The Phillipian

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2026 COMMENCEMENT

The Phillipian

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Fall Term in Review

JUDY LIU & SIMRAN SHAH

This year's Fall Term observed several foundational changes to campus culture, student safety, and academics, both in response to current community trends and in preparation for the future. Upon returning to campus, students participated in the second annual Cluster Olympics, fostering community building despite many events being held indoors due to a thunderstorm.

Fall Term marked the arrival of the cell phone policy. Created by a task force of faculty and students, the policy states that cell phones cannot be used during the school day unless in an approved area, namely Susie's and George Washington Hall (GW). Additionally, phones are prohibited at all times in the Paresky Commons food lines and the Garver Room in the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library (OWHL), and underclassmen must turn in their phones to the house counselor on duty in their dorms at 11 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, explained that it aims to improve student culture and well-being, while students expressed concerns about the policy's effectiveness.

Andover also introduced a new medication policy that requires students to register any medication they take and to pick up their doses from the Rebecca M. Sykes Wellness Center (Sykes). Students can obtain their medication during certain time frames every day, including in the morning before classes and at night. The policy was implemented to improve compliance with taking appropriate doses and prevent the sharing of medications, according to Amy Patel, Dean of Health and Wellness and Chief Medical Officer. Students have encountered unexpected changes to their schedules as a result of the policy and have expressed the inconvenience of visiting Sykes daily.

This year, the Dean of Students Office changed the process of signing up to become an Orientation Leader or "Blue Key," making it significantly more selective. Previously open to all interested Seniors, Blue Keys are now restricted to a predetermined list of Student Leaders. The change was made to promote relationships that last beyond Orientation Day at the beginning of the school year, according to Assistant Dean of Students Aya Murata. Students and Blue Key alumni felt that this change left out crucial aspects of the orientation experience for new students, including the breadth and diversity of the Senior class.

Students attempted to organize a protest at the Abbot Flagpole on Friday, October 17. Posters were used to advertise the event, a "Protest for Democracy," with some reading "Address Fascism Now" and "Ice Raids are Happening in Lawrence. Lawrence is 15 minutes away." The protest was later canceled due to concerns from the school administration about student safety, especially for those holding student visas. Former student Yara Handschin '27, an organizer of the protest, sent a mass email to Andover students describing her experience staging it, provided a "Guide to Protest at Andover," and announced that she would be leaving the school.

Three alumni received Andover's 2025 Alumni Award of Distinction and shared their insights and experiences during All-School Meeting (ASM): Award-winning cinematographer and director Pablo Durana '02, LGBTQIA+ and reproductive rights lawyer Ruth E. Harlow '79, and John Marks '61, former foreign diplomat and founder of peacebuilding organization Search for Common Ground. Durana explained how he discovered his passion for visual media and filmmaking, and Harlow discussed how Andover inspired her to contribute to history later on. Marks spoke about his work addressing global challenges and its connection to Andover's idea of non sibi.

Many teachers across Andover's humanities departments have elected to implement more in-class writing assessments in response to increased student use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across educational institutions. These assessments have replaced take-home assignments and essays to encourage individual thought and prevent academic misconduct, according to Christopher Jones, former Chair in History and Social Science. While some students noted the benefits of in-class assessments to promote student thought and ease the out-of-class workload, others mentioned how they can take away from the flexibility and quality of work that longer assessments offer.

The study rooms in the basement of the OWHL, previously a staple of student life at Andover, were converted into offices starting this term. According to Camille Torres Hoven, Director of the OWHL, this change was made to clear more space to accommodate the OWHL's full staff. Many students expressed frustration over the removal of a space for studying and socializing, and some called for greater communication with students before such changes are made.

Safety netting has been installed in the stairwells of Gelb Science Center and Borden Memorial Gym. It is planned for installation in other locations, including the Phelps Stadium tower, the OWHL front stairwell, and an outdoor section of the Snyder Center. Head of School Raynard Kington and the Senior Administrative Council launched this project as part of a broader effort to address community safety. Students and faculty discussed the emotional impacts and significance of the netting.

Andover Adjusts to New Cell Phone Policy

PRISHA SHIVANI

Andover's student body received an email around two weeks before school officially started, outlining the cell phone policy for the 2025-2026 school year. The email stated that phones cannot be used during the school day unless in an approved area, must be outside of the dorm room at 11:00 p.m. for lowerclassmen boarders, and are fully prohibited in Paresky Commons (Paresky) food lines or the Garver Room in the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library (OWHL). The policy was created mostly by a task force consisting of students and faculty.

Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, explained that the reasoning behind this change was mostly to increase student connection and presence. Esty commented on the reasons for fully restricting phone usage in places such as the Garver Room (Silent) and Paresky's lines.

"In line for food, first, there's the social connection piece. Second, what's happened in modern life is we have paid less attention to what's going on around us when we're on our phones. You're not as efficient going through the line if you're also looking at your phone. It makes a lot of sense to talk to your neighbor. Also, when you get up to the food and get what you want, don't be on your phone and slow down the line too," said Esty.

Esty continued, "[Garver Room], should be silent. Cell phones had made it less silent. It is really a place of focus. You go there for a purpose. You don't go there to just hang out. You go to [Garver Room] because you want that atmosphere. Phones should just not be part of that atmosphere and silent study."

Colin Lee '28 reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of the policy so far. Lee acknowledged that, while the policy's goal of tackling excessive phone use is reasonable, its strictness makes it feel controversial.

"There's definitely a real issue of people being on their phones too much, and it's unhealthy socially and mentally. At the same time, this policy is partly overreaching. Parts of it seem unnecessary or unfair, and not well thought through. Perhaps if they had made it more lenient or it had more exceptions for people to use their phones, it would be healthier. But I think it does address an important issue and [works to] improve it," said Lee.

Cristian Ramirez '29 shared that due to not using his phone regularly regardless of the policy, his transition was relatively easy. However, he feels that communication of specific guidelines is an issue. Ramirez suggested that students should be able to use their phone between classes as long as they are not walking and texting.

"When I'm in between classes and I want to check texts to meet up with someone to study, and a teacher tells me to put my phone away, it does get annoying... Usually students stay connected and communicate with each other via their phone, especially because it's a campus. You have friends in other dorms and friends that aren't currently with you. If you want to communicate with them you need your phone for that," said Ramirez.

Some students felt that the policy has been more strictly enforced in the OWHL than other areas on campus. Camille Torres Hoven, Director of the OWHL, wrote on why regulation of phones may seem more intense in the library. She emphasized that if students need their phone for any academic reason, they should talk to librarians beforehand or move to a space where phones are allowed.

"From my perspective, it probably feels more enforced in the library because students aren't following the policy here as consistently as they do elsewhere. For example, I have not seen students in [Samuel Phillips Hall] or Gelb [Science Center] pull out their phones to scroll, text, make calls on speaker, etc. but we frequently see this happening in the library. I also think there's been some confusion about how the OWHL fits into the policy. That said, it's still very early days — hopefully, things will feel clearer and more consistent soon," wrote Torres Hoven in an email to *The Phillipian*.

When asked about consistent enforcement, Esty noted that the administration cannot monitor every space but expects community members to follow rules. She expressed her hope that students will uphold the policy to better the community.

"We can't be everywhere all the time, but it's our expectation that people are upholding the phone free times and the phone free spaces. If they're not, they're not. The policy is really designed to be for the health and wellbeing of the community. On some level, we have to trust that people want health and wellbeing for our community," said Esty.

Going forward, Esty explained that the school plans to monitor how the policy unfolds over the year before reassessing. She mentioned the positive effects other schools have seen after regulating cell phone use, expressing optimism that Andover might also see benefits.

"We will see how things are going through the year and at the end of the year and see where we are. We were hardly the first school to restrict cell phone usage. My understanding from not only peer schools, but from public schools, and other kinds of schools, is that they find they are happier, healthier, more productive, and just perform better all around with some limitations or regulation of cell phone use. I suspect we may find similar results for us," said Esty.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on September 12, 2025.

Andover Introduces New Medication Policy

KRISTEN MA & SAKETH LINGISETTY

This academic year, Andover implemented a new medication policy affecting the storage and distribution of student medication at the Rebecca M. Sykes Wellness Center (Sykes). The Blue Book states that all boarding and day students taking any type of medication while on campus must register the medication with Sykes to prevent the misuse and sharing of medication.

While the majority of prescription medication will be allocated to students at the time of each dose, some over-the-counter drugs, including vitamins and supplements, may be approved for self-administration at limited quantities. Students with medications not cleared for independent use must now visit Sykes for each dose. Three windows will allow students to take their medication at Sykes: from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m, and from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. The Student Medication Policy and Acknowledgement states that if students or their parents fail to respect the policy they will be reported to the Dean of Students for "an appropriate response."

According to Amy Patel, Dean of Health and Wellness and Chief Medical Officer, students are required to visit Sykes at certain time frames each day, in the morning before classes or at night, sometimes after final sign-in, to receive their medications. Patel outlined salient points of the policy as well as the shifts affecting the way students can obtain their medication.

"We have shifted our baseline med dispensing to a dose-by-dose practice. We also made some of the requirements clearer, such as registering all medications (prescription and over-the-counter medications) with the Wellness Center and individualizing dispensing plans with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and the healthcare provider who prescribes or recommends the medication(s)," wrote Patel in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Patel continued, "We expect to see improved compliance with taking medication as directed, and students can also reach out for support sooner if they are having any symptoms or side effects. It will require that students plan ahead to pick up medications, but we are finding that almost all students are in and out of the Wellness Center in five minutes during the morning (which is when most medications are taken)."

Students taking medication are encountering shifts in their daily schedules as a result of the policy. Namely, a few reported having to go to Sykes past final sign-in with the Office of Physical Plant (OPP) because their medication has to be taken before they go to sleep, while some others reported having to wait in line before classes in the morning. Mia Isacson '26 elaborated on her experience with accessing her medication.

"[My schedule] has changed so much. I take my medication before I go to bed, so either my whole schedule gets messed up because I have to go earlier or I have to take a Campus Safety car to Sykes before I go to bed... I don't think the policy makes sense for Seniors and Uppers, because [there are] girls who take birth control in the morning. There is too much of a line [to get medication]. I go there, and although the whole [point of this] process is just to make sure people are taking their medication, that's not happening. There [are] so many people [that the policy] is not helping. Facing the facts, Sykes has a hard time finding out who or where [to give the medication]. It's a mess. It's impossible. And [Campus Safety] is understaffed," said Isacson.

Some students have also expressed the inconvenience of having to go to Sykes daily to receive dosages, and the lack of privacy they experience as a result, since other students waiting to get their medication see them in line. Charlie Gillick '27 explained how the policy would possibly impact his daily routine in the future.

"Especially [in the] winter, which is when everybody starts getting a little bit sick, that's usually the season when I take some Advil three days per week... I'm going to try to deal with it because it's a pain going to Sykes every morning to get some Advil. I'm going to try, but if I can't, I'll end up just having to go to Sykes. That would pretty drastically change my morning routine. I'll have to get up earlier. Especially as a cross-country athlete, I need my sleep, so it'll be unfortunate... Having your medication in your room is also helpful so that you don't need to call up Sykes and go through that whole process to test you [and] see what's going on," said Gillick.

Reflecting on the policy, Gillick acknowledged the need for some form of regulation on medications on campus. He shared his thoughts on how the policy has affected and will continue to affect the entire school community, as well as improvements that could be made.

"Overall, it makes sense to not completely trust kids [with their medication] for safety reasons... Maybe allowing students to have a controlled amount in their dorms could be a good idea. For example, I could last a week on maybe six Advil, that would probably get me through a week. At the start of a Monday, I would go in, get my weekly Advil, and then that would get me through the week, and if the worry is overdose, there's no way to overdose on six tablets. They could hand out the tablets in moderation and keep track of how much students have at a time," said Gillick.

Accordingly, Patel conveyed a willingness for Sykes to take responsibility for any issues that may arise due to the policy.

"We put a lot of thought into the new procedures ahead of time to try to anticipate and address complications or challenges. We are prepared to address anything that comes to our attention," said Patel.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on September 12, 2025.

Current and Former Students Share Mixed Feelings on Changes to "Blue Key" Orientation Role

CADE RUTKOSKE

Almost every Andover student remembers the moment they turned off Main Street and into Pan Athletic Center Circle, surrounded by a mob of cheering students wearing tie-dye shirts and covered in face paint. Celebrating the arrival of new students at Orientation Day has been a tradition that goes back decades at Andover.

This year, the Dean of Students Office changed the selection process for becoming an Orientation Leader, making participation in Orientation Day significantly more selective. Previously, Seniors were allowed to sign up for the position of Orientation Leader, traditionally known as "Blue Keys." This year, that system was replaced with a predetermined listing of Student Leaders (Proctors, Prefects, Day Student Mentors, Equity, Balance, and Inclusion (EBI) Seniors, and Cluster Presidents and Representatives) who were already on campus, barring regular Seniors from participating in Orientation.

According to Assistant Dean of Students Aya Murata, the rationale behind the shift from Blue Keys to Student Leaders was to promote relationships that were more likely to last beyond Orientation Day. She explained that "enough" faculty reports over the years encouraged a rethinking of the Orientation process.

"A concern that would come up year after year was this sort of arbitrary, artificial relationship between the selected Blue Keys and their assigned students. There wasn't really any connective tissue there... We would hear from new students or sometimes their parents and families that they were supposed to have this Blue Key to help them through orientation, but they were sort of MIA," said Murata.

Blue Key Heads are Seniors who are elected to lead school spirit and community events within a given school year. Blue Key Heads have historically played a crucial role in the success of orientation day, doing everything from teaching new students cheers to facilitating Blue Key and new student activities. Isaiah Lee '19, a former Blue Key Head, explained how the new policy could overlook many aspects of student leadership.

"My classmates would agree that one of the best parts about Andover is the number of places on campus that you can find intimate and lasting mentorship. A crucial component of that is the breadth and diversity of the student body. It's reductive and borderline offensive to the rest of the Senior class to suggest that Student leader Blue Keys are categorically more capable or likely to form long term relationships with new students. If the goal really is to promote meaningful relationships between Seniors and new students, then new students should be given as many opportunities to connect with the right person for them as possible. The change to the tradition is strictly counterproductive," wrote Lee in an email to *The Phillipian*.

In an email addressed to the Senior Class of 2026 on May 30, Murata communicated that Orientation Leadership would only be opened up to those with student leadership roles.

She wrote, "This change is for this formal and limited role only. We know and appreciate that it takes all Seniors to set the tone during the opening weeks of school by welcoming and supporting new students, leading by example, and upholding a culture of care, kindness, and inclusivity. In fact, we invite all returning students to cheer on the new students as they walk into the Cochran Chapel for their Matriculation Ceremony."

Will Ennis '19, another former Blue Key Head, reflected on the change in Orientation policy. When asked to compare the Matriculation Ceremony to Orientation Day, he commended the effort to bring students together, yet highlighted several key differences between the two.

"First of all, I'm glad they did something. You need some sort of way to bring out the breadth of campus, and it's nice that they got it in some fashion. [However], I don't think it's equivalent at all. Not to put too blunt a point on it, but it's not... You can't quite replicate the way everyone feels getting back to campus, all dressed up together, colorful, and standing on the corner," said Ennis.

Ennis also provided his opinion on the rationale behind the switch that aimed to prioritize fostering relationships between students. While he acknowledged that he understood the reasoning, he pointed out several aspects of student relationships that may have been left out of consideration.

"I do understand the sentiment. I don't think that they're entirely wrong that the Blue Key-Freshman relationship is one that by its nature has a ton of staying-power. It's probably correct that it tends to be a little more transitory, [but] I disagree on the fact that that is a problem. One great thing about Andover is you are going to have opportunities to form strong mentor-mentee friendships across grades. You have your whole Freshman year to get to know the Upperclassmen, [and] those kinds of relationships form naturally and are strengthened over the course of the year," said Ennis.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

Instead of being open to the entire Senior class like previous years, only student leaders could participate in Orientation.

He added, "It feels like an overcorrection. You're just not getting the level of benefit to substantiate a decision to lock all these people out of being a Blue Key who would have wanted to be a part of it and would have made the experience stronger for all the Freshmen."

Due to the fact that she doesn't hold a Leadership Position, Phia Cutler '26 is one Senior who was disappointed to learn that she couldn't participate in Orientation Day. As a day student living near campus, Cutler decided to go to the corner despite not receiving a traditional tie-dye shirt. She commented on the decline in turnout.

"I definitely think that there used to be a lot more people there. Just visually you can tell. The amount of people can change the amount of energy that you get. In the past I've literally been able to hear the cheering from my house, but this year I couldn't. When I went there, I could hear Drumline, but that was it," said Cutler.

She continued, "When I was on the corner, there were only about 20 people on my side and 20 people on the other side. It's usually half the Senior class there, so it definitely made a difference."

Lee reflected on the purpose of Orientation Day. He recalled the importance of feeling welcomed, especially as a Junior in an environment that is new and away from home.

"The whole tradition is about giving the right first impression. Anyone who knows what it feels like to show up on that first day as a 13 or 14 year old kid and be greeted so warmly by what feels like a majority of the senior class who, by the way, have voluntarily elected to return to school early (which, if you think about it, is kind of insane and probably doesn't happen in many other high schools). The tradition instantly communicates to that new student sitting in their parents' car that Andover is a place where people genuinely want to be, and that it's a place that wants you to be there. That is the right first impression," wrote Lee in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on September 12, 2025.

Standardizing the 6: Academic Council Sets 94% as Suggested Threshold

JEANNE KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET

Starting the 2025-2026 academic year, the Academic Council suggested standardizing the 6 threshold at 94 percent, part of a broader effort to bring consistency to Andover's grading practices, which range from percentages to mastery-based systems to the 0–6 scale itself. This Fall, academic departments have each decided how to take those suggestions into account differently, but with a recurring idea of bringing consistency in grading policies across sections of the same course.

=The decision was made by the Academic Council, a group comprised of department chairs and other school leaders who make decisions about matters relating to the academic program. A draft of the plan was shared with instructors in an email sent last June, including grading conversion suggestions and a rubric with detailed descriptions of what work qualifies for 0-6. Caroline Odden, the Dean of Studies, explained what prompted the change.

"This is a suggested scale, and it is understood that instructors may use a different conversion for a variety of pedagogical reasons. However, many instructors, course groups, and departments have welcomed this guidance and adopted this conversion (some were already using it). It is worth noting, as well, that plenty of courses don't use percentages at all in their grading," wrote Odden in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Odden continued, "In recent years, both students and faculty have voiced concerns that different courses have different ways of converting from percentages to the 0-6 scale. At times, these inconsistencies were becoming a distraction from learning. This common approach was established to take some of the mystery out of the conversion and help students refocus their attention on the learning process."

One of the guiding principles behind the change was consistency across sections, particularly in diploma requirement courses. Christopher Jones, the interim Chair of the History and Social Science Department, has asked teachers to adopt the same scale so students receive comparable evaluations regardless of who teaches their section, one of the main objectives being that all students in the same course have a "shared experience."

"We also want consistency across, especially, diploma requirement courses. If someone is in history in one section and they're getting grades, they mean something similar to someone else who's in a different class and with a different teacher. Those grades ought to reflect something similar when they go on a transcript so that someone reading the transcript has a sense of the quality of the students work...We want a degree of consolidation, of reliability, and transparency in our diploma requirement courses," said Jones.

At the same time, Jones noted that flexibility remains important for electives, where teachers design different kinds of assessments and projects that reflect varied subject matter and teaching approaches.

"There's going to be variation, especially in electives... We imagine an elective program where teachers are doing different kinds of assessments and different projects with different content. Someone might be thinking about teaching and evaluating the history of fashion in a completely different way than someone is doing the history of the modern Middle East, or my class on freedom," said Jones.

The emphasis on consistency is also shaping conversations in other departments. Heidi Wall, Assistant Chair of the Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, explained that instructors are encouraged to employ the same grading practices across sections of the same course. Rather than relying solely on percentages, the department is working toward common understandings of what constitutes different levels of work on the 0–6 scale.

"Some instructors do still grade on a percentage scale, but other instructors are using a 0–6 scale. What we're trying to do is have some more consistency among course groups so that there's a common understanding of what it means to earn a 6, a 5, a 4, a 3, and so on. ...We're also encouraging course groups to have those conversations and to try to come to some consensus within those course groups about the qualities of work that we're looking for that represent 6-level thinking and understanding," said Wall.

Wall added that the department plans to create a rubric with detailed descriptions for each point on the 0–6 grading scale, similar to the framework shared by the Dean of Studies, but tailored specifically to math and computer science.

"Part of what came out of the Dean of Studies office is descriptions that correspond to 0 to 6. We're hoping to take those descriptions and make them more specific to the math department and the qualities of the work that we're looking for in our students for each of those levels...We want to come up with more of a common understanding that the percentage is a separate thing. [The scale and description] would be for our students to have a better understanding of what that grade means," said Wall.

In the English department, all teachers who use percentages will now apply 94 as the cutoff for a 6. According to Leon Calleja, the English department Chair, beyond that requirement, instructors can continue using the grading method they prefer, whether percentages, the 6-point scale, or rubrics. He explained that the change mainly serves to make grades easier to interpret and consistent across classes, but it is unlikely to significantly affect outcomes, since English teachers tend to grade with an idea of what a "6" represents rather than by strict numerical thresholds.

"A couple of years ago, we decided as a department that teachers who grade on a percentage basis all use the same scale. In the past, for one teacher, a 93 would count as a 6, but for another teacher, you'd have to get a 94 within the English department, even though it was done with the same ideas in mind... I've told my instructors that if they use percentages, they should use the 94 scale... Some still do a scale out of 6. Some do rubrics that are not percentage-based," said Calleja.

Beyond internal consistency, the College Counseling Office (CCO) is also considering how these changes may be interpreted by colleges. Sean Logan, the Dean of the CCO, explained that the school has experience contextualizing transcripts with explanatory notes, especially since the pandemic, when grading practices were disrupted. He shared that if grades were to be lower this term and in the future, it would be communicated to colleges to ensure they can evaluate students within Andover's context.

"It's definitely our job to communicate any sort of changes within our curriculum and within our grading systems to colleges. This suggestion of where these grades land, my sense is that we're not going to see big changes. People may be concerned if we see at the end of the first term that the number of sixes and fives was cut in half. We would certainly be messaging that out to colleges as those grades went out the door... We would also be pretty proactive with at least the top 50, top 60, top 70 schools where kids apply to make sure that they talk with our rep directly," said Logan.

While the new 94 cutoff aims to bring more consistency in grading, it is handled differently by each department. Olivia Isacson '26 described her experience as confusing, though she tries to keep the focus on her own effort rather than the numbers.

"It's even more confusing and stressful, because all departments are doing it differently and have different grading practices... I also feel like the grading system is already very strict and very intense. It's hard to understand... Because I want to make the best of my Andover experiences, I don't think so much about the grading scale. I think more about the effort I put in, so even if it is a little stressful and confusing, I try to view it like a formality," said Isacson.

Odden noted that the 94-for-a-6 suggestion is only one step in what is likely to be a longer process of institutional reflection on grading.

"Institutional discussions about grading are ongoing, and I do expect that we will make other adjustments in the future. We will make changes carefully and methodically, and always with the goal of encouraging robust student learning," wrote Odden.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on September 19, 2025.

Netting Installed in Several Campus Buildings

MICHEAL KAWOOYA

Last Spring, the campus community tragically lost Lucas Lee '25 to suicide. Since then, safety netting has been installed in the stairwells of Gelb Science Center (Gelb) and Pan Athletic Center (Pan), and will be installed in the Phelps Stadium tower, the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library (OWHL) front stairwell, and an outdoor section of the Snyder Center (Snyder), according to Head of School Raynard Kington.

Kington declined a request for an interview, but sent an email statement on behalf of the Senior Administrative Council. Kington contextualized the change and expressed regret for the lack of advanced communication to the Andover community.

"Working with experts in building safety over the past several months, we reviewed our facilities to determine whether any changes would enhance community safety. As a result, we have implemented several new safety measures, including the installation of netting in places such as Gelb and Pan stairwells," Kington wrote in an email to *The Phillipian*. "We intended to install the netting before the start of the school year, but supply chain difficulties made that impossible."

Kington continued, "I am sorry that we did not communicate in advance about these changes. Please trust that these projects were initiated with the safety of our campus community foremost in mind."

Evan DeMayo '26 acknowledged the netting's purpose while recognizing its emotional impact.

"The intent behind the netting is pretty clear. [It's] to protect the student body. Although, the emotional weight is harder to ignore. For many, seeing nets [in] spaces where we study, where we live and gather, transforms familiar places into reminders of vulnerability and tragedy," said DeMayo.

According to the Harvard Means Project, suicide rates decline when lethal means are made less available. Ellen Utley, MD, Senior Clinical Advisor at Jed Foundation (JED), noted the role netting has in protecting those who are most vulnerable.

"It is important to see the netting as a message of hope. When we take measures to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, we're raising the collective commitment to care and compassion in all of us. We would not ask a person with a cast on their leg to walk without crutches. Similarly, we are not asking a person who is struggling with thoughts of suicide to avoid tragedy on their own," wrote Utley.

Utley continued, "The only way to prevent suicide is to remove the means for taking one's life — which is what netting, safe storage of medications, and other efforts accomplish. The other critical thing, which is JED's work with Andover, is to infuse and nurture a campus-wide culture of care and compassion. More than any other factor, a sense of community and belonging is where the healing and thriving as a community begins."

Some community members have expressed that the netting should serve as just one part of a larger discussion on student support. Susan Esty, Assistant Head of School for Residential Life and Dean of Students, mentioned the administration's commitment to launching broader efforts to address student support.

"We are committed to communicating more frequently with students as we look to enhance community connections, student supports, and practices that ensure student safety. The netting in Gelb is only one part of a larger effort that we will continue across the school year. We plan to invite students to share their thoughts about what else we can be doing sometime in the near future," wrote Esty in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on October 10, 2025.

Respondus Implemented as In-Class Writing Tool

RIAANA BAJAJ & NICCOLO LEE-SUK

Students of all grades have installed Respondus on their devices, a testing browser that locks down the test environment on Canvas. As in-class assessments surge in popularity, Respondus has been implemented to block access to external websites or applications during testing.

Apart from in-class writing assignments, there are additional benefits for classes using Respondus highlighted Caroline Odden, Dean of Studies and Instructor in Physics .

"Respondus will be a great tool for in-class writing assignments. For many students, writing on the computer is preferable to writing by hand, and typed essays are easier to read. There are potential uses for the Respondus technology beyond in-class writing. For example, it is possible to make the Desmos graphing calculator available through Respondus — that may benefit some STEM classes. We were motivated to incorporate the Respondus LockDown browser into our suite of technology tools so that students would be able to use their computers for in-class writing assignments," wrote Odden in an email to *The Phillipian*.

At Andover, where academic honesty is encouraged, the use of Respondus can be a means of ensuring it. Erin McCloskey, Associate Director of Technology, emphasized that the use of Respondus is a new way to tackle the problems stemming from generative artificial intelligence (AI).

"In a phrase, academic integrity. In response to the rapid proliferation of generative AI over the past couple of years, faculty and students have been exploring its role in learning, both to harness its power to support and augment learning and also to understand how it can give students shortcuts to produce work that doesn't necessarily reflect their true understanding. This creates a challenging environment in which to assess students... Respondus LockDown Browser offers a technological approach, so that students cannot access other materials during an assessment," wrote McCloskey in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Stephanie Curci, Instructor in English, had previously tested Respondus in the spring and recently used the application for in-class essays in ninth and twelfth grade classes. Curci spoke of Respondus' usefulness as AI use becomes more widespread.

"A lot of people are using it due to the rise of AI. Not necessarily because we suspect that kids are going to use it, but so that we don't have to think about it. We're trying to make as suspicion-free a space as possible, so that then you don't have to worry about it... The other thing you could do is have students use Blue Books [but] I can't read students' handwriting particularly well. I think a lot of [students] have worked for so long on computers that [they] want to be able to manipulate the text and move it around. That's why I like [in-class essays with Respondus]," said Curci.

Jayden Roos '29 first heard about the software from her English teacher and received a few emails from other teachers regarding its implementation. Roos shared that the use of a lockdown browser created the impression that teachers do not trust students to complete their work honestly.

"I don't personally cheat on tests, so [Respondus is] not a big deal for me, but it is a little annoying that we have to go out of our way to download a new software. I know a lot of people with Macs are having trouble downloading it, so it could be annoying... We value academic integrity here, and everybody takes that pretty seriously, and they know the consequences if they don't take it seriously. I personally don't think [Respondus is] needed. It doesn't really bother me, but it is an extra thing that shows that [teachers] don't trust us as much," said Roos.

While she mentioned AI use as a concern, Curci reiterated that in-class assessments predated AI. She also pointed to limited class time as a factor.

"In-class essays or things like that are not just about AI, but just about the time we have with you all. If you map out across a term, you might only have only 20 class days. If we're going to spend a whole week working on an essay, we've really lost a lot of class time together. That's also part of the calculation that teachers are making," said Curci.

Shiloh Robinson '27 described using Respondus for a history paper. She noted that the software malfunctioned, requiring her to repeatedly re-enter her work into the browser.

"The software's a little bit glitchy, but other than that, I have no problem with it. When I was working... I had to copy and paste my answers just to make sure they didn't delete, and I think that could be a problem... I was not super stressed using it, but it just feels like there's a barrier when you're using it, so it just feels a little bit more stressful," said Robinson.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on October 3, 2025.

HOPPING HOME: GRASSHOPPER RETURNS TO TANG THEATER

DANIEL LIU & MADELYN SOONG



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY, PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KELVIN MA/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Grasshopper, Andover's largest annual performing arts showcase, will once again return to Tang Theatre (Tang) this Family Weekend and adopt its traditional four-show format in Tang. The Theatre & Dance administration has cancelled their plan to hold a Grasshopper show in the Cochran Chapel (Chapel) during All-School Meeting (ASM).

The shift back to Tang restores a familiar setup for students and faculty after months of discussion. Initially proposed to improve accessibility and explore future alternatives during Tang's construction next year, the ASM performance for the Grasshopper aimed to give the show a wider audience during the school day.

Kareem Lewis, Instructor in Dance, helped oversee Grasshopper's planning and the discussion around its new ASM format. Lewis explained the reasoning behind the switch back to hosting Grasshopper in Tang.

"The challenges came down to logistics and fairness. The Chapel already had programs scheduled, which meant not all acts could be included, raising concerns about equity and optics. Once those surfaced, it became clear that the classic format would better serve the students and the spirit of Grasshopper this year," said Lewis.

Ashiq Kibria '26, a Producer for Grasshopper, expects the return to Tang to pose no problems. All acts that were previously excluded under past policies would still be included in the final Tang shows. Since bands and other affected performers had been part of the audition process since it began in early September, the change in venue will not affect the final lineup.

"[After learning about the change to an ASM show,] we were trying to ask students what we could do... We really wanted to make sure all groups who wanted to be in [Grasshopper] could audition first and then figured we'd find a solution," said Kibria. "By the time we found out that there'd no longer be an ASM show, we had not cut a band yet, so there were no issues related to that [and] now everything's good."

For Bruce Ru '28, another Producer, the decision to cancel the ASM show came as a relief. With a record of 24 acts signing up this year — compared to 17 last year — the return to Tang allowed every performer to be well-prepared under the consistent staging conditions.

"Performers who are used to the Tang configuration will now have a chance to showcase their perfected acts in a venue that's better suited for it. Logistically, it's going to be much easier because we now have one venue instead of two. We have extra time and space for sound checks, and we don't have to account for the period between second-period classes. Some acts, like Photon, can't be fully realized in the Chapel, especially because of the lighting limitations," said Ru.

Some performers expressed no strong preference between the two venues but viewed the change as a positive for the show overall. Ethan Liu '26, a member of student-run band Goose&Moose, did not take issue with the ASM show, but was joyful that the Grasshopper would stay in Tang, echoing sentiments about familiarity and time.

"I think all the performers feel a huge sense of relief," said Liu. "[For some students], the ASM show created a lot of pressure, it felt like we were doing five different shows in three nights, and then having to switch everything up for one night. That made us really nervous. The stage is different, the audience is different, and in the chapel it just didn't feel the same. The energy with the crowd wasn't as close. So yeah, we're all just relieved."

For Liu, Grasshopper represents more than just a showcase of talent, but rather a moment of unity for the entire Andover community.

"Grasshopper brings everyone closer, no matter what role you play, audience member, performer, whatever. Last year, when Goose&Moose did 'Walking on Sunshine,' that was the song stuck in everyone's head while they left the theater, and even for days and weeks after. Cheering for your friends, hooting and hollering from the crowd, that kind of thing really brings people together. It's a much-needed event in the fall," said Liu.

Since news of the change spread across campus, Kibria noted a sense of relief and joy among the whole student body, especially the seniors who would have missed the Senior and Faculty Night showing.

"A lot of people disliked the ASM show in general, and now that it's gone I've heard a lot of praise," Kibria said. "Campus mood has been a lot lighter, especially as there's a senior and faculty night, as now that we're on the normal schedule we're having a Senior and Faculty night because we have time for it, which really boosted campus spirits."

Theatre and Dance Department Chair Robert Lazar explained the thought process behind the ASM show, intending to make Grasshopper accessible to all students. Lazar stressed that both the initial and subsequent updates to the show were made with the best intentions to improve the show for everyone involved.

"These decisions are not made lightly and we always look at, before any decision is made, what the objectives [are]. For example, having the ASM show, it wasn't just, 'let's have an ASM show.' We've heard for years that students want more access. 'How do we get it?' Every decision we make is predicated on 'how do we move things forward?' It's super complex and there are a lot of moving parts and pieces, but I think it's important for people to realize that we look at what's going to be the best decision. Sometimes you nail it and sometimes you [say], 'We missed the mark a little bit. How do we improve it for next year?'" said Lazar.

Despite all the changes and various campus reactions in the past month surrounding this year's Grasshopper, most are simply excited to see the show that has lit up Andover every year since 1990.

"It's important not to forget the reason we do Grasshopper, or performances in general," added Liu. "It's not just a chance to get on stage or audition. It's a space to show the best version of ourselves. It's a place where it's all positive, no competition, just celebrating each other's unique talents. There's no other space quite like it."

With the show's return to Tang and enthusiasm building across campus, Grasshopper continues to stand as a defining moment of community at Andover.

"[Tang] is designed for performance, so it supports the work students have created at the highest level. Most importantly, it preserves Grasshopper's identity as a full, shared celebration, a moment when the whole campus comes together around creativity and expression," said Lewis.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on October 10, 2025.

Food for Thought: Food Delivery Task Force to Be Created

SARAH SUN & KRISSY ZHU

Students expressed support for food delivery two weeks after the creation of a Food Delivery Task Force was announced in an email to the student body by the Dean of Students' Office on October 3.

Three cluster deans and multiple house counselors declined to interview due to limited knowledge on the subject. On September 16, Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, noted there was "no story" about a food delivery policy to report in an email to *The Phillipian*. This past week, Esty and David Gardner, Assistant Dean of Students and Residential Life, did not respond to follow-up interview requests from *The Phillipian*.

In their email to the student body, Esty and Gardner noted that a "recent surge in deliveries... has raised significant concerns about student safety and wellbeing, campus traffic, and community connection." The task force, which will be composed of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, will draft a new food delivery policy to be implemented later this year. Students must apply and be accepted in order to join the task force.

"[The task force] will assess needs, gather input, review best practices at other schools, and propose a revised policy that balances safety, health, fairness, and community connection... [and] assisting with drafting, refining, and communicating the final policy proposal," wrote Esty and Gardner in their email to the student body.

Ben Temple, Dean of Faculty, commented on his thoughts on the reasoning behind the task force. From his outsider perspective, he named multiple possible reasons that food delivery causes downsides to the boarding school experience.

"I am new to PA, so my perspective is somewhat limited. My sense is that food delivery increases traffic on campus for drivers who may be unfamiliar with the campus. While I can't speak from my own observations, my sense is that food delivery has the effect of decreasing the centrality of a common dining experience for students. My understanding is that other schools might have central delivery locations on their campuses, which would allow students to order food for delivery but address some of the traffic concerns. I am not on the food delivery task force and am not aware of the group's conversations or process," wrote Temple in an email to *The Phillipian*.

As reported previously by *The Phillipian*, many students have mixed feelings about having restrictions for food delivery. As a boarder, Teddy Blum '29 uses DoorDash once a week. Referring to concerns of how food delivery can impede community connection, Blum suggested that the school instead focus on ways to improve the dining experience at Paresky Commons.

"Sometimes the Commons food is unhealthy, and there isn't another option, so I usually DoorDash that... I don't think there needs to be restrictions, but maybe more encouragement to eat at Commons. I know they have a survey, but maybe they can have a more interactive survey, that's easier for people to access and say what they would like to eat," said Blum.

To some students with various commitments, such as sports or clubs, food delivery is essential to ensuring they can make it to all their commitments. Murewa Biyi-Olaoye '27 explained her schedule in the prior year, noting that particular days became tough for her.

"Last year, I would order every Thursday because I had some commitments. I'd have musical practice, then I'd have voice lessons and then I'd have meetings. I'd always be done at seven when Commons [dinner] ended. I'd have to order every Thursday. This year, I don't have as many commitments, but I still do order once a week or once every two weeks," said Biyi-Olaoye.

Edward Kim '29 further expressed how, as an international student from Korea, ordering Korean food allows him to retain part of his own culture and a sense of comfort. He noted some things that he would like the task force to consider.

"Another reason [I order] is to feel back at home, because I'm Korean and there's not that much Korean food served at Paresky, so I sometimes order Korean food... You want to have your hometown food," said Kim. "My general opinion is that we are high schoolers and we should be responsible enough to not have a policy regarding delivery ... If there is a new policy, my hope is that it doesn't restrict too much. There should be flexibility in terms of what you can order and when you can order."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on October 17, 2025.

Student Protest at Andover Called Off Amid Safety Concerns

CADE RUTKOSKE & JEANNE KOSCIUS-KO-MORIZET

When asked, "Does Andover have enough spaces to have political discourse?" Christian Robinson '28 replied, "Not really."

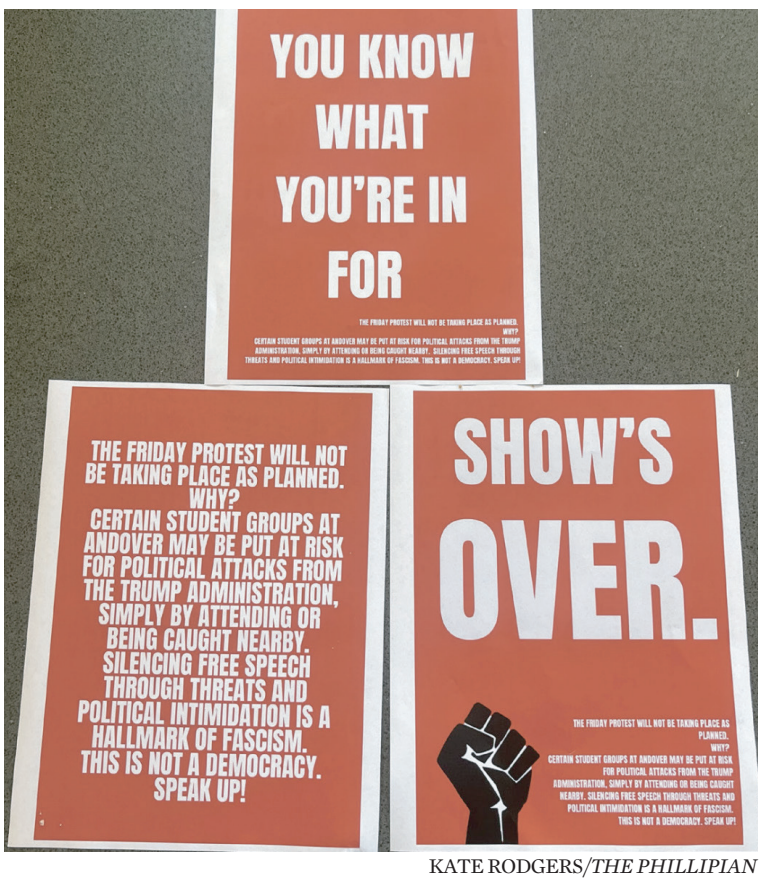
Such frustration over the absence of political discussion at Andover inspired some students to organize a protest. According to Yara Handschin '27, the organizer of the rally, the peaceful event was to take place at the Abbot Flagpole after All-School Meeting (ASM) on Friday, October 17, when it would not disrupt the academic day. The protest was canceled due to concerns about student safety.

According to Handschin, the goal of the protest was to both promote political discourse at Andover and to encourage the Academy to release a public statement regarding the practices of the current U.S. Administration.

"There has been a sort of deliberate messaging around the political climate of the United States that seems to discourage students from engaging with it critically," said Handschin. "The protest was a response to the silence, [and how] students have been having problems with the lack of response from the [Andover] administration to the political climate of the United States."

She added, "It's important for Andover as an institution, which is a school that has uncountable wealth and immense privilege that extends to its student body, to use that responsibility towards classes that are not protected in the face of the threat that the Trump administration is posing to democracy."

In an email sent to the student body in February 2024, Head of School Raynard Kington wrote that, "Andover's mission is to educate high school students. We teach students how to think, not what to think. And we teach them to analyze societal issues through a wide range of perspectives. We are not policymakers or experts in global affairs. Therefore, it is rare that Andover will issue a statement on societal events that do not directly impact the school's mission."



KATE RODGERS/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

On October 16, flyers were distrubuted across Paresky Commons Tables regarding the cancelation of the student protest.

Acknowledging Andover's pledge to political neutrality, Miriam Villanueva, Instructor in History and Social Science, suggested that Andover can foster political discourse without breaking its policy. She explained the importance of teaching students how to properly engage in political discourse.

"[Andover] can still maintain neutrality while offering programming for students to learn beyond the classroom," wrote Villanueva in an email to *The Phillipian*.

She added, "Andover is a school with a history of preparing future presidents, ambassadors, politicians, and world leaders. It should be its prerogative to give students spaces and dedicated programming to engage in research and dialogue on local, national, and international crises, issues, and events. Otherwise, students will be ill-equipped to lead as informed global citizens. A more immediate consequence of disengagement is that students will turn to the internet — a cesspool of unverified misinformation — rather than peers and faculty to process challenging political discourse and world affairs."

The Civil Discourse and Political Activity policies, added to the Blue Book on September 23, 2024, outlines the procedure for dealing with campus demonstrations. The section states that students who express political beliefs through "demonstrations" are "required to comply with any requests or restrictions from the Academy or public officials, including but not limited to the instruction to disassemble, remove positives, or relocate off campus."

Within several hours of posting the protest notices, Handschin was asked to speak with several campus administrators on the impending demonstration. Handschin recalled that "alternative avenues" for political discourse — such as clubs, forums, and talking to campus adults — were suggested.

"That conversation, that invitation to talk to me, was very much with constructive intent. Neither party was attempting to completely shut down the protest without a conversation, [which] was mostly just about why I hadn't pursued alternative avenues of change-making at Andover," said Handschin.

"There was certainly a disagreement there in how effective the medium of nonviolent protest is. I definitely had some questions about who really benefited from me choosing or opting for those alternate pathways of change-making first," said Handschin. "I felt that part of the thought behind the protest was holding an administration accountable for a year of very imperceptible action towards an issue that is incredibly important and, frankly, unignorable, right?"

As someone who thought that Andover needed to promote more spaces for political discourse, Robinson thought that the protest was sending a "really good message." However, he recalled a range of opinions on the protest.

"From what I heard, [and] how it was going to be carried out, it sounded like it would be really peaceful and organized. A few people would be speaking and giving their views on a certain thing. But I also can understand the other side where it gets out of control," said Robinson. "Others were scared that it would bring more harm."

Aquita Winslow, Dean of the Office of Community and Multicultural Development (CaMD), is one faculty member who talked with Handschin about the proposed demonstration. Winslow emphasized the importance of exploring other paths of political discourse before holding a demonstration. She added that another reason to cancel the protest was to protect students who could be at risk, such as "visa-carrying students." When asked about specific safety or institutional concerns, she declined to provide any specifics on the record.

"If you want to do any kind of a protest or a rally, let's think about who is going to bear the brunt of that conversation or that decision. If it's just me as an individual, I'm making a choice for myself. That's one thing. But if I'm making a choice that will have a ripple effect and hit other students, I have to think about that," said Winslow.

She added, "[It's important] to think about the impact that whatever we do is going to have on not just ourselves, but other individuals. If I get up and say something, are you, as a visa-carrying student, going to be impacted by that? If [Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)] comes here, is that going to impact students? I have to think about that."

After various discussions with Winslow and International Student Coordinator Reverend Gina Finnochiaro, Handschin agreed to cancel the protest. Despite thinking it unlikely that a peaceful protest with "no disruptive intention" could have called such attention to Andover, she mentioned the importance of acknowledging the possibility.

"It is of utmost importance that the vulnerable population, or the vulnerable demographics of Andover, are protected and feel safe in coming here. I would hate to do something that would jeopardize that or put anyone in danger. At the same time, recognizing that fact is a terrifying thing to do, because it means that US democracy has deteriorated to a point where free speech is no longer protected. If there can be no protest, there has to be a recognition of why there can be no protest," said Handschin.

To raise awareness about the protest's cancellation, Handschin distributed a poster on Thursday, October 16 with the following statement: "the Friday protest will not be taking place, [because] certain student groups at Andover may be put at risk for political attacks from the Trump Administration. Simply by attending or being caught nearby. Silencing free speech through threats and political intimidation is a hallmark of fascism. This is not a democracy. Speak up."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on November 7, 2025.

Winter Term in Review

SARAH SUN & NICCOLO LEE-SUK

This year's Winter Term saw a myriad of developments, including a slew of policy changes, extreme weather, and a student demonstration. Additionally, Head of School (HOS) Raynard Kington announced that his tenure would end at the conclusion of the 2026–2027 school year.

In early December, the Dean of Studies Office introduced a new policy to mitigate the condensed scheduling of major assignments during the period between Fall and Winter Breaks. The policy designated days that certain departments were prohibited from assigning assessments worth more than 10% of the term grade or in-class assessments with a duration above 20 minutes. Several students expressed appreciation for the policy's alleviation of academic stress.

Following Winter Break, the Dean of Students Office relocated from the ground floor to the second floor of George Washington Hall (GW), following the opening of office spaces in the renovated Graves Hall. Dean of Students and Residential Life Susan Esty and students shared hopes that freeing office spaces in GW would allow it to become a more student-focused area in the future. Ongoing renovations include the Peabody Institute of Archeology, which is temporarily situated in the former Dean of Students Office, and the Tang Theater, scheduled to reopen in January 2027.

In early January, the History and Social Science Department implemented a new, standardized policy for academic dishonesty, replacing its previous case-by-case evaluation. Confirmed violations now incur a 50% point deduction, with a possible redo that would average out with the failing grade at instructor discretion. For unconfirmed violations, the student would redo the assignment. The department also began requiring students to complete assignments on Google Docs shared with their instructors.

The week of January 12 saw Andover's Mixed Heritage Awareness week programming hosted by MOSAIC, including a campus visit from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tessa Hulls, who spoke about her experiences navigating Chinese and American identity. Then, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Mexican-American astronaut José Hernández spoke at All-School Meeting, recounting his difficult yet rewarding journey to NASA and encouraging students to persist through adversity. His visit was a request of multiple Andover students, according to Aquita Winslow, Dean of Community and Multicultural Development.

Since last spring, Andover's Senior administration has worked to create a "Student Safety and Risk-Reduction Plan." According to Amy Patel, Dean of Health and Wellness, this plan centers around environmental risk reduction, which resulted in installing netting, reducing access to certain buildings, security monitors, and limiting student access to medicine. Additionally, it involves efforts to address student well-being through faculty training and statistical patterns. Senior administrators have been communicating with the JED Foundation in the plan's development.

This winter's weather was record-breaking. On the morning of January 7, students awoke to an email from Esty regarding an ice storm the night before, postponing the start of certain classes. The thirty-sixth Head of School Day (HOSD) was announced for Monday, January 26, and coincided with a severe snowstorm. There were restrictions on sign-in times, day excuses, car permissions, and food deliveries, and several facilities had restricted hours, leading some students to express dissatisfaction about HOSD's timing. A second storm led to the cancellation of in-person classes on Monday, February 23, the first snow day since 2015; classes operated asynchronously or met virtually.

On January 30, Kington announced that he will step down as HOS at the end of the 2026–2027 academic year. In a letter to the Andover community, he described his journey to Andover and included photos from his family history. The Board of Trustees has since commenced the search process for the 17th HOS.

In early February, Andover announced plans to implement Khanmigo, an artificial intelligence-powered teaching software developed by Khan Academy, into classes beginning in Spring term. Dean of Studies Caroline Odden described Khanmigo as a tool designed to prompt critical thinking rather than provide direct answers. According to Director of Technology for Educational Initiatives Erin McCloskey, Kington was also interested in acknowledging inequities in access to private tutors through Khanmigo. Its arrival as other AI tools are being used by students raises questions about their impact on student learning.

In an email to the student body on February 13, Esty announced updates to campus safety and security. Exterior cameras were installed at Route 28 and campus entrances and exits, audio systems were added to classrooms and common spaces to allow for broadcast messages, and landline phones were added to dorms. Esty also outlined plans to add gates that restrict access to campus for non-Academy members during certain times of the day.

During seventh period on February 13, over 100 students participated in a sit-in demonstration on the steps of Samuel Phillips Hall to protest recent actions by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Organized by Kristen Ma '27 and Vivi Plouffe '27, the demonstration featured posters, music, and speeches. Classes continued as scheduled, and students who missed class received unexcused absences. Commenting on the sit-in and broader discussions of current events on campus, Associate Head of School for Equity, Inclusion and Wellness Linda Carter Griffith encouraged students to form coalitions and communicate their concerns and wishes with both administrators and faculty.

History and Social Science Department Implements New Standardized Academic Integrity Violation Response

JOHN KIM & TRAVIS GUAN

The History and Social Science Department has implemented a new standard response to academic integrity violations since the start of winter term, and is now requiring students to complete out-of-class projects on Google Docs, according to Keri Lambert, Chair of the History and Social Science Department.

Generally, a 50 percent grade penalty is incurred for a confirmed academic integrity violation on a major graded assessment. If there is time left in the term for a rewrite, the student may redo the assignment at the discretion of the teacher and chair, that new grade being averaged with the initial 50 percent mark. A student with multiple confirmed academic integrity violations may receive a lower mark; if an academic integrity violation cannot be confirmed or ruled out, the student will redo the assignment or complete a modified version.

In an email to *The Phillipian,* Lambert explained why the department has adopted the grading aspect of this policy, noting that it provides a more standardized response to academic integrity violations across the department.

"Previously, when a student was found to have committed an academic integrity violation, the relevant assignment generally received a grade penalty, but it could vary from case to case. We also did not have a departmental policy around whether or not the student would need to redo the assignment. [This] opened the door to variability and bias in a way that made many instructors uncomfortable. By standardizing our approach and making the policy known, we want students to be able to trust that all infractions—across [History] sections and instructors—will be treated uniformly," wrote Lambert.

Benjamin Levchin '28 thought the specific amount of penalization was fair, noting that it balances grace and forcefulness.

"[The penalty] is positive in that it is a relatively good punishment. It doesn't tank your grade entirely as it's not a zero, but it is very clearly a bad thing, and it could give you a space to redo it and maybe bring it up to about a 75," said Levchin.

Adam Sealfon '29, on the other hand, viewed the policy as not severe enough.

"The penalty should be lowered to something like a 25. Which means [that], yes, it's a deeper fail, but also it says 'Don't do this again. Here's why this is what happened when you did use it,' so the effects last longer in your head," said Sealfon.

Regarding Google Docs, students must now share a link to their document with editing access to their teacher. In an email to *The Phillipian*, Caroline Odden, Dean of Studies and Instructor in Physics, noted that this usage of Google Docs also applies to various other departments, including STEM subjects. Odden further elaborated on the usefulness of the policy.

"This is a great approach — in fact, I use it myself in STEM courses. Asking students to use documents with version histories allows instructors to offer students feedback on their entire writing process while also having the benefit of allowing instructors to check that students are doing their own writing. In the age of AI, it is so tempting for students to use AI tools to generate writing, even when they are not allowed to do so. When that happens, students miss out on important learning opportunities," wrote Odden.

Lambert emphasized that the work of the History and Social Science department in facilitating student-driven work is not done, especially with the advent and development of Artificial Intelligence; she further noted that part of this includes facilitating a mindset shift on the students' part.

"Moving forward, in the face of a changing tech landscape, [History and Social Science] teachers will be collaboratively thinking through how we might adapt our teaching and assessment practices to help students feel confident that their own human-generated ideas are far stronger and more valuable than bot-produced content," wrote Lambert.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on January 16, 2026.

53 Percent of SOTA Respondents Believe that "Reverse Racism" Exists, An Increase from 2024's 34 Percent

MICHAEL KAWOOYA & KATHERINE RODGERS

In the 2025 State of the Academy survey, 53 percent of respondents indicated that they believe that "white people can experience racism," colloquially known as reverse racism. This was an increase from 2024's 34.4 percent. In previous years, the figure has ranged from 31.6 percent to 34.4 percent.

Andover's Blue Book defines racism as "a system of oppression involving subordination of members of targeted racial groups by those who have relatively more social power. This subordination occurs at the individual, cultural, and institutional levels."

Students interviewed suspected various factors may have led to an increase in this year's reverse racism statistic, ranging from fewer conversations about race-related topics in some campus settings, to social media influences. Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, Linda Carter Griffith, Associate Head of School for Equity, Inclusion, and Wellness, declined to be interviewed. Director of Empathy, Balance, and Inclusion (EBI) Brigitte Leschhorn didn't respond to a request for an interview.

According to several EBI teaching assistants from the class of 2024, EBI classes have previously centered discussions on reverse racism, and other lessons relating to race relations and identity. Additional topics included microaggressions, implicit bias, racism, sexual identity, and rape culture.

Former EBI Senior Tina Zeng '24 wrote in an email to *The Phillipian,* "During my time as both an EBI student and teacher, facets of identity like race, gender, or class were topics we discussed at some length. These conversations were imperfect, but I still believe they were absolutely foundational to the development of mutual respect and understanding."

Current EBI Senior Sami Tokat '26 spoke about this year's curriculum, highlighting how EBI has evolved throughout his time at Andover.

"My first two years of EBI were focused on taking on issues directly. Now that I see the side of a teaching assistant, we talk about covert forms of injustice in a much more indirect way. As an EBI Senior, we've talked about communication and relationships. We've talked about how identity can play into building these relationships and what to do when those boundaries are crossed. We aim to have students bring up these topics, as opposed to [EBI Seniors] being like, 'Today, this is what we're talking about. What do you think," said Tokat.

Zeng emphasized the importance of discussions around systemic barriers. She also shared her appreciation for the tools EBI offered her to discuss complicated topics.

"There are a million different topics EBI could encompass, and choosing which to cover will always be a difficult process. Still, systems of injustice are key to include, because EBI is also one of the spaces where students can cover them more thoroughly. Empathy is fundamentally a skill that we develop through learning about others' perspectives, struggles, and experiences. That means studying racism, implicit bias, sexual orientation, ability, and all these topics that we need to relate to each other thoughtfully. We don't avoid systemic barriers by not learning about them, we simply become uncritical parts of the problem. Throughout high school and beyond, I was always glad to have the language to discuss these issues," wrote Zeng in an email to *The Phillipian.*

Mac Strong '27 shared her personal views on why the reverse racism statistic may have increased. Strong also urged Andover to equip their students with the tools to navigate today's media landscape.

"The majority of children [get] their news from Instagram. You're getting all of this misinformation spread to you, and then you start to believe that reverse racism actually does exist, which is not a thing at all," said Strong.

She continued, "Andover is supposed to be a leader in education, and take all these already really intelligent people and equip them for the modern world. But we're not teaching students how to research well in this era. Obviously use '.org,' or whatever. But how do you research when so much is AI driven, or when so much of the news is completely to the left or right and extremist."

Olivia Isacson '26 raised concerns around students' limited exposure to varying perspectives. She urged Andover to help students process what they encounter online and in conversations around difficult topics, distinguishing between opinion and fact.

"When you're never confronted with varying perspectives, you're never able to challenge your own beliefs, so you go way more to the extreme. I think this is especially the case with teenagers," said Isacson.

She continued, "Andover creates an isolated bubble where we think the issues that are happening in the United States and worldwide don't affect us, but they do. We're seeing it on our For You pages, on Instagram, on YouTube, and we don't know how to process [that] information. It's really important for us to have teachers that guide us through it. There's a distinction between teachers sharing their opinion versus resources and actual facts."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on January 16, 2026.

Senior Administration Details Andover's "Student Safety and Risk-Reduction Plan"

STAFF REPORT

Last Spring, the campus community lost Lucas Lee '25 to suicide. Since then, Andover's Senior administration has met every other Monday, working to create a "Student Safety and Risk-Reduction Plan."

Amy Patel, Dean of Health and Wellness, gave an overview of the senior administration's postvention plans. She described the necessity of implementing postvention after administrators had time to formulate a systematic response.

"Every organization should have a postvention. It's for when something tragic happens, often a death. It could be a death for any reason, but it's typically thought of in a setting of death by suicide. But it's a plan, because you've got to be systematic," said Patel.

Patel continued, "There's a ton of research and evidence about what ways you can respond to reduce further risk in a community and be most supportive. Then there's also a ton of data, unfortunately, that's been acquired about some steps that can increase risk at a very vulnerable time for a community. We didn't have one in place. One of many things that we needed to do once there was a little bit of time after the Spring Term was to document what did we do? Where was there maybe an opportunity to do anything better?"

Patel elaborated on the student safety and risk-reduction plan, which centers around environmental risk reduction. This resulted in the netting installation in various campus locations, and the new policy limiting student access to medicine.

"The second document is a Student Safety and Risk-Reduction Plan. It's everything from environmental risk reduction, netting [in] stairwells, but also supervision in particular places, maybe reducing access to certain buildings, security monitors," said Patel.

Patel continued, "It's also medication and substances. That's medication, but also drugs and alcohol. What training do we need to do for our adults? How do we support students accessing universal screens? And then substance prevention education."

Among those involved in planning are Head of School Raynard Kington, Deputy Head of School Merrilee Mardon, Patel, and Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life.

Kington and Mardon declined to interview individually, but agreed to a group interview with *The Phillipian*, alongside Chief Communications Officer Tracy Sweet. Esty declined to interview.

Mardon stated that training for faculty has been part of the risk-reduction planning. This Friday, Andover invited Ellen Utley, psychiatrist and JED Foundation Boarding School Consultant, to the faculty meeting.

"[The] Columbia [Lighthouse Project] came in the fall. That was more about normalizing the idea that you could ask somebody how they're doing and that you could also ask, 'Do you feel like hurting yourself?'" said Mardon. "This training, we're working closely with Dr. Ellen Utley... She's going to do the training [about] how adults ask questions in ways that reach students, because sometimes students can shy away from adults, so we need to build that habit."

Patel detailed how the Senior administration has been able to track patterns in student behavior and wellness with the school's new medication policy.

"That was one of the things we thought we could update and align to what has now become more of the standard in schools, which is more close monitoring, an opportunity for connection to do a dose-by-dose check-in with students. It doesn't take a long time, being able to proactively identify when something isn't going well or if there's a side effect or if somebody ran out of meds or if they lost them. That is generally the goal... to be able to have bi-directional communication with students who are taking medication," said Patel.

Patel continued, "We can see what percentage of students have picked up their medications on time and which ones have not. We could, on an individual basis, figure out what patterns there are. If a student is noticing that they're having a harder time with a particular health issue, we can very easily look back and figure out, what's your compliance rate been in terms of taking the medication?"

According to Mardon, the risk-reduction plan aims to create forums where students, department chairs, and administrators can discuss academics and student well-being at Andover.

"This is my third year [here]. I've heard frequently from students that they wish they had more meaningful contact with adults, and they'd like to have more contact with department chairs, for example, and to just be in conversation about their learning and program... I know the department chairs know about it," said Mardon.

Chloe Song '26 noted how campus culture fixates on academic and extracurricular excellence. She noted how increased contact between students and department chairs could help students navigate Andover's high-stress environment.

"Andover is definitely a pressure cooker. It's really hard for a lot of students in terms of mental health. That's just a part of the culture, and having everything on your plate leaves you susceptible to mental health struggles," said Song.

Song continued, "Students would get really involved in [forums]. And maybe that could help facilitate a more positive culture around academic pressure and academic performance. I could see that becoming a part of Andover's student culture. But it needs to be ingrained for it to make a difference... Because ultimately, at the end of the day, what causes so much mental struggle for a lot of students is the pressure to do everything."

Song acknowledged that limited explicit communication about risk-reduction measures, such as the netting, has generated criticism among the student body.

"All of a sudden, there's netting in the Gelb [Science Center] and you're like, 'what?' Then you draw the quick connection, and you're like, 'maybe they should have said something about it.' You feel surprised [that] that was their response after a tough Spring Term last year. The problem was the lack of communication. Maybe with communication... there wouldn't have been as much criticism," said Song.

Sweet raised concerns that formally communicating about the netting would isolate the netting installation from the rest of the school's risk-reduction measures.

"I do see this as a broader strategic approach. Our next communication to the community would be most valuable with everything stitched together so people can really understand how it relates. We're not isolating something like netting... It's that and so much more. I wouldn't want the community to misunderstand that as a central focus," said Sweet.

Kington expressed uncertainty about future plans to formally communicate about the netting.

"We were already in the process of consulting with outside experts, JED, to see if it made sense to do it now, after the fact," said Kington.

"We communicated through [*The Phillipian*'s October 10] article, ['Netting Installed in Several Campus Buildings']. The changes have already occurred. I don't know if there's added value now in clarifying why we did it," said Kington. "It's a complicated question, how much you say [and] when."

Acknowledging the sensitive nature of the situation, Willow Wright '26 suggested that certain risk-reduction measures may appear less purposeful without explanation.

"The level of communication [is interesting] because they obviously are choosing to communicate some things over others. With the netting, it's assumed that we understand why it's there. That glosses over some of the purpose of why it's there. It can be taken as unimportant, without knowing some of the reasoning and completely understanding why those protocols are in place. I know that [the administration doesn't] want to draw attention to events, which is difficult," said Wright. "When they do have a solid plan, it'll be useful to inform people."

Patel emphasized the administration's commitment to carrying out its various risk-reduction measures.

"It's important to know that [risk-reduction] is a multifaceted plan. This is not new and it's not going away. The emphasis is on making sure that everybody on this campus is involved in the well-being of our students and our community," said Patel.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on January 23, 2026.

Head of School Raynard Kington Announces End of Tenure in 2027

ANGELA GUO & STELLA SEONG

Head of School (HOS) Raynard Kington announced last Friday that he will conclude his tenure at the end of June 2027. The Board of Trustees has also begun the search for the next HOS as Kington continues to implement ongoing institutional initiatives.

When asked about the factors and considerations behind his decision, Kington said the timing of the announcement was shaped by both personal reflection and logistical coordination with the Board of Trustees.

"It's always a complicated decision... largely driven by the board once decisions are made in order to give sufficient time for [the] search. Obviously, the board is very supportive of a number of initiatives that are ongoing and wanted to make sure there's enough time to do those things," said Kington.

He continued, "I will quote my father, 'To everything there is a season, and the time for every purpose under the heavens.'"

Looking ahead to his remaining 18 months, Kington said much of his focus will be on advancing initiatives that have emerged from the school's roadmapping process, which evaluates Andover's academic, residential, and co-curricular systems.

"There are a whole series of proposals coming out of the roadmapping process, the Learning Steering Committee, related to ninth-grade dorms and advising, the structure of the dorm system, the faculty work model. We're having an athletics review," said Kington.

When asked what success on these initiatives would look like in his final months, Kington framed the time period as a continuation of his leadership.

"I've been consistent throughout my career in focusing on the work I have to do to help an institution thrive. I see this as no different. I will do the work I'm supposed to do until the last day that I'm here," said Kington.

The search for Andover's next Head of School has also begun, and will be overseen by the Board of Trustees. Amy Falls, President of the Board of Trustees, said the board is in the process of forming a search committee.

"I could imagine sometime in the next three to four weeks, [there] could be an announcement about who's leading the committee, [what] the composition will be. [The committee] has historically included faculty. But a majority of trustees," said Falls.

The board will work with the search firm Carney, Sandoe & Associates to solicit nominations and conduct outreach across the Andover community. Falls outlined a tentative timeline for how the search will proceed over the coming year.

"The board [does] a big listening tour, [trying] to put together a sense of what the right next Head would [be]. You would expect to have an announcement sometime in the October, November time frame next year to the whole world. You also have open platforms for people to nominate. The search firm will have a place, usually it's a website or they just take email. And by April, you've got a job description that's posted, and then the search committee spends April, May, June, July, working very hard to meet. The whole goal would be that a person who is really happily employed at a great institution can give them close to an academic years' notice. The search committee does the work, comes down to two or three finalists, and the board votes. The search firm will help interview lots of constituents, so they'll want to come to campus and talk to faculty," said Falls.

Falls said the board also plans to solicit community input as part of the search process, including feedback from students.

"They want to talk to some cohort of students to feel what the students think. A good search is also a moment to reflect as a community where we are and where we want to go... I vaguely remember sitting in [Paresky] Commons at an open table and students could just come talk. That's one way that works pretty well. I could imagine surveys...

But, yes, there will be an intentional effort to get a broad based understanding of what students think," said Falls.

Kington said he will remain deliberately removed from the selection process. He added that he does not plan an extended or highly public departure.

"One responsibility that is unambiguously the board's is selecting and hiring the [HOS]

so that the outgoing person doesn't unduly influence the selection of the next person. I'm going to have more than an arm's length between me and the process," said Kington.

Kington continued, "I'm not one for a long goodbye... Leaving will be on my terms and it's going to be low-key. I'm going to literally pack up stuff, close the door, turn off the lights, and have a clean desk for the next Head."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on February 6, 2026.

Novel Improvements to Campus Safety Announced in School-Wide Email

KRISTEN MA & SAKETH LINGISETTY

In an email to the student body last Friday, Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, announced significant enhancements to campus safety that are underway. The changes include the continued installation of audio devices in classrooms, the implementation of exterior cameras on buildings, and the establishment of gates along pedestrian-heavy roads. These measures are intended to mitigate both recent safety concerns and cumulative ones that have arisen over the years.

Campus safety measures have been continuously added, altered, and retracted over the years to accommodate the needs of the Academy. Mark Leonard, Director of Campus Safety, elaborated on previously implemented security measures and explained the planning for additional regulations.

"The good thing that came out of [COVID-19] was we were able to make sure the buildings remained locked during the day. No one could just walk into an academic building and not have a badge... If we put the card access system to lock down, nobody's card will work, so we can lock the exterior of the buildings down immediately. A step further building on that was [putting] locks on every classroom... If you study active shooter incidents in schools across the country, an active shooter has never really breached a locked classroom," said Leonard.

Leonard continued, "As new buildings come along, we're enhancing the video camera coverage outside and inside those buildings from a safety and security standpoint. We've enhanced the number of cameras on the exterior and in certain interior spaces as well, balancing privacy and things like that. Some of the camera coverage in buildings might be a little lacking. Recognizing that, we're currently in the process of adding more cameras to mostly exterior spaces, like along Chapel Ave, [or] other areas on campus where we feel camera coverage would be important."



KELVIN MA/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

The institution of the cell phone policy this academic year has underscored the need to improve communication in emergency situations. Esty elaborated on the reasoning behind establishing landline phones in house counselor apartments and dorm common rooms.

"We had this sense of security, which maybe is a little false sense of security, that as long as I have my phone I'm safe, when in fact, when we had the gas explosions years ago, the phone lines were so busy that we couldn't make calls out. In a true crisis, sometimes the usual channels of communication don't work too because of the chaos and all the people trying to use the network at once. So, it's important to always be thinking about what are the things we could improve upon," said Esty.

Recognizing Andover's open campus, Ellah Kotlarsky '27 felt that the ongoing measures provide an extra level of security necessary for handling emergencies. She stressed the importance of adapting safety measures from traditional schools in ways that work best for Andover.

"Since Andover's campus is so large and sprawling, we forget that it's a high school sometimes. Most high schools where I'm from are a lot more tight and secure than this. Unfortunately, there is always the danger of an emergency situation in this place, so I appreciate that they're taking these measures," said Kotlarsky. "There's always the worry about safety. I completely understand why they would make an effort to have these measures, especially with everything that's going on related to violence on school campuses. There's always a risk."

One of the primary changes to campus will be the installation of gates along campus roads which will restrict access for non-Academy members during certain times of the day. These locations include Chapel Avenue, Fieldhouse Road, Great Quad Road, and Old Campus Road. Leonard elaborated on the device students and faculty can register their vehicles with to gain entry to these gates.

"It's a simple device in their vehicle that could open the gate. As the vehicle approaches, it would recognize that this vehicle is allowed to pass through, and the gate would raise automatically.

Say a faculty member is returning back to campus at 8 p.m., 9 p.m. at night. They would be able to have the gate open automatically by having that very inexpensive device that would be in their car, like the transponders that people have on their windshields. Not something that big, just something very small that would be able to communicate remotely or as a vehicle approaches to let it know this vehicle is allowed through here to make it as least impactful and least invasive as possible," said Leonard.

Maya Tomlinson '28 considered this implementation an essential measure to improve campus security. Weighing its potential advantages and disadvantages, she discussed how the gates would benefit safety at the cost of convenience.

"At my old school, we had a gating system. It prevented people from getting in or out who were undesirable, but it didn't really impact student life... I was a little shocked when I got here that there weren't gates because that means anyone can drive in and be fine. That said, [they] would prevent rental cars like airport pickups, and parents visiting, especially if they don't have a car permission sticker. And delivery drivers, how are they going to get in? How am I going to get my DoorDash? That doesn't make sense. But generally, it's a good idea," said Tomlinson.

Guetty Moita '26 conveyed a contrasting opinion of the gate installation, citing a concern that Andover may begin to appear more closed-off to external communities with this addition.

"I have conflicting notions about how Andover in some ways can become a bubble if you have certain things like completely locking the campus off to other people or having gates and otherwise. While there are significant benefits in regards to safety, if that were to be the case, there should be greater occurrences of community engagement such that Andover isn't just its own bubble walled off from the greater community," said Moita.

Moita continued, "It would be good if, alongside having gates that seclude campus, there were stronger forms of community engagement so the bond between the community and the school isn't completely severed. Maintaining safety for students and faculty is very important, but it's about seeing how to do that in a way that's tasteful."

Henry He '26 reflected on some of the measures currently in place to enforce campus safety. In particular, he expressed the need for training procedures to equip students with the knowledge to handle certain types of emergencies.

"In terms of emergency drills, we have a fire drill early on, but at my old school, we would always have lockdown drills and fire drills at the start of the year, and we don't have that here, so I feel like we're not educated in terms of what to do during a lockdown drill versus an active shooter drill or anything like that," said He. "If there were more safety concerns, drills and education would never hurt."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on February 20, 2026.

Students Participate in Anti-ICE Sit-In Demonstration

STAFF REPORT

Over 100 students gathered on the steps of Samuel Phillips Hall (SamPhil) last Friday during 7th period for a sit-in demonstration. Organized by Kristen Ma '27 and Vivi Plouffe '27, the demonstration was held in response to recent actions by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. Attendees held up hand-drawn posters, listened to music, and gave speeches to express their beliefs on current events.

As the demonstration took place during a scheduled class period, Dean of Studies Caroline Odden explained the guidance to faculty regarding attendance and graded work.

"The administration advised faculty to hold class, take attendance, and refrain from moving assessments scheduled for 7th period on Friday. Because this event was planned during 7th period rather than the unscheduled time, students who had 7th period and wanted to attend the protest had to consider some tradeoffs," wrote Odden in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Plouffe said that she and Ma envisioned the demonstration not only as a response to ICE, but also as a way to consolidate student support and demonstrate the feasibility of coordinated action on campus.

"We wanted to draw together student support for the cause of ICE brutality over the past year. We wanted to gather a community of students that care very deeply about this issue. We also wanted to illustrate that it actually is very possible, to hold a protest and to organize students, because there are a lot of like-minded people in this community who just don't have the opportunities together. And we were aware of Andover's prominence within the NEPSAC schools, and we were hoping that it could have a spillover effect onto other schools to recognize the importance of showing student support," said Plouffe.

Ma said she and Plouffe opened the sit-in by framing the issue as one of human rights and moral responsibility rather than partisan politics.

"With this protest, we tried our best to keep politics out of it and frame it as a human rights issue. We wanted our students and our faculty to make a statement of care because there are students in our community that are impacted by this. We have faculty that are from Lawrence, we have students that are from Lawrence. And so it was very imperative that [we], as a boarding school, take a stand on things that we believe are morally incorrect," said Ma.

Plouffe added that the idea for a demonstration had been in discussion since October, and gained renewed momentum in the wake of national walkouts.

"We have been thinking about and planning a protest for many months, starting in October, but we started more closely workshopping this specific one a few weeks ago, following the storm of walkouts across the country. We wanted to make sure that the community was safe, and we believed that a walkout was a more peaceful and toned-down version," said Plouffe.

Ma elaborated on the intentionality of the sit-in's format and timing during class hours. She pointed to both historical precedent on campus and her and Plouffe's belief that protest should require a personal stake.

"On [Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK)] Day, Vivian and I both heard a lot of praise, the school administration was really lauding Brian Gittens 1989 protest to have MLK Day on. In addition, we wanted, very importantly, that this would be a walkout that would cost students a cut because we believe that protest is something that you must have some sort of stake in. We were very adamant about having students skip their 7th period. You have to relinquish something to advocate for something, especially with regard to something like human rights. And so that was the direction that we took," said Ma.

Jason Cai '28, who helped distribute flyers, explained his reasoning for attending.

"I felt like it was a matter of obligation rather than a matter of having a choice in the matter because, to me, it was essentially a question of: are you willing to take one cut, or are you willing to just skip seventh period to communicate that this campus cares about the people who are dying on the streets? So the obvious question to that answer, at least to me, [was] yes. It wasn't a matter of heroism and I didn't feel like I was going above and beyond by attending, but more like I was performing a duty that I had. To me, sacrificing or skipping one period is almost negligible," said Cai.



KELVIN MA/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Attendees held posters at the sit-in demonstration to express their beliefs on current events.

During the sit-in, a group of faculty members gathered on the side of the steps in support. Eliot Davenport, Instructor in Philosophy and Religious Studies, explained why he invited his 7th period class to attend the protest with him.

"I wanted to go support the students who were at the protest. So, I said that any students who wanted to go with me were welcome to come with me, and any students who wanted to stay and have class, I had a solo activity that they could be doing. Protest always comes with real-world consequences. To protest, sometimes [you] are putting your body on the line, sometimes you're missing work. Getting an unexcused absence is a very low-stakes but real consequence. I told the students that, and I [said], if you don't want an unexcused absence, you're welcome to stay here. Every single one of them came to the protest. We all walked over together," said Davenport.

Olivia Isacson '26, founder and president of the Current Events Club, gave a speech at the demonstration. She highlighted the significance of maintaining awareness of events outside of the Andover bubble.

"What I loved and I found so meaningful was that cutting class and just sitting together was just a symbol of solidarity in our community. I was able to speak to people I haven't spoken to all year [and] communicate with teachers. It was a moment to take a break in our busy and overwhelming Andover lives just to be in community and think about the world around us. We can change [our] community mindset, and it speaks to a larger issue that too often we're so busy and we forget to think about others. We forget to think about the broader implications of our work," said Isacson.

Last Thursday evening, teachers in the History Department led an open forum to answer questions on current events. Eric Denby, Instructor in History and a member of the panel, elaborated on the importance of creating further opportunities for facilitated discussions on campus.

"There's absolutely a need for more forums in which students can discuss in a civil way what's going on in the world and how to understand it. That's one of the reasons why the History Department has attempted to offer a couple of these panel discussions and forums. [On] Thursday, about 120 [students showed up], and we have more planned. As long as there are historians and faculty colleagues who are willing to do these types of events, I'm going to try to plan more with them," said Denby.

Associate Head of School for Equity, Inclusion, and Wellness Linda Carter-Griffith encouraged students to form coalitions and communicate with administration and faculty.

"I definitely want it to be known that we are looking for students to come forward. As an adult in this community, my goal is not to influence you about what you need to protest about or care about. My goal here is to help facilitate: what's the information you need, what's the awareness [we need to address]? So what I'm looking forward to doing is bringing in more folks [to speak] on some of the controversial and difficult topics that we're addressing. I know what some of [the topics] are, based on the questions I heard [at the History Panel] on Thursday. I want students working with students. It should not be an administrators-led matter...So my desire is that students who were standing [up] for any of the issues that were presented [at the protest] consider coalition building," said Griffith.

Griffith continued, "I really encourage students to reach out to teachers. It doesn't have to just be administrators. If you're interested in bringing a speaker, if you're interested in putting something together, there's the Abbot Grants, there is the Speaker's Committee, which I do coordinate. And so, come by and talk, come with a friend, to have a conversation. Consider it. If we can create some spaces to better learn what's on students' minds, I'm all for it."

Aquita Winslow, Dean of Community and Multicultural Development, and Gina Finocchiaro, International Student Coordinator and Protestant Chaplain, declined to interview.

Editor's Note: Kristen Ma is a News Editor for The Phillipian. *None of the News Editors were involved in the reporting or writing of this article. This article originally ran on February 20, 2026.*

Winter Storm Prompts Cancellation of In-Person Classes

SAKETH LINGISETTY

Blizzard-like conditions brought by a winter storm caused the cancellation of in-person classes on Monday for the first time since 2015. Teachers provided instruction via Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or asynchronously, while athletics and off-campus events were cancelled for the day, according to Susan Esty, Dean of Students.

In an email sent to the campus community on Sunday, Esty outlined several other changes, including barring day students from traveling to campus and closing the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library (OWHL) and all athletic facilities for the day. In coordinating the response, a campus 'Storm Team' comprising administrators across several departments — including Facilities, Campus Safety, and Human Resources — had convened Sunday morning, according to Caroline Odden, Dean of Studies.

For Paul Murphy '84, Instructor in Mathematics, the decision to cancel classes made sense given the storm's circumstances. He noted that such a cancellation remained uncommon, considering Andover's residential nature.

"Usually, we don't take time off for bad weather, even with a lot of snow. We've definitely had days when the town of Andover canceled school but we did not... We're essentially a small town on the hill, and everyone is in high school, so getting to class normally isn't difficult. But this felt like one of those storms where we might consider not having classes because of the timing and the winds. Not that it was dangerous to walk around, but it [became] difficult to get around," said Murphy.

Odden elaborated on the school's policy for weather-related events. She explained that Monday's decision was an exception to their default response rather than a rule.

"As a boarding school, we have many community members living on campus and a school year that is already short compared to many other schools. Therefore, our default is not to cancel classes for weather-related events. In this particular case, the scale and timing of the storm seemed to warrant the adjustments we made to classes. Every situation is different, so we do not have a standard solution," wrote Odden in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Andover's reluctance to cancel classes due to inclement weather meant that many students were caught off guard when the full scope of the storm became clear. Robert Budzinski '26 described his reaction upon reading Esty's email.

"I've been at the school for four years, and they've never canceled. They almost had to during the last snowstorm, but then they called a Head of School Day instead. I thought they might just do another Head of School Day or not cancel at all," said Budzinski.

The closure of certain buildings on campus was also unexpected for students. Allegra Lee '27 recounted heading outside during the storm only to encounter a change in her plans.

"I wasn't anticipating any of the buildings to shut down, and actually I remember even when the snowstorm was happening, I went outside still, because I had to go to [Paresky Commons] to eat food, and obviously that was open, but I also thought, 'Oh, maybe the Borden gym will be open,' but I went, and everything was locked," said Lee.

With the campus largely inaccessible, students navigated the day on their own terms. Lee noted a positive moment in the day despite the storm.

"Me and my friends did a call, and we were able to play some online games. We just played the Google Doodle ghost game and also the Spanish bingo card game on Google Doodle. It ended up being pretty fun, even though it was kind of tiring too," said Lee.

Hannah Jung '28 also found an unexpected positive, turning the day into an opportunity to reconnect with friends.

"I was able to spend my evening with a friend in Isham [House]... we had a long common room visitation, ate dinner together, and talked while doing work, which was nice because I hadn't caught up with her in a long time," said Jung.

The disruption to academics was managed on a course-by-course basis. Odden described the approaches faculty took to assess the needs of their students.

"Instructors were encouraged to adjust plans in ways that made sense for their courses. Since most assignments are collected through Canvas, it was reasonable for instructors to go ahead and collect those assignments. However, I did hear anecdotally that some instructors extended deadlines. In-class assessments tend to be less common on Mondays, but in cases where they were planned, instructors had to adjust in some way. We left decisions about how to adjust up to instructors, because they know best what makes sense in the context of their courses," wrote Odden.

Drawing on a similar disruption during this term's Head of School Day, Jung suggested that the school improve how updates on building availability are communicated to students in the future.

"It would be nice to have a more reliable source of information. Everyone was waiting to see when buildings would be available, and it was unreliable to go to PANet because a lot of students don't know where to find that information. I had friends checking every 30 minutes. They ended up posting on Instagram, but I know some people who don't have that social media, and it felt exclusionary. It would be nice next time to notify all students directly if athletic facilities or Falls are open and when they close in situations like that," said Jung.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on February 27, 2026.

Football Leadership Transition Begins with Ernie Adams Appointed Interim Football Coach

FELIX BRET

Ernie Adams '71 will be serving as Interim Head Football Coach for the 2026 season, marking the beginning of a broader restructuring of the football program and the head coaching role. The search for a full-time head football coach for the 2027 season onwards is underway.

In an email to Football players, Director of Athletics Lisa Joel, Dean of Faculty Ben Temple, and Assistant Head of School for Admission and Financial Aid Jim Ventre announced that the Head Football Coach position will be restructured into a full-time role with a "comprehensive focus on the football program, including year-round player development, practice and game preparation, strength and conditioning coordination, prospective player recruitment and support for college recruitment."

The role moves away from the traditional "triple threat" approach, in which head coaches also served as instructors, house counselors, or admissions officers. Ventre explained that Football's demands have grown beyond what that approach allows.

"It's very time-consuming to coach Football because there are elements of it that are unrelated to what happens in the game. Football requires a very steady and consistent recruiting strategy to get football players to come to Andover. Then they come and they play here with good coaching, and then they would like to play in college. And so, you need someone who can spend time recruiting, manage the day-to-day of the football's actual operations and coaching, and then someone who can help our players move on to college. [Football is] unique unto itself, [which] doesn't allow for someone who does multiple things at the school to have the same focus on what is required for football. And other schools that we play in our league, if you will, have moved to this model. And so, why should those student-athletes who come to Andover not have the same benefit of being recruited to come focus here?" said Ventre.

Football Co-Captain Thane McCormick '27 said he views the shift to a full-time head coaching model as a positive step for the program.

"It definitely steps up the program to another level where we're able to bring in a coach who is nationally recognized and who's going to come to Andover and see how Andover can be on the national level as a competitor," said McCormick.

Assistant Football Coach Christopher Powers pointed to similar leadership models already in place in other Andover athletic programs.

"In my opinion, what the school is thinking about is they already have done this with a couple other sports. There's a Director of Squash, right? And our Squash program has seen some really great success. There's a Director of Swimming, there's a Director of Rowing. And I think it's kind of the way independent schools are kind of shifting in [how] they look at their head coaching roles. So I think what this will allow the Director of Football and Head Coach to be able to do is spend more time developing the systems and the recruiting and then the college placement of our players," said Powers.

Ventre elaborated on the cultural and institutional significance of football on campus.

"I think all of us care deeply about the way our football program is perceived and the fact that we are embedded in developing a culture that is about character and strength of friendships... I will say there has been real success with the way our football program has evolved, where the students and their families care deeply about our program. And so, it goes to kind of the emphasis on football right now. It becomes important. It becomes important to those families and those students, and it's important to the school and the administration and athletics," said Ventre.

Prior to his appointment as Interim Head Coach, Adams served as football research director for the New England Patriots, contributing to six Super Bowl championships. He has worked with the Andover football program in the last four years, and served as linebackers coach last season. Adams reflected on both his time as a four-year student and his return to campus.

"[When I was here], I was the good kid who tried hard. I [wasn't] a real good player. But I was extremely interested in football. My senior year we had a PG who I ended up playing next to on the offensive line, Bill Belichick ['71]. So that's where we started our fifty five year friendship. I had a chance to learn from a great coach at Andover, Steve Sorota. Andover football was very important to me and I got blue blood flowing through my arteries," said Adams.

He continued, "[Being back has] been great. I always have a warm spot in my heart for anything Andover. Largely because students are wonderful to deal with. It's a lot of fun for me being on campus working with students. A lot of alumni do volunteer work for the school but I get to do the fun stuff: I actually get to work with a bunch of guys who are trying to do something hard and I try to help them."

Former Football Head Coach Trey Brown PG '12 will remain with the program as Assistant Coach. Football Co-Captain Scott Carmichael '27 reflected on Brown's legacy.

"Brown brought me to Andover. He's opened an immense amount of doors and he's coached me everyday with passion, integrity, and graciousness. He's really an amazing guy. He has an amazing reputation on campus. He leaves a reputation and a culture at Andover that is built upon pillars of family, strength, hard work, and integrity," said Carmichael.

The team and captains met with Adams earlier this week. Football Co-Captain Jun An '27 said Adams' familiarity with the program helped ease concerns about the transition.

"The most important thing is that the kids that have played on the team know who he is because he's been on the staff. A lot of the worries regarding the coaching change was that [the school] would bring someone that we didn't know. There's [anyway] going to be a new dynamic to the team but I really like the fact that it's someone that we all knew. And Coach Adams, is one of the most respected coaches in football. He worked with the Patriots. He knows what he's talking about," said An.

Adams shared that he is currently working on the scouting and recruitment process for next year's team, along with ensuring that the football team gets access to the turf field everyday during the fall for practice. Adams also discussed his views on his role as a head coach.

"My role as a coach is to give the players a good plan, and teach them how to execute it. My number one goal is to get the Andover team to play as close as possible to our maximum potential," said Adams.

Joel explained the search for a permanent head coach will follow a standard hiring timeline.

"The person who will step into the head coaching role for 2027, that's a long ways' away. So this is not something that people are going to see in the next couple of months. We'll put that out there and I expect there'll be a deep, deep amount of interest in this job. So we'll want to do a thorough job of vetting applicants and hopefully to name someone by the winter of [2026]," said Joel.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on February 27, 2026.

Spring Term in Review

HELEN XIONG & DINA NAMJOO

Spring Term saw student leadership transitions, institutional changes, and renewed conversations revolving around student voice. Andover piloted a new All-School Meeting (ASM) seating plan, progressed the Head of School (HOS) search process, announced the Board of Trustees' leadership transition, elected new Student Body Co-Presidents, and launched the Student Wellness Council. The term also saw Khanmigo enter classrooms and Seniors reflect on connection, growth, and legacy during Senior Remarks.

In an email to the student body on March 23, Chief of Staff and Assistant Head of School for Strategic Planning Dianne Domenech-Burgos announced a pilot ASM seating plan organized by advising groups. Under the plan, Juniors, Uppers, and Seniors would sit in Cochran Chapel (Chapel), while Lowers would watch the livestream from Kemper Auditorium (Kemper). HOS Raynard Kington, who made the final decision to pilot the seating plan after discussions with senior leadership, explained that the plan aimed to address issues of student engagement with ASM speakers. Following concerns about its impact on the Student Body Co-Presidential Debate, Kington moved the pilot to the ASM on April 10. Advising-group seating remained in place for later ASMs, except for Senior Remarks, which had no seating plan.

Andover's annual Co-Presidential debate featured finalist pairs Minnie Kim '27 and David Siahaan '27 alongside Chloe Park '27 and Alfonso Gonzalez-Cano '27. Throughout the debate and broader election cycle, candidates discussed their initiatives surrounding campus culture, Paresky Commons (Commons) food options, and improving communication between students and the administration. Following the debate, Andover students selected Kim and Siahaan as the 2026-2027 Student Body Co-Presidents.

The HOS Search Committee and search firm Carney, Sandoe & Associates continued soliciting input from community members throughout Spring Term. While select Senior student leaders were invited to participate in an in-person focus group during Winter Term finals week, a March 5 survey seeking input on the qualities and priorities for the next HOS was sent to current and former parents, employees, alumni, trustees, and other "friends of the school," but not to the current student body. Eric Zinterhofer '89, Search Committee Chair, explained that the committee felt focus groups would allow for more effective and meaningful student input. Some students, however, expressed that greater communication with the full student body and more opportunities for student involvement would strengthen the search process.

On April 14, the Board of Trustees announced a historic leadership transition, naming Zinterhofer as its next president and Christopher Auguste '76 as its first-ever vice president, both elected unanimously. Board President Amy Falls '82 will conclude her term on June 30, and Zinterhofer and Auguste will assume their roles on July 1.

Current Uppers participated in the annual Blue Key Head auditions, a longstanding tradition located in the Lower Right dining hall of Commons. Competitors engaged in a variety of cheers and skits aimed to test confidence, creativity, and student interaction. Andover's 2026-2027 Blue Key Heads are: Kosi Udeh '27, Yumi Lai '27, Alastriona O'Donnell '27, Enrique Mercado '27, Gabbie Kawooya '27, Carsen Leach '27, Liz Wodarski '27, Kristian Kearins '27, Oliver Marrero '27, and Jaylen Edmonds '27.

In classrooms, Andover piloted Khanmigo, an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tool designed to support student learning and provide academically focused assistance. Khanmigo aims to serve as a resource for studying, brainstorming, and academic problem-solving, encouraging students to think critically rather than simply generating answers from AI chatbots. Students and instructors expressed differing expectations, hopes, and concerns for Khanmigo's use and potential in the classroom.

A second Head of School Day (HOSD) was announced for Monday, April 27. In an email to the student body and campus adults, Dean of Students and Residential Life Susan Esty wrote that Kington intended to make up the winter HOSD, which had been scheduled on the day of a major snowstorm and drew dissatisfaction from students who felt it did not effectively foster community spirit or relieve academic pressure.

Evan DeMayo '26 and Anny Wang '26 launched the Student Wellness Council, its goal to be an association directly embedded into the school's organizational structure, set to spearhead events, workshops, and programming aimed towards destigmatizing mental health conversations. Isaac Owodunni '27 and Hanna Lisauskas '28 were named the Founding Co-Presidents of the Council, with a four-person supporting board named later in the term: Emily Ney '27, Christian Estrada '27, Shelby Aime '28, and Tabitha Wei '28.

Toward the end of Spring Term, Justin Puno '26, Sophia Lazar '26, William Oh '26, and Nneke Ezeike '26 reflected on their Andover experiences in their Senior Remarks during ASM. Puno highlighted the significance of genuine connection and experiencing discomfort, while Lazar emphasized separating your desires from others' expectations. Oh connected his diverse Andover experiences to meals with multiple flavors, and Ezeike's message was for the audience to leave their lasting mark on the school community.

Pilot of All-School Meeting Seating Chart by Advising Groups Postponed

SAKETH LINGISETTY

Andover has postponed the pilot of a new All-School Meeting (ASM) seating chart, originally set to begin this week, following concerns that the change would affect the Student Body Co-Presidential Debate. The plan is now set to begin on April 10.

Drafted by Gina Finocchiaro, ASM Coordinator, the seating plan moves the majority of Lowers to Kemper Auditorium (Kemper) and has advisors sitting in the Cochran Chapel pews with their students.

In a schoolwide email sent out on Thursday afternoon, Head of School Raynard Kington announced that the seating will be postponed in light of the final round of the election.

"After listening to students and faculty about this particular ASM and the need for students to be with each other and cheer each other on, we will postpone the seating by advisory groups until the next ASM... We thought this was a reasonable request that should be honored," wrote Kington.

Kington, who made the final decision to pilot the seating plan after discussions with senior leadership, explained issues with student engagement that the change sought to address in an interview with *The Phillipian*.

"I heard from both students and faculty that there was a sense that the All-School Meeting was no longer functioning as the community's collective classroom in the way that it was conceived and has historically been in the past. That was reflected in a number of ways. One, for example, the common occurrence of students talking while a speaker was speaking. More than once, speakers have had to stop their speaking because it was so loud that other students couldn't hear," said Kington.

He continued, "[The plan] was a group effort, a number of the senior staff were involved. Our senior staff included the Deans and other people involved in planning. I don't know exactly what specific people, but the senior leadership of the school was involved... There were conversations, and it was briefly discussed at faculty meeting... that's not always the best way to engage [in] conversations."

While rumors of a seating chart had been circulating prior to Spring Break, many students did not anticipate this change. Maya Tomlinson '28 shared that she feels the decision resolves only a few of the issues associated with ASM.

"I felt that the fact that they separated it by advisory is just a little unnecessary. I know that there have been problems with the volume in the chapel, in that it's very loud, but I feel like at least where I'm sitting, it's not really that large of a problem, especially because it's really only chaotic in the beginning and the end of the ASM... I feel like they're making a big deal out of something that can be solved by a few more teachers walking through the aisles or just shushing people," said Tomlinson.

Robert Budzinski '26 similarly felt the chart marked a significant culture shift and commented on its implications for both students and faculty.

"My initial reaction was [surprise], as that's a big change from what ASM normally is. I also honestly felt bad for the advisors, because they're all teachers who are very busy, and that's one of their break times. It's the only time they can go eat at lunch without there being a thousand kids there. I felt bad that they were having to spend an extra hour overseeing us like that," said Budzinski.

A notable aspect of the chart is the relocation of most Lowers to Kemper for seating. Tomlinson described the consequences of this change, noting that it conflicts with what she sees as ASM's purpose and goals.

"I don't think it's necessarily fair to force any group of students into Kemper. Not that it's the worst thing ever, but it's not ideal because you want to have that community that you get in ASM. It detracts from the point and the community that we're trying to inspire because ASM is supposed to be a place for students or all students to get together and then learn something in togetherness, and now we're splitting that up," said Tomlinson.

Kington said the relocation considered both space limitations in Cochran Chapel and ways to maintain a sense of community.

"We don't have a space on campus that can hold the entire student body and faculty. What we may do is we may ultimately rotate which group is in Kemper, but that was the thinking... there are different ways of building community, and one way is to have all the students together. One could argue that we've done that, and it hasn't worked out well. So this seemed like the greatest chance of having an impact, and would least violate the sense of community," said Kington.

Clara Isaza-Bishop, an advisor to Upper day students, thought that the change could also create more opportunities for discussion in advising groups.

"There was an old model that was not working that well, and we're trying to create a different structure to create a sense of more community, and be able to reflect on what we see or what the students see in the [ASM]... I'm happy to share an experience with my advisees, actually. It's like going to an event with my advisees and then kind of reflecting on what we saw in advisory," said Isaza-Bishop.

Echoing Tomlinson's sentiment, Allegra Lee '27 explained how the chart may act as a restrictive measure that prevents students from taking responsibility for their conduct.

"Part of Andover is supposed to be figuring things out for yourself and learning how to be a respectful person on your own, which I think people are capable of, and I honestly don't think the seating chart is teaching people how to do that. Part of what we're supposed to learn here is how to recognize the value and the time and effort that ASM speakers put into their presentations and choosing ourselves without discipline just because we want to make that respectful choice to listen to them and to ask questions. I don't think that more policies are necessarily fixing that," said Lee '27.

Colin Lee '28 explained that similar policies can end up being ineffective for inducing cultural change and encouraged more intentional efforts to improve ASM.

"It's making it feel like the administration's doing what they want. I don't think that's going to really spark the change they want. You know the saying, you can bring a horse to water, but you can't make it drink... What they're doing is dragging the horse to water, but what they should be doing is seeing if the horse is thirsty, if that makes sense. They're making policies to create changes that there isn't much desire for, intentional or otherwise," said Lee '28.

ASM Coordinator Gina Finocchiaro declined to comment.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on March 27, 2026.

David Siahaan '27 and Minnie Kim '27 Elected 2026-2027 Student Body Co-Presidents

ANGELA GUO & STELLA SEONG

David Siahaan '27 and Minnie Kim '27 were elected to serve as 2026-2027 Student Body Co-Presidents following the final Co-Presidential Debate at All-School Meeting on March 27. Throughout Spring Term and over the summer, 2025-2026 Co-Presidents Gracie Aziabor '26 and Philip Meng '26 will help the pair transition into their roles.

Siahaan and Kim's campaign focused on four initiatives: opt-in formal Community Suppers; a surprise Head of School festival; Community Conversations, a forum for student dialogue with campus adults; and event punch cards. Kim expressed her excitement about starting work on Community Suppers, and Siahaan pointed to the event punch card initiative as especially meaningful to him.

"I really hope that there will be some meaningful change as quickly as possible. We really hope that [we'll be] seeing that uptick in attendance and uptick in people showing up for each other. What I'm most excited to see is walking into a volleyball game or wrestling meet or a musical and seeing more and more people coming in," said Siahaan.

Students pointed to specific proposals that stood out during the debate. Andrew Ren '28 highlighted Siahaan and Kim's community dinner initiative.

"When Minnie and David announced their idea of the community dinners, it really stood out to me because it was a very different event. I think the idea is really cool, and sitting next to someone new and eating dinner with them would be quite memorable," said Ren.

Several students said the debate clarified the candidates' platforms and, in some cases, influenced their votes. Helen Xiong '29 noted that the questioning segment helped her distinguish between each pair's proposals.

"The debate definitely changed how I perceived both of the candidate pairs. I think it was pretty productive overall. It answered some questions I had and gave me a better understanding of what the candidate's initiatives were. The best part about the debate was the questioning segment, because the questions asked were really good, they really targeted the other groups. So I was able to see how they could respond under pressure," said Xiong.

Having served as Class Representatives together for the past two years, Kim reflected on the strength of her and Siahaan's partnership and the support they provided each other throughout their campaign.

"There's no one I'd rather have run with, no matter the outcome. I'm just so happy David and I have been able to do this entire process together. We have been so supportive of one another, and I truly am so proud of both of us. Before every single round of voting, I was so stressed. I would call David, and he would have to help calm me down. This entire process, just putting yourself out there, [is] so scary, but also it's so rewarding at the same time," said Kim.

Aziabor pointed to Siahaan and Kim's messaging at the Co-Presidential Debate and the practicality of their proposals as strengths of their campaign.

"For me, a highlight was their opening speech. The way they phrased it around their biggest fears as Andover students was really creative, and it was a really compelling way to talk about their hopes for the presidency. This year in general, we've tried to really focus on having these candidates come up with ideas that we really think they could get through and be feasible. David and Minnie were the epitome of that. They worked really hard to come up with things that they thought were still fun and still needed for the student body, but also things that they could very well get through," said Aziabor.

Meng highlighted initiatives in the pair's platform that he particularly appreciated.

"In terms of their platform, I'm excited about the idea of the [event] punch cards because I think that [it has] a lot of potential for increasing the amount of spirit at school. I also think that the other initiatives, such as the Head of School festival or the Community Conversations, are great measures to increase the amount of connection that we get on campus, which is becoming increasingly important," said Meng.

Before officially assuming the role in the fall, Siahaan and Kim will undergo a transition period alongside the current Co-Presidents, meeting with administrators and being involved in student leadership processes. Reflecting on their tenure, Meng encouraged



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

David Siahaan '27 and Minnie Kim '27 delivered speeches to the student body during the final Co-Presidential Debate.

Siahaan and Kim to begin outreach and planning to implement their initiatives, while Aziabor emphasized the importance of staying grounded in their original motivations.

"One piece of advice is don't forget the main reason as to why you signed up for this in the first place. [David and Minnie] are really driven people, but they're also really kind and really welcoming, and that's one of the most compelling parts of their partnership. They should remember that, at their core, what they really cared about was connecting the Andover student body and connecting people together. They should never lose sight of that," said Aziabor.

Kim and Siahaan expressed gratitude towards the Andover community for their trust in the pair's leadership and shared their enthusiasm for assuming their roles.

"The hardest part is putting yourself out there and just having faith in the people that they will choose who they believe will work for them and who can get things done. I'm just so proud Andover has decided to trust us... to follow through with our initiatives [and] represent this entire school. We can't wait to get started," said Kim.

Siahaan added, "I still want to be the person people can walk up to. I still want to be the person that says hi to people on the paths. I don't think any of that will change. I'm still going to be positive [and] enthusiastic, and hopefully spread that joy to the rest of Andover."

Editor's Note: David Siahaan is a Sports Editor for The Phillipian. *This article originally ran on April 3, 2026.*

Updates on the Search for the Next Head of School

NIKI TAVAKOLI & SAKETH LINGISETTY

The Head of School (HOS) Search Committee and search firm Carney, Sandoe & Associates (Carney Sandoe) have been soliciting input from community members over the past few months. Select student leaders from the Senior class were invited to a focus group session when Carney Sandoe consultants visited campus for two days during the finals week of Winter Term.

On March 5, Amy Falls, President of the Board of Trustees, invited current and former parents, employees, alumni, trustees, and other "friends of the school" to share their thoughts in a survey inquiring about qualities and priorities they would like in the next HOS. The survey was not sent to the current student body.

On March 16, Falls announced the members of the HOS Search Committee via email. In an email to *The Phillipian,* Tracy Sweet, Chief Communications Officer, said that the Board of Trustees determined the composition of the HOS Search Committee, though she could not name the specific individuals involved.

Eric Zinterhofer '89, Search Committee Chair and Trustee, explained the committee's decision to involve students through focus groups rather than through the March 5 survey.

"We felt it would be more effective and meaningful to speak with students in person, which focus groups allowed us to do. This also followed the guidance of our consultants who have years of experience running school leadership searches. The committee remains open to hearing all input from students and anyone in the Andover community. Every email [to HOSsearch@andover.edu] is read by the committee chair and shared with the full membership," wrote Zinterhofer in an email to *The Phillipian.*

When asked whether and when the Search Committee plans to involve the current student body more in the process, Caroline Odden, Member of the Search Committee and Dean of Studies, pointed to existing avenues for student input and what has already been accomplished.

"Students are encouraged to email the selection committee (HOSsearch@andover.edu) at any time with thoughts and ideas. Student leaders were invited to take part in a breakfast meeting with the consultants when they visited campus in March... Student feedback has been incorporated directly in the Position Description," wrote Odden in an email to *The Phillipian.*

Odden provided a list of 10 student leaders who attended the student focus group. Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, explained how these students were chosen.

"The consultants from Carney Sandoe asked us to invite a small group of students to a breakfast during Finals Week. We invited the School Co-Presidents, Cluster Co-Presidents, EBI Seniors, and Blue Key Heads, who are all part of the leadership cohort that receives training organized by the Dean of Students Office. Of course, there are many other leaders on campus, and we would have loved to include more students if possible! We hoped that by including the Co-Presidents we were inviting leaders students feel represent them. Because it was finals week, we opted to include a larger group in case students had finals that conflicted with the meeting time (which some did)," wrote Esty in an email to *The Phillipian.*

Denys Tereshchenko '26, current Flagstaff Cluster Co-President, recounted that three consultants from Carney Sandoe attended the breakfast and described the discussion.

"The focus wasn't on specific candidates, since none had been selected yet. They explained that the next Head of School could come from either inside or outside the institution. The discussion centered on what values, policies, and leadership qualities the new head should have, as well as how the search process should be conducted," said Tereshchenko.

Miklosh Frusztajer '26, an EBI Senior who also attended the meeting, recalled the major themes students raised.

"A lot of people mentioned engagement with the community, an energy and passion that mirrored the students, and a desire to go to events and interact with students, not only events necessarily planned out by the Head of School, but all sorts of events on campus. And regular interaction with the student body," said Frusztajer.

Will Ware '26, a Blue Key Head present at the breakfast, encouraged the Search Committee and Carney Sandoe to reach out to more students to better encompass the student body's diverse needs.

"Each grade has a different perspective on what they want out of their Head of School, and so hearing only from seniors isn't the most productive. If they could hear, maybe from the class [representatives] of each grade, or if they could hear from Upper Prefects in dorms to get more of a touch of dorm life. There were a few holes if they were trying to encompass the entire campus. I don't think they covered everything with the group of students that they were able to meet with," said Ware.

Tereshchenko noted that he wanted the Search Committee to keep students more in the loop about the process.

"I wasn't aware of that survey [sent to the Andover community on March 5]. If surveys are already being used for other groups, it would make sense to include students as well. Even if it's difficult to involve large numbers of students in meetings, surveys are a scalable way to gather input... On one hand, there are limits to how much [the Search Committee] can share, since too much transparency could complicate the process. On the other hand, it would be helpful if they communicated more clearly what they've learned from different groups, students, faculty, and staff, and what priorities they are identifying. More broadly, I'd like to see better communication, not just collecting information from students, but also sharing information with us about the process and findings," said Tereshchenko.

Zinterhofer outlined the next steps in the search process, writing in his email to *The Phillipian* that "the Search Committee will begin engaging with top candidates later this month, with interviews taking place throughout the spring and early summer." Additionally, he stated that "later this month, some of us will be meeting with alumni on campus."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on April 10, 2026.

Board of Trustees Appoints Zinterhofer as President, Auguste as Inaugural Vice President

ANGELA GUO

The Board of Trustees announced a historic leadership transition on Tuesday, naming Eric Zinterhofer '89, P'18, '19 as its next president and Christopher Auguste '76, P'09, '12 as its first-ever vice president, both elected unanimously.

The creation of the vice presidency, according to current Board President Amy Falls '82, P'19, '21 in the press release, "was envisioned in the board's recent governance review and which recognizes the increasing complexity and scope of the Academy and its role in global education."

Zinterhofer, a charter trustee since 2016 and currently serving as Chair of the Head of School Search Committee, will assume the presidency on July 1. He will succeed Falls, who has led the Board since 2019 as its first female president.

Auguste has been a charter trustee since 2019. He has served on the board of the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers and was a member of Andover's 2014 Strategic Planning Task Force, among other advisory roles.

Zinterhofer declined to comment, citing that he will not officially begin his role until the summer. Falls and Auguste could not be reached for comment before deadline.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on April 17, 2026.

Student Wellness Council Launches Under Leadership of Isaac Owodunni '27 and Hanna Lisauskas '28

NIKI TAVAKOLI & SAKETH LINGISETTY

Following a round of applications and interviews earlier this April, Isaac Owodunni '27 and Hanna Lisauskas '28 were named the Founding Co-Presidents of the Student Wellness Council (SWC). The announcement of the co-presidents prefaced a discussion with Josh Steiner '83 during last week's All-School Meeting (ASM).

Guided by founders Evan DeMayo '26 and Anny Wang '26, the pair will begin to transition into their roles and define the council's direction beginning this spring term. DeMayo spoke on the motivation for founding the SWC.

"[Gracie Aziabor '26], our [2025-2026 Student Body] Co-President and a dedicated founding partner of the SWC, and I had talked many times about forming some kind of wellness task force. But the more I reflected on that framing, the more I realized that a 'task force' implies something temporary... a short-term fix for a long-term challenge. Wellness shouldn't be treated as a passing institutional focus. What we needed was something permanent. A council embedded directly into the school's organizational structure with lasting influence. That distinction became the foundation of what the SWC is today," wrote DeMayo in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Susan Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life, recalled the conversations she had with students, including DeMayo, about the installation of netting in Gelb Science Center (Gelb) this Fall. She explained how they were a starting point for student and faculty collaboration towards improving student wellness.

"We met with a group of students to have what was, really, beautifully open dialogue about what was happening. That was a moment where certainly [Caroline Odden, Dean of Studies] and I felt like, 'wow, that was great.' The students said, 'We have some concerns, and we want to talk with you and have you answer some questions.' We were happy to do that. In fact, both of us said, 'Gosh, we should do this more often,' because everybody gets busy and we tend to communicate often through email... having that face-to-face was a pretty defining moment," said Esty.

After drafting an initial concept for the council, DeMayo collaborated with Wang to gather support from student leaders and present their proposal to the administration. DeMayo detailed the challenges faced in advocating for their initiative.

"One of the most significant challenges was simply finding the confidence to believe in our idea enough to propose it to prominent adults at a school as large and well-established as Andover. As students, it can be difficult to feel that your voice carries weight in institutional conversations, and there were moments where that self-doubt was real. That said, once we brought the proposal forward, the support we received from adults on campus was nothing short of extraordinary. Faculty and administrators embraced the idea with an enthusiasm that exceeded anything we could have hoped for," wrote DeMayo.

Owodunni described his previous experiences advocating for student wellness, explaining how they motivated him to apply for SWC Founding Co-President.

"Its mission of fighting stigma around mental health at our school was really the deciding factor for me. I did similar work at my previous school in Houston[, Texas], where I founded an organization called Students Stopping Stigma that united several private schools in the Houston area to work together to combat stigma around mental health in their respective communities. So when I saw this, it was like, this is what I'm familiar with. I really respected Evan and Anny for taking the time to make this initiative. Even though they won't be here to benefit or see it through, I thought it was really admirable, and I wanted to be a part of it," said Owodunni.

Owodunni elaborated on his vision for the SWC as an opportunity to normalize conversations around mental health on campus and improve the accessibility of Andover's wellness-related resources.

"Our goal is to facilitate more discussions happening around mental health. It's something that we can talk about here. I hope that through my initiatives, Sykes will feel more accessible and less [so as if] mental health counseling or treatment is a foreign thing. Mental health is part of one's health, and I want Andover students to know that... We're going to encourage student leaders to be open and have discussions around mental health so that when people see that the people they look up to, their prefects, their proctors, their cluster presidents, being open and talking about mental health, they will feel more comfortable doing so, so that we can have a more open and supportive campus for students," said Owodunni.

Building on Owodunni's points, Lisauskas shared her experiences with mental health at Andover. She explained how the SWC aims to incorporate them into future initiatives, including mental health response training for student leaders.

"As someone who has seen her best friends struggle with mental health and been there herself sometimes, it's really important to feel like you have other students who are there to support you. It can be really hard to take it upon yourself to go to an adult and be like, I need help... Being part of something that helps people, reduces stigma around mental health first, and then also helps people know how to respond in those situations so that everybody stays safe, is really important," said Lisauskas.

Devin O'Reilly, Director of Athletic Training and advisor for the SWC, expressed appreciation for the council's initiatives. He encouraged students to actively find ways to contribute to the goals the SWC is working towards.

"Evan and Anny are tremendous, and they're doing a lot of work in their last few months at Andover. A lot of it is adults with hands-off. It's all student-run. As adults, we're there to support the ideas and shape them to try to get them into fruition. [It's] mostly an advisory role, and inspired by how much strength and willpower the student body, especially Evan and Anny, have to bring this to life, which is really cool to see," said O'Reilly.

O'Reilly continued, "Students should feel encouraged to be part of something run by their peers and continue breaking down the stigma around mental health. Supporting each other and talking about it openly is important. It would be great to see more students get involved."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on April 17, 2026.

Andover Launches Pilot of Khanmigo in Classes

SAKETH LINGISETTY

Andover has officially introduced Khanmigo to all students near the beginning of this April. The pilot includes instructions for setting up an account for Khanmigo and navigating the resources available for each class.

Patrick O'Connor, Chief Information Technology Officer, announced the offering of Khanmigo in an email to the student body on behalf of Raynard Kington, Head of School, explaining their intentions.

"Khanmigo is an AI[Artificial Intelligence]-powered tutoring tool that provides personalized, subject-specific support. It promotes learning by asking guiding questions and fostering critical thinking rather than supplying direct answers, helping students build skills while using AI responsibly... Khanmigo is intended to supplement—not replace—classroom instruction or traditional tutoring, and its use is optional. Students should consult their instructors to discuss any planned use of the tool to ensure it is appropriate for their course and discipline," wrote O'Connor.

Although many students have not interacted with Khanmigo, some have considered integrating it into their study habits. Russ McLaren '27 explained how his experience with AI drew him to try using Khanmigo to aid his learning.

"AI will always be there as a tutor if you need it. That's what is compelling me to use Khanmigo further... Khan Academy itself is already a really reliable source. So I figured Khanmigo would work really well. I've tried it multiple times other than Math 580. It does a pretty good job. For example, I tried to send an image of my notes and then [it creates] conceptual questions or create example problems based [on] my notes," said McLaren.

Henry Zimmerman '27 tested Khanmigo to gauge its performance with topics beyond the scope of its syllabus. Noting its limitations, he explained how Khanmigo does not serve as a reliable tutor at the moment.

"Socratic learning means that you attempt to truly understand a topic. By interrogating someone else about that topic in the form of questions and doing that until you've reached some new truth. It seems like Khanmigo attempts to promote this. However, it's unclear [whether] Khanmigo is sufficiently receptive to both student understanding and student needs to be able to effectively take on that role," said Zimmerman.

Reflecting on his experience, McLaren emphasized the advantages of Khanmigo over commonly used AI tools. He noted its potential for conducive learning that is otherwise offered by humans.

"Based on what it gave back to me, I feel like you're actually going to learn something. When ChatGPT gives you the answer right away, you're not really learning anything. But when Khanmigo works with you step-by-step like a teacher would, you're learning why you need to do something," said McLaren.

One of the main purposes of Khanmigo is to provide an alternative for students who are unable to access private tutoring. Zimmerman mentioned the implications of Khanmigo and similar tools for expanding accessibility.

"The way to combat [the prevalent usage of private tutoring] is not necessarily to provide a less capable version that students can use. It is to critically evaluate the school's academic integrity, the academic integrity policies, and think about both AI tutoring and private tutoring in the context of that... The solution there isn't necessarily introducing a tightly monitored method with limited capabilities. It is either drawing specific lines on private tutoring or advocating for expanded access to the much cheaper and more equitable forms of tutoring that can work for students," said Zimmerman.

Keri Lambert, Chair of the History and Social Science Department, shared her thoughts on the utility of Khanmigo. She explained how her department has aimed to avoid the usage of AI tools for humanities classes.

"I have... been able to see a couple of brief demonstrations of some of its Humanities-oriented features, which gave me serious reservations about how much it could help students in their History coursework. History and Social Science instructors want our students to make use of other excellent resources available here, such as the Writing Center, conference periods, OWHL reference appointments, and more, rather than resorting to using artificial intelligence tools, including Khanmigo," wrote Lambert in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Acknowledging that Khanmigo is in its early stages, McLaren offered suggestions for promoting the use of Khanmigo. He explained how Khanmigo can become a viable alternative to traditional AI usage over time.

"I feel like it can do a really good job at creating some conceptual questions for you. But it's new. It's still improving. It's going to make mistakes... People are already using ChatGPT and other sources of AI because that's been around for a while. Khanmigo is new, so we're not used to it yet. If we give it a few months or a year or two, and teachers encourage or advertise it more, then students might start using it," said McLaren.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on April 24, 2026.

Shifts in Sports Funding Allocation Impacts Athletic Teams

KRISTEN MA & NIKI TAVAKOLI

Each year, changes in athletic funding shape how teams allocate budgets and train during their seasons. In the past, sports funding had been accumulated through gifts, where sports teams possessed individual accounts funded by parent donations. Recently, however, Andover has been moving away from individual accounts and toward more centralized, discretionary funding structures in an effort to maintain fairness across programs.

These changes have altered how teams obtain financing for specific needs. Deputy Head of School Merilee Mardon described the current budgeting process.

"As I understand it, budgeting is a dialogue between athletics and specific teams. Teams identify their needs and relay them through the athletics department, with the goal of supporting students on those teams...there's been an effort to create more consistent experiences for students, regardless of the team, because the student experience is the priority," said Mardon.

Mardon continued, "Teams explain their needs, and some teams naturally have bigger expenses than others. Football, for example, requires a lot of equipment, while Ultimate may require less. We're also a very large and complicated school, so communication is not always perfect. We acknowledge that, and there's an effort to improve it."

Scott Hoenig, Head Coach of Boys Varsity Ultimate and Instructor in Mathematics, explained that his team had a specially designated account parents could donate to in past years. Now, the team communicates its needs directly to the athletics department.

"We spent [the gifts account] on the stuff that the parents wanted us to, in this case it was the video camera system and some subscriptions for several years. That gift account is no longer there. Now we just say what it is that we need and so we continue to be able to have that monthly subscription for the video system," said Hoenig. "From my perspective that hasn't hampered our program... I'm able to get what it is that we need."

Similar to team gift funds, dorm funding has also moved towards a more centralized structure in recent years. Dean of Students and Residential Life Susan Esty explained that the previous system, in which each dorm had its own fund for parent donations, created inequities between dorms. She noted that the creation of a centralized House Discretionary Fund was intended to address those disparities.

"Sometimes you might, by just luck of the draw, because we're intentionally diverse, you might have a big dorm that has a whole lot of funding from parents, and you could have a big dorm that has very little funding from parents. You all have the per-head school funding. With the parent gifts, it was really inequitable. And so, we ask house counselors to share it at the start of the year, that if you want to make a donation for dorm activities, dorm bonding, this sort of thing, please contribute to the House Discretionary Fund. And that just means that people can make gifts, and all the dorms have access to the funds. It's that simple. There's no strict control over it, but there is oversight of it," said Esty.

Girls Junior Varsity Squash player Danielle Han '28 reflected on how funding has positively impacted her team's facilities and equipment.

"I feel like our courts are definitely one of the best, if not the best in our league. They're really spacious, and you can tell that the school has put a lot of money, effort, and time into planning the courts. Also, because we have such a big squash community, it makes sense for us to have such a big facility. We have squash cannons, they launch squash balls at you, but we had them last year as well. But not every school has those. In comparison to other schools, we honestly have good equipment," said Han.

Ultimate has also benefited from increased resources this year. Samantha Gong '28, a member of Girls Varsity Ultimate, compared the team's current equipment and field access to previous seasons.

"We have a sufficient amount of pennies and cones. We were also able to hand out every single kid who didn't have a disc, a disc to practice on their own time. I have a school disc from last year, but all the new kids got one this year. So that's pretty nice. And we also got some new designs on them. So I think they're new. We have two fields this year and two full fields. We had that last year, but we never trained on two. It allowed us to definitely do more scrimmages, more full field scrimmages," said Gong.

As part of Boys Varsity Golf, Junu Lee '29 reflected on the quality and new improvements made to the facilities over the academic year, as well as new team merchandise.

"We have two Trackmans, they're pretty expensive. One hasn't been working for a few months, but now it's fixed. We also got a new screen. And we practice at a nice course every day," said Lee.

Lee continued, "We are getting some clothes and travel bags from a brand called Holderness and Bourne. One of the founders graduated from Andover, and this year he decided to present us with some clothes. [We] haven't gotten them yet, but I think they're gonna be nice. We're getting two hoodies, two polos, and a travel bag. The bags have our names on them."

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on May 15, 2026.

Faculty Adapt Teaching and Enforcement Practices Amid Expanding AI Usage

NICCOLO LEE-SUK & SOPHIA FANG

According to the 2026 State of the Academy (SOTA), 88.3% of students use Artificial Intelligence (AI) for some academic/educational purpose, chief among them to explain concepts, create study guides or practice questions, and summarize texts or information. As AI becomes increasingly present in student work, faculty across departments have begun reassessing how to harness these tools in the classroom.

The Natural Sciences Division recently held a day-long workshop with Hanspeter Pfister, An Wang Professor of Computer Science at Harvard University, who led faculty in reflecting on AI's productive uses, limitations, and implications for students. Chair in Physics John Rogers described his main takeaways.

"We have to really be as proactive as we can be in figuring out what [AI] means for our students and ourselves because, whether we like it or not, it's here and it's transforming the way that many things are done. We don't really have the luxury of ignoring it. Another big idea was that we want to... create assignments where if it's going to help students to use AI that we've built that into the assignment so that everyone gets equal benefit from it," said Rogers.

Brian Faulk, Head of the Natural Sciences Division, elaborated on a point from the discussion that the Division hopes to explore next year.

"One of the things that Professor Pfister encouraged us to do is create AI-literate graduates, or at least that's something that Harvard feels strongly about, because it is going to be a skill, much like using email and navigating the internet was when I started going into the workforce... [Creating] students who are AI-literate, who are using it to support their learning but not replace the process of learning," said Faulk.

Nick Zufelt, Instructor in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, described his approach to AI and how it varies between his math and computer science courses.

"In my math classes, I would say that AI is available, but it's not really talked too much about. I told students that they can go ahead and use Khanmigo, [or] they can also use something like ChatGPT. Obviously not on a test. That's where the vast majority of the grade comes from in my math class, so that's why I feel relatively comfortable allowing students to use it. I'm going to start incorporating a little bit more AI by showing these students how I would tackle math problems using AI. That's probably coming at a later stage," said Zufelt.

Zufelt continued, "In my computer science classes, we use AI a ton. There are certain [tasks] that I'm comfortable with students allowing AI to perform. For example, it could be the case that AI is used to do research on some computer science concept. So maybe you are writing the code to have a character move across the screen in a game. You can do research on the side and have AI explain to you how something works. I think a lot of people, especially a lot of teachers, worry about what we would call hallucination, or confabulation, where AI just makes up stuff that's not true. The cool thing about computer science is you can just run that code and test with your own eyes if it's working or not. So that's why I feel relatively comfortable in computer science, allowing AI use, as long as students are being responsible with it."

Keri Lambert, Chair in History and Social Science, shared that humanities instructors have used AI-powered tools to better understand their potential. She expressed her hopes for AI literacy to complement integration in the future.

"If instructors use AI at all for work, it's mostly to understand the tools better. For instance, some instructors have tried to learn how ChatGPT analyzes historical evidence, how Gemini produces research notes, or how Claude organizes historical arguments... In the next couple of years, I hope History can collaborate with the other Humanities departments to figure out how to promote better AI literacy so that students can more critically evaluate AI tools as well as the content they generate," wrote Lambert in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Within the department, AI usage has varied among instructors. Eric Denby, Instructor in History, explained how AI has enabled him to expand his creative range in the classroom.

"I have found AI useful in creating historical simulations that I use during group activities. While it doesn't necessarily lessen time, as I double check all of the information for accuracy, it does allow me to explore different ways to make history come alive in my classroom. As far as workflow, it has not reduced much time in lesson plan, though it has become a nice brainstorming partner," wrote Denby in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Lambert also expressed reservations about Khanmigo, an AI tutoring tool that Andover piloted this Spring Term.

"The Khanmigo writing tutor tool did not offer helpful advice in the demo that I saw; in fact, it affirmed really poor writing, so I worry it could mislead our students... [We're] trying to help students learn how to think, whereas I worry Khanmigo incorrectly implies History as a discipline is more in the business of teaching students what to think," wrote Lambert.

Many students have noticed these shifts in usage and enforcement firsthand. Nafi Diagne '26 shared her observations of cultural attitudes towards AI during her years at Andover.

"Before my Lower year, nobody really knew what it was. Before my Upper year, no one knew what it was. I heard the word ChatGPT three times. Upper year, all [of a] sudden it was this huge thing. The teachers, especially in the History Department this year at least, have talked a lot about how checking for AI infringements... has taken so much time, and they shifted from absolutely not using it at all to giving you guidelines around it, just because they knew students were using it a lot... They started doing, in my English 300 [class], no out-of-class essays, whereas in my earlier years, all my essays were out of class," said Diagne.

Kami Zheng '27 explained how AI integration has varied greatly across her classes, particularly in her teachers' viewpoints.

"My past English teacher, I feel like he felt personally attacked by AI. I understand that because it's an insult to [teachers'] work. Some teachers are so against it that they refuse to interact with it at all. And then there's some teachers that don't enforce anything about AI. For my teachers, I've definitely seen some of them become more strict with it, but not necessarily let us use it more," said Zheng.

Felisha Li '28 noted a similar increase in enforcement around AI. She highlighted the different usages of AI and their varying implications, citing an example from her history class.

"I've noticed a lot more in-class essays in the English, History, and RelPhil departments," said Li. "[Finding sources using AI is] okay in certain cases. For example, in my history manifesto project, our teacher let us use some AI to look at manifestos because it's a gigantic database over thousands of manifestos. So it lightens the workload over something that's tedious and doesn't help you learn."

Frank Hu '26, who has begun using AI tools more frequently for his academic work, said he sees AI as a technological shift Andover will need to adapt to.

"For academic institutions, it's a lot easier to do well and it's a lot easier to do more. So it's an arms race of who can use it the best in order to maximize their time... because the expectations change based on the tools that you have. I assume that research was a lot more difficult when the internet wasn't around and in the same way, putting out a high volume of work was harder when we didn't have AI. It's neither good nor bad. It's just different, and we still have to wait and see how this changes the landscape of a school," said Hu.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on May 22, 2026.

Andover Admissions Aims to Expand Rural Recruitment Through STARS Initiative

ANGELA GUO

In an effort to expand outreach to rural and small-town communities across the United States, Andover's Admissions Office has launched the STARS (Small Town and Rural Students) Boarding School Initiative in partnership with Choate Rosemary Hall, Deerfield Academy, The Hotchkiss School, and St. Paul's School. The initiative is an offshoot of the STARS College Network.

In the 2026 State of the Academy, 6.0 percent of respondents identified as currently living in a rural community, compared with 30.7 percent urban and 63.3 percent suburban. The STARS Boarding School Initiative aims to increase awareness of and access to college-preparatory boarding school education for students from small-town and rural communities across the U.S., according to an email to *The Phillipian* from the Admissions Office attributed to Assistant Director of Admissions Chris Powers, Associate Dean and Director of Admissions Jill Thompson, Assistant Head of School for Admission and Financial Aid Jim Ventre '79, and Associate Director of Admissions Sarah Carroll.

The Admissions Office formally launched the initiative last summer after reviewing prior rural recruitment efforts and consulting with external partners.

"The planning for [the STARS Boarding School Initiative] was driven by a desire to formalize and expand upon previous outreach efforts. The admissions office analyzed the history of rural recruitment to determine which approaches yield success and which did not. The team explored ongoing rural efforts at the university level as well as the strategies used by peer institutions. Coupled with insights from rural educators, community-based organizations and leads from past and current Andover families, and in partnership with four peer boarding schools (Choate, Deerfield, Hotchkiss, and St. Paul's), we formally launched this initiative last summer," said the Admissions Office.

Next year will mark Andover's second admissions cycle with the rural recruitment initiative. The Admissions Office described the initiative's current partnerships and outreach efforts.

"[Head of School] Raynard Kington initiated a deeper commitment to our rural outreach, and he continues to support our efforts. In addition to our partnership with STARS, we have also begun to grow other partnerships with the following organizations: National Rural Educators, Camp Susan Curtis, Future Farmers of America, Quiz Bowl and the Andover Class of 1965. We have also been participating in STARS webinars, and attending rural events, such as the Machias Blueberry festival, in Washington County, Maine. We have also engaged in targeted recruitment travel for this effort, like the Ten Schools Admission Organization Mountain Towns trip this spring," said the Admissions Office.

Looking ahead, the Admissions Office hopes the initiative will expand Andover's rural enrollment while ensuring that the school is the right fit for prospective students.

"Our hope is that we will continue to grow our population of rural students at Andover, but we want to make sure—as we always do—that we are bringing students to Andover who will be able to thrive in our academic program and take full advantage of the Andover experience. That takes careful and thoughtful recruitment and candidate cultivation as we want to be certain the match is exactly right for students coming to us from rural communities!" said the Admissions Office.

Editor's Note: This article originally ran on May 22, 2026.

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Retiring Faculty

Peter Cirelli Retires After Four Decades of Music at Andover

SOPHIA FANG & WINSTON WU

Peter Cirelli, Instructor in Music, Interim Director of Performance, and the conductor of the Academy Jazz Band, will retire after 40 years at Andover. Cirelli first joined Andover in 1978 as an Adjunct Music Instructor, teaching private lessons. Since then, Cirelli has impacted a diverse range of members on campus, from the students he has instructed and performed with to colleagues who have worked closely alongside him.

In an email to *The Phillipian,* Instructor in Music Christina Landolt, who has been a part of the Music Department for 19 years, spoke to Cirelli's impact on musicians. She noted that he taught them new ways to think about and perform numerous music types.

"Mr. Cirelli cares deeply about his students and about creating a positive learning environment for them in our department. He is a strong advocate for the representation of musical traditions outside of classical music, giving our students opportunities to develop new ways of thinking about music making, performance, and improvisation," wrote Landolt in an email to *The Phillipian*.



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Ethan Liu '26 said that Cirelli has been a consistent mentor throughout his time at Andover. After first meeting Cirelli through Jazz Band during his Junior year, Liu remembered Cirelli as a source of inspiration and insight into his own musical career.

"My first year with him taught me so much about music, what it meant to play it as part of the jazz band, and what it meant to play jazz music. I hadn't been in such an environment beforehand. Being at rehearsals with him every Monday, playing saxophone, and then also going on the Performing in the World tour that year with a jazz band. Portugal [with Mr. Cirelli] showed me what was possible in jazz and allowed me to pursue it later on in my career," said Liu.

Beyond his work with students, Cirelli has created meaningful relationships with his colleagues. Ray Daniels, Instructor in Music, recalls first noticing Cirelli's distinct personality in 2002, long before they would work as colleagues at Andover.

"I had just finished my graduate degree from the Boston Conservatory only a few years before [and] I was trying not to embarrass myself in front of all the top trombonists in the area. I remember [Peter Cirelli] being a gentleman, the same gentleman I know him as now. He was really understated. But laser accuracy in all that he did. He was very quiet in that atmosphere but extremely professional," said Daniels.

Daniels continued, "[While working with him at Andover,] we have had disagreements. We have had agreements. In comparison to the two, the disagreements were similar to the agreements. We thought of a very practical way to move forward. I adore those types of relationships, where you can push back on someone's ideas, and they can push back on your ideas, and you leave that space as professionals, as friends, as colleagues."

Liu reflected on Cirelli's legacy, particularly that his dedication to his students' growth as musicians.

"The number of students that he has inspired through the jazz music program here is just amazing. Him retiring this year, looking back, even in the past four years that I've known him, the amount of care that he's shown and passion that he's shown to the program and the students speaks to how he leads as a teacher. His legacy is already cemented and will be forever great," said Liu.

Continuing Her Mission of Language Learning: Chair in German Lisa Svec Retires After 40 Years

IAN S. KIM & JUNIPER KLOCK

After a tenure of 40 years at Andover, Lisa Svec, Chair and Instructor in German, will retire after the 2025-2026 academic year.

A member of the Class of 1981, Svec found her way back to Andover as a teaching fellow. Since then, she has filled many roles on campus, including teaching first through sixth year German, serving as a house counselor for various dormitories, and coaching a variety of sports including Swimming & Diving, Gymnastics, Soccer, and Nordic Skiing. She has also led numerous Learning in the World (LITW) trips to German-speaking countries over the years.

Faculty Emeritus Mary Mulligan worked alongside Svec for more than three decades as a former Instructor in History and Social Science. Mulligan reflected on her experiences teaching with Svec.

"She certainly made me a better teacher. Even though I'm a couple years older than she is, she's been teaching at least as long as I have, which would be close to 40 years... My first classroom experience with her was when she sat in on some of my history classes. It's a wonderful thing to have a colleague in class. It's inspiring. She joined in and participated. It's very different from someone sitting in the back of the room observing," said Mulligan.



COURTESY OF LISA SVEC

Mulligan continued, "My next classroom experience with her was when we taught together the third term of her German-300 class, starting in 2015. It was a multidisciplinary approach. She continued teaching German language, and I was teaching German history with a focus on Berlin. I was teaching in English. Watching her teach and being with her in that course made me 100% a better teacher. It's good to see colleagues with different perspectives. She carefully prepares for every class, and afterward is honest about what went right, what went wrong, and what could be improved. She's never stopped doing that."

Mulligan emphasized aspects of Svec's teaching philosophy, including encouraging students to cultivate skills that are translatable to multiple languages and cultures.

"She's a big believer in the importance of language learning as a way of learning about the culture of the country whose language you're studying, and also as a way for students to use a different part of their skillset than they use in other courses. Language-learning is different, just like History, English, and Math are different. She's very committed to that being an important part of the student experience," said Mulligan.

Kassie Bateman, Chair and Instructor in Russian, highlighted Svec's role as an advocate for less commonly taught languages and influence on expanding opportunities for students. She emphasized Svec's role in building community among faculty members through shared experiences that transcend the classroom.

"Svec is not only an amazing German teacher, but a fierce advocate for all of the less commonly taught languages. If a student participated in a mini language class on a May evening after saying yes to Andover, or if they sat in on a mini class during opening of school orientation—that is all thanks to Frau Svec's advocacy for our less commonly taught languages, her careful planning and thoughtful organization." wrote Bateman in an email to The Phillipian.

Bateman continued, "For many years now she has organized community hikes for faculty and staff on the weekends (at least once a term) encouraging us to get outdoors together and enjoy nature together. She provides equipment for less experienced hikers to participate. She has also organized an opening of school hiking trip for faculty to hike and stay at one of the AMC huts in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. She always makes sure to reserve a few spots for new faculty members so they can get to know returning faculty members before the school year starts."

Mulligan explained how Svec played an irreplaceable role in holding the German Department together.

"The German Department will especially miss her because it's such a small department. When she leaves, it's like losing half the department... I know her [colleagues] will miss her, and it will be a big gap. But having been through many retirements, the gaps fill in. There's always a new generation. Ms. Svec would be the first to say you have to pass the torch. No one person defines the whole operation, but she will be greatly missed across campus," said Mulligan.

In an email to The Phillipian, Svec reflected on her time at Andover and the lessons she hopes to leave with students.

"I have loved teaching German—the thing about language learning, no matter which language, is that it allows us to better understand our own selves and our own experiences. It builds empathy and understanding as we learn about different ways of thinking and being in the world. I think those are the real lessons that transcend the mechanics of learning a language and that ultimately make language learning meaningful. I would like to thank my wonderful colleagues and fabulous students who have made my time here so enjoyable. I will miss you all!" wrote Svec.

Fei Yao, Instructor in Physics, Retires After 35 Years

RIAANA BAJAJ & SOPHIA TOLOKH

Fei Yao, Instructor in Physics, will retire at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 academic year, signaling the end of a three-and-a-half-decade career of educating Andover students. Yao arrived at Andover in 1991 and has since taught across all sequences of the physics curriculum, including the Physics 400 sequence, Physics 550 sequence, and Physics 650. In addition to teaching, she has served as a house counselor in Alumni House, Carriage House and as a complement in several other dorms. Yao also instructed many life fitness sports.

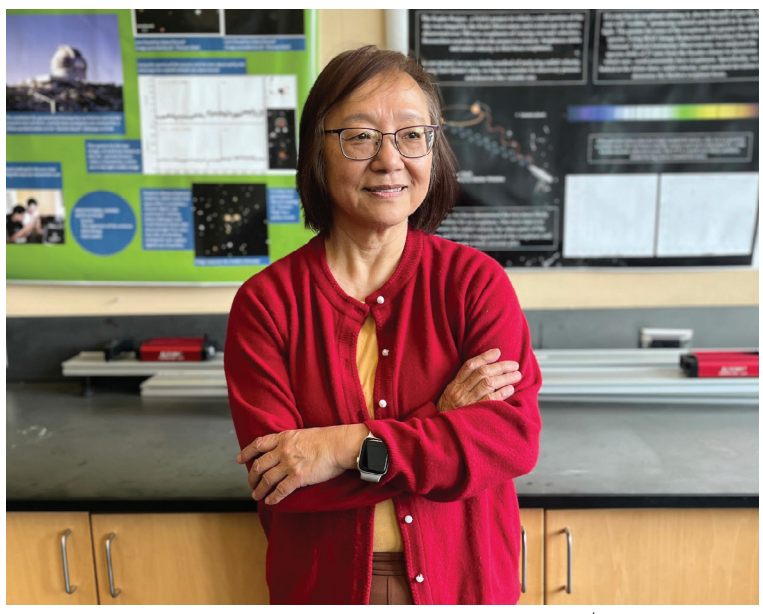
Mika Latva-Kokko, Instructor in Physics and Assistant Dean of Studies for Scheduling, noted how Yao's commitment to students as scholars and as real people defined her approach in the classroom.

"She's one of the warmest people I know. She's always offering to help others and she really loves teaching and loves her students. Her course is Physics 650, the analytical mechanics course. She has brought new ideas of how to teach that and what the important things in analytical mechanics that people want to know are. She's an excellent teacher and she's always available for her students," said Latva-Kokko.

Latva-Kokko continued, "She's very sensitive too if students are having a hard time. She advocates fiercely for her students to be able to continue their academic careers in the best possible way. For example, to stay in the right math class in her opinion or to go into the right science class."

David Song '26, Co-Head of the Physics Club, explained Yao's friendly nature discernable across the paths, noting how her positivity is something students and faculty associate with her.

"The one thing that everyone will say about her is that she is the most smiley person you will ever meet. Whenever you see her, she's always smiling. She's happy to see everyone. If you've ever had her as a teacher she will smile at you. That's one thing about her I'll never forget. During classes, she's also very passionate about physics so she's very interesting to listen to when she's giving lessons," said Song.



EMMANUEL OKEKE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

John Rogers, Chair and Instructor in Physics, also reflected on Yao's compassion and dedication to her students.

"She is an amazing colleague. She's been great to work with and we're going to miss her tremendously. She is incredibly generous and kind and thoughtful and very thorough in all of her work. She really cares deeply about the students as people and also wants them to excel as students, wanting them to learn how to become the best students that they can be. She's helped a lot of them to do just that," said Rogers.

Manalee Chowdhury '28 highlighted Yao's support for students outside the classroom in reflecting on a recent physics tournament.

"I competed in a physics tournament this year and she was one of the teachers who showed up for us consistently throughout all the rounds and brought us food and everything. I think everyone from the team wanted to extend a heartfelt thank you for doing that for us and showing us encouragement," said Chowdhury.

As Yao steps away from the school, her colleagues reflected on not only her decades of teaching, but the impact she has had on the community.

"I feel like she is going to leave a hole that will be very difficult to replace. We will try to honor the stuff that she has done and hopefully get to a point where we can do our best to mitigate the loss," said Latva-Kokko.

Yao was unable to provide comments to *The Phillipian.*

Retiring Faculty

Michael McHugh, Instructor in Mathematics, Retires After 32 Years

TEDDY STEINERT & JEREMIAH NUÑEZ

After 32 years at Andover, Michael McHugh, Instructor in Mathematics, will retire at the end of this academic year. Faculty and students described his legacy as one defined by both his mathematical expertise and the humor and humanity he brought to classrooms and conversations.

Khiem DoBa, Instructor in Mathematics, has worked alongside McHugh since joining Andover's faculty. DoBa described McHugh as a colleague who set the tone for collaboration from day one.

"Since the first day that I started working at [Andover], he was already reaching out, welcoming me. He was always volunteering, covering classes for other faculty in the department. Whenever someone needed help, and he was available, he would be the first one," said DoBa.

DoBa noted that McHugh was humble and approachable, almost unlike anyone else in the department.

"He got a PhD, and his mathematical ability is beyond amazing, but he's able to relate directly to other faculty or students where they are, and he invites them into more intellectual conversations with a great sense of humor. That's something that's really amazing... He's one of the very few people that I can feel that students will have no problems approaching and asking any kind of math question, and he has a very perfectly simple way to answer it and not to make it more complicated, not to make them feel like they aren't smart enough," said DoBa.

McHugh's path to Andover was anything but expected. A graduate school professor of his noticed his gift for working with young students through soccer coaching and math programs and nudged him towards teaching at a school, something he hadn't envisioned. He then decided to become a teacher.

"I had never thought of that before in my life until she mentioned it. So I mailed about 50 letters, basically cold, to every private high school in New England, and got one or two responses. And I ended up here," said McHugh.

Over his 32 years at Andover, McHugh philosophy in the classroom has evolved considerably. He has moved away from passive learning techniques toward active engagement, finding that they drew students in.

"Getting them to do math relaxes people when they're engaged, and they're only going to get engaged if you give them hard problems. Calling on kids in class and giving hard problems on tests, those are two things I do now that I was more reluctant to do when I was younger," said McHugh.

The greatest challenge across three decades, he reflected, was the culture of student anxiety around grades. He found that the best solution was returning again and again to his belief that math is genuinely enjoyable.

"From an early age, people get hit with this idea that if you can't do math, you're not very smart. I think everybody really likes math when they're young, but when they start thinking that way, it's a killer, because if you think you're not good at something, you shy away from it," said McHugh.

Kaya Mangani '27 joined McHugh's Multivariable Calculus (MTH650B) course during the Winter term, initially unsure of what to expect. She credited him with shaping the way she now approaches difficult problems.

"I genuinely think I've learned so much in his class, not just about math, but also how to approach a problem, how to solve a problem, and how to use what I already know to kind of break it down and find a way to make my best attempt at them," said Mangani.

For Mangani, his class was different from others she had taken at Andover. Many math courses leave little room for trial and error and are oriented almost entirely around the correct answer. McHugh, Mangani reflected, seemed more interested in what happened on the way to the final solution.

"He just wants you to try out the math, and he wants you to just experiment with it. He doesn't really care whether it's right or wrong, just as long as you show your process, and at least take a stab at it... School really values what's right, and doesn't really leave much room for experimentation or just trial. So I think it's really nice how he kind of builds that into his teaching style," said Mangani.

Yui Takeuchi '26 recalled McHugh's energy and presence in the classroom, noting the collaborative nature of his classes and his patience and honesty with students.

"The first day [McHugh] was really interactive, and his classes are never just lectures. It's very much like we're all integrated together... He's a math teacher, but he kind of makes you forget that he's a math teacher. He's just a teacher in everything. His humor, and he's always really understanding, he's a really kind person," said Takeuchi.

Takeuchi continued, "He uses all the boards and we're always really immersed in learning. And he's really patient. He's always willing to just keep teaching us the same thing if we're not getting it. And I'm glad that he's very real with us, [so] we can be really real with him."

Looking ahead to retirement, McHugh is currently learning German in preparation for a trip abroad.

"I am looking forward to traveling. Germany, specifically, because another thing I'm interested in doing is learning German... and hiking in the White Mountains," said McHugh.

Billy Murray Takes His Final Bow

OLIVIA TEMPLE & DINA NAMJOO

Billy Murray, Instructor in Theater and a lighting and costume designer for Andover's productions, bids goodbye to Andover after over 25 years.

Robert Lazar, Chair in Theater and Dance, described Murray as an artist and teacher with a commitment to creativity and student growth.

"He works so hard to make things effortless. He really wants his students to succeed. And so he works really hard at figuring out 'How do I need to communicate this idea to my students? How do I need to structure this assignment? What assignments do we need to have so that students can succeed and learn skills that they never maybe would have experienced or tried before?' I really appreciate him and his ability to make things happen in a way that is really thoughtful and really focused on the student process and the program's future," said Lazar.

A former student of Murray, Instructor in Theater Brad Seymour '00, currently works with him in design for the Theater Department. Seymour explained his admiration for how Murray encourages students to take risks.

"His biggest strength is that he empowers students to try something that they haven't done before. So whether that's sewing for his costume class, or like for me, whether it was lighting, and just letting students jump in and try it... without the fear that trying something new might result in failure," said Seymour.

Lazar attested to Murray's dedication and unique, growth-focused approach to the arts when asked about Murray's impact on the department.

"He has kept us thinking about art in a way that is aspirational and not just pragmatic. And in the arts, you create because there's something that has to be said, because there's something that has to be expressed... and he makes it look so easy and so seamless. He's worked really hard for many years to have the department grow and evolve," said Lazar.

Nina Wombwell, a faculty emerita and former Chair in Theatre and Dance, highlighted Murray's contributions to Andover's productions in an email to *The Phillipian*.

"He is an exceptionally talented artist. The projects that stand out to me took place in the early years, pre-2000, includ[ing] the costumes for the musical 'Big River' and the lights for the dance concert 'Southern Words Danced,' because they set a standard of excellence in our productions. He took on the production of costumes for our full-length 'Nutcracker,' generating many of the ideas unique to our version. This was a massive undertaking, with as many as seventy costumes in this one show. He was instrumental in the success of the Department in a time when it felt like we were a vibrant center of the arts on campus," wrote Wombwell.

Above all, Lazar mentioned Murray's authenticity as a notable trait. He expressed gratitude for the time he had with Murray.

"A defining trait is being true to his core beliefs and ideas. That's a part of his personality because a lot of that is what we do in the arts. I really, as a department chair, have really respected working with Billy, and I appreciate the time that I have had to collaborate with him, because he's taught me so much," said Lazar.

Collaborative Pianist Rebecca Plummer White Closes Her Ten-Year Career at Andover on a High Note

KONNOR FORTINI & JOHN KIM & NICCOLO LEE-SUK

After a decade at Andover, Rebecca Plummer White, Adjunct Instructor in Music and Collaborative Pianist, will retire this Spring. Upon arriving at Andover, Plummer White spent two years as an Adjunct Piano Instructor before taking on the role of Collaborative Pianist. Over the years, she has collaborated with the Fidelio Society (Fidelio), given private piano lessons, and coached chamber music.

Before coming to Andover, Plummer White taught at Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter) for 24 years. She also worked on the faculty of Manchester Community Music School and Bard College. Plummer White recalled how Instructor in Music Peter Cirelli encouraged her to come to Andover.

"Peter Cirelli needed to hire two pianists, and he asked me when we were at a gig one day. He said, 'Are you taking on any more teaching?' I said, 'Sure, I can do that.' And having been at Exeter, it seemed like a natural form to come to Andover. And once I got here, I realized that I really loved the vibe of the Music Department and the people I was working with, many of whom I've done gigs with for the past 35, 40 years in Boston," said Plummer White.

Plummer White said that her favorite aspect of teaching at Andover was the students. She emphasized her appreciation for her students' passion, curiosity, and developmental process.

"[My] favorite part of my job is meeting with you [students], and rehearsing with you. Not only do you come in sometimes not prepared for what it is like to play with the accompaniment, but to see how our rehearsal enhances your pieces as you see both piano and solo instrument [parts] come together. And that really speaks to us as teachers, because one of the most rewarding parts of being a teacher is to see the progress [of students] learning the give and take of playing with another person," said Plummer White.

Harry Zhou '28 took private piano lessons with Plummer White during the school year. He reflected on the impact Plummer White had on both his technical skills and his mental growth as a musician.

"[Mrs. Plummer White] is a great mentor that has such a big passion for music and teaching musicians how to grow and really push themselves to grow. I'll definitely miss her advice about how to practice different practice strategies. She's such a positive person; she really wants the best for all her students," said Zhou.

As a singer in Fidelio, Amina Gorman '26 described Plummer White's teaching style. Gorman also recalled working with Plummer White for a solo in a student recital.

"She knows exactly what you are capable of doing, and she holds you to that standard. It's a great opportunity to be around and understand her musicality so that you can understand your own musicality better. I will miss how much she believes in us as singers and how she holds us to a high standard, even when we don't," said Gorman.

Gorman continued, "I remember my first-ever student recital. [Mrs. Plummer White] was accompanying me, and rehearsing with her helped me get rid of any of those last-minute jitters that I had about performing in front of my peers."

Abbey Siegfried, Chair in Music and Director of Fidelio, described the connection she and Plummer White had built over the years.

"When you're a choir director, and you fully collaborate with your collaborative pianist, it's like they can read your mind. You actually don't have to communicate with words. You get to communicate as musicians on this higher level," Siegfried said. "We can make music together, and that's such a special relationship to have with a person, and it's not easy. It takes time and work, and being a magical person, so that's what I'll miss the most."

Before retiring, Plummer White marked the occasion with a personal recording project.

"Recently, I just spent eight months practicing [and] recording all the preludes and fugues in the Well-Tempered Clavier Book 2 by J.S. Bach... Those pieces have been my friends for the last 40-something years," said Plummer White.

The pieces first entered her life in her 20s, shortly after graduate school, when she learned and memorized them for a competition. Inspired by a friend who recorded all of Bach's unaccompanied violin works upon her own retirement, Plummer White decided it was time to do the same.

Looking ahead, Plummer White expressed excitement about having more control over her schedule. She shared plans to spend more time travelling and working on solo piano repertoire.

"I'm going to miss what I do here, but I'm also very happy to start a different chapter of my life where I'm devoting myself just to solo piano music. I'm going to practice every day and learn new pieces. My husband and I love to travel... We're going to Prague and Budapest in June, and then next year, Japan, and Istanbul, and back to India; we have relatives in India. And every year we start planning for the next year," said Plummer White.

CLASS OF 2026 OVER THE YEARS

184 students from the Class of 2026 responded in 2023

209 students from the Class of 2026 responded in 2024

241 students from the Class of 2026 responded in 2025

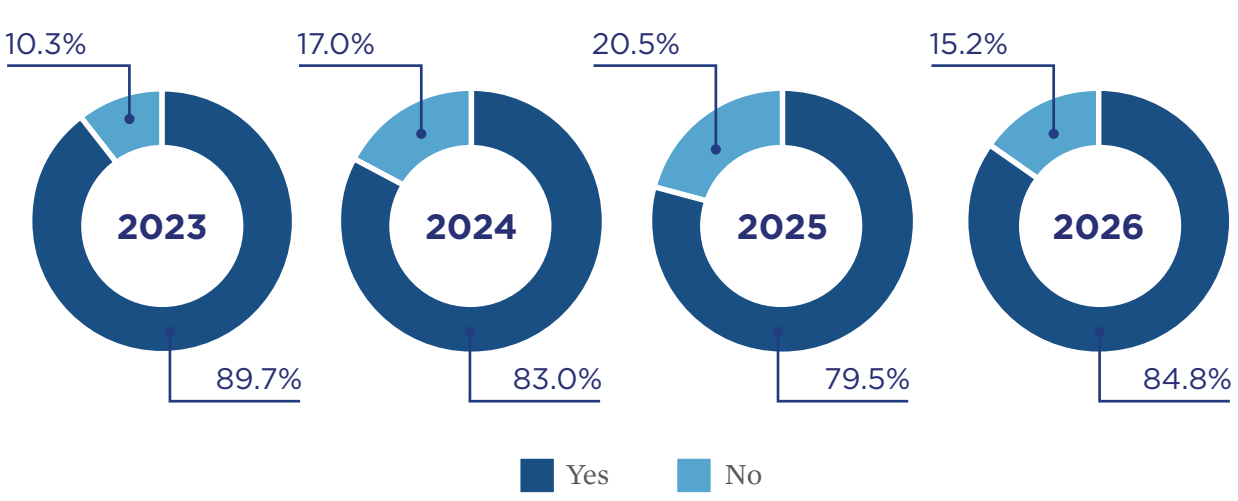
191 students from the Class of 2026 responded in 2026

CLASS OF 2026 OVER THE YEARS

The State of the Academy (SOTA) is a survey sent out to the entire student body each spring, collecting information about student demographics, experiences, and opinions. Full statistics from this year were published in our May 8 issue. This page displays statistics from the Class of 2026 from Spring 2023 to Spring 2026 to highlight how students have changed over the course of four years. Graphics by: Athena Gutiérrez-Ewing '28 and Kelvin Ma '27.

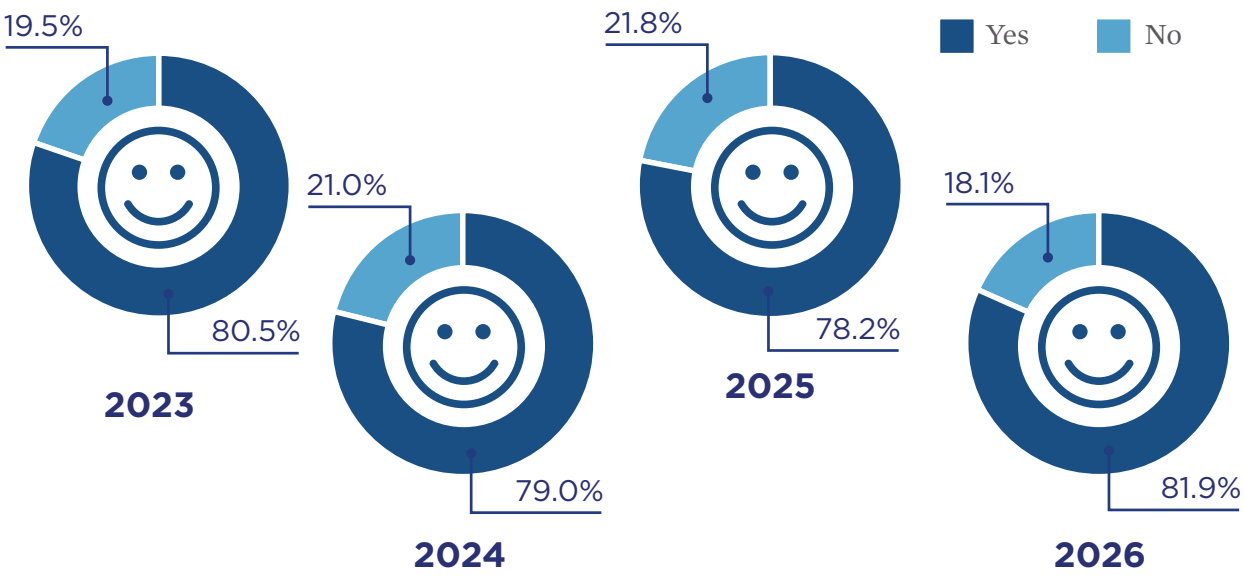
COMING TO ANDOVER

In retrospect, would you still make the choice to come to Andover?



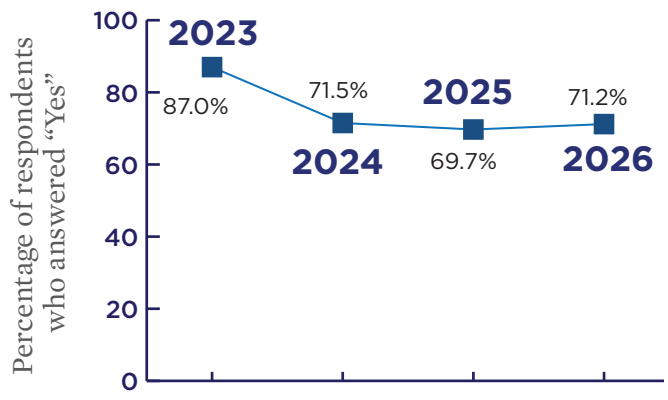
HAPPINESS ON CAMPUS

Generally speaking, do you consider yourself happy at Andover?



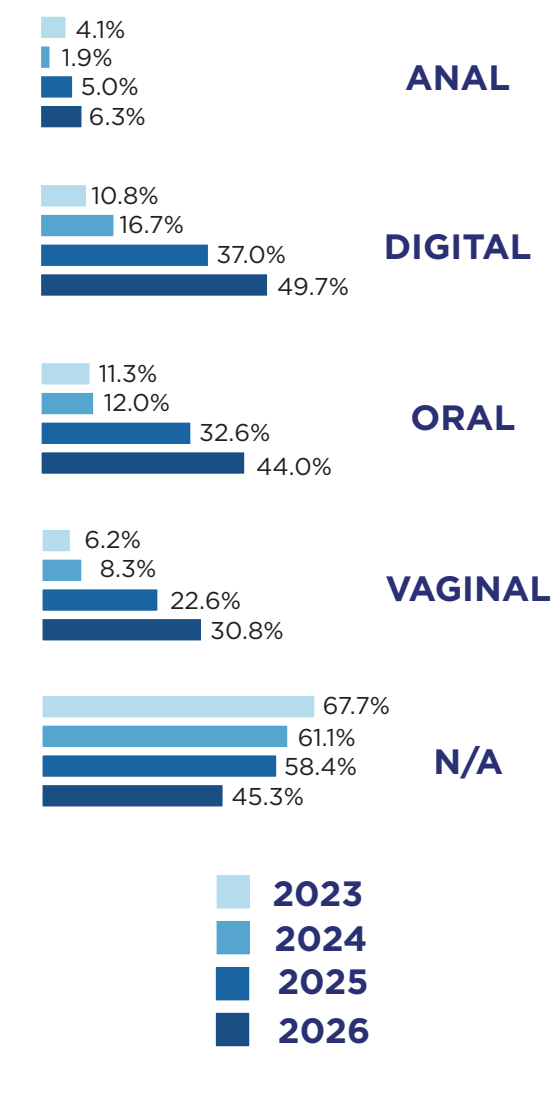
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION*

Do you support affirmative action in academic institutions?

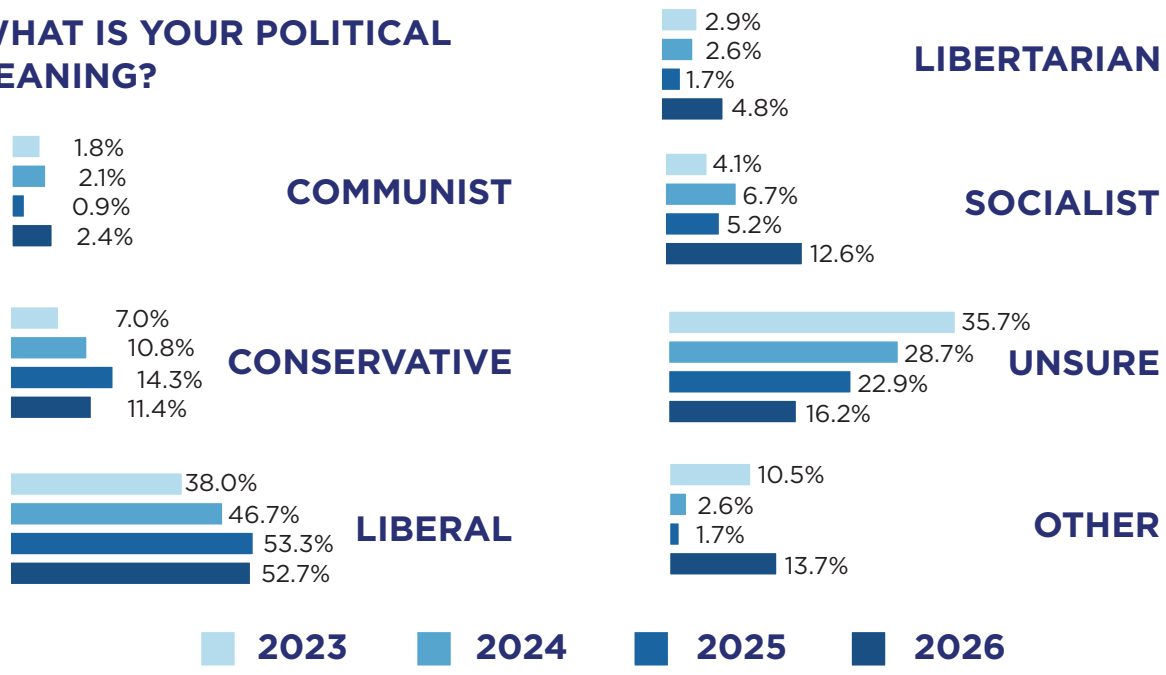


*Editor's Note: Affirmative action is defined as "Positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and culture from which they have historically been excluded." (Stanford University)

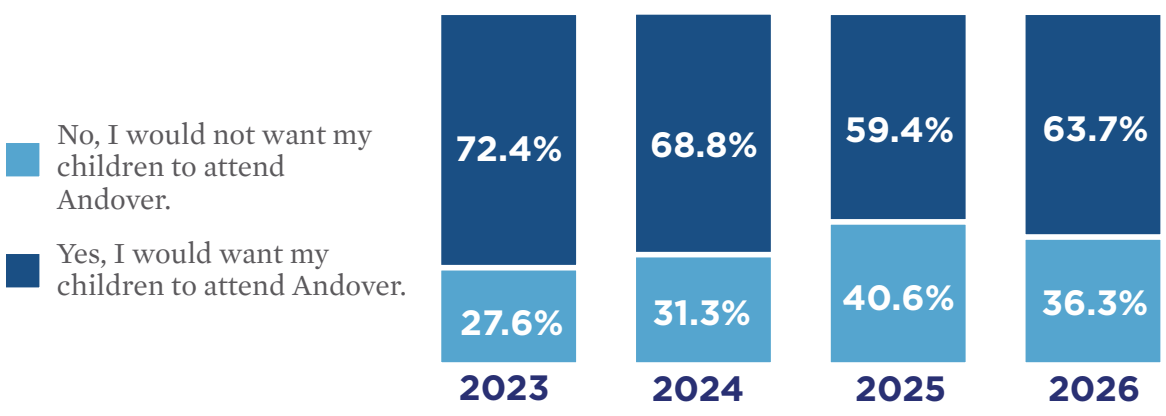
HAVE YOU EVER ENGAGED IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY?



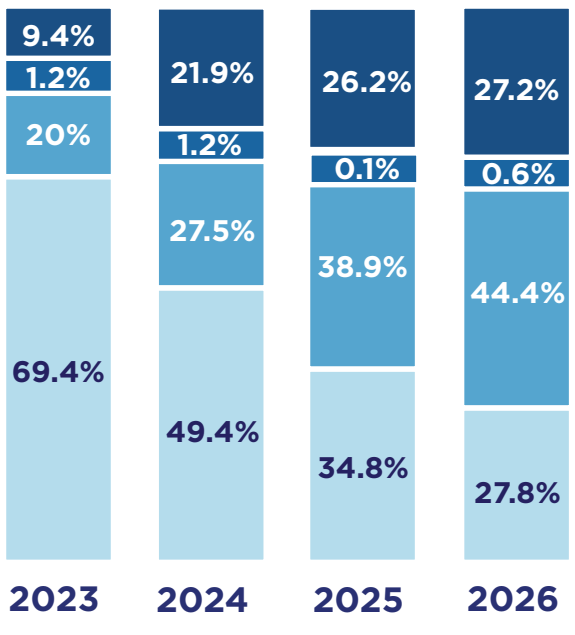
WHAT IS YOUR POLITICAL LEANING?



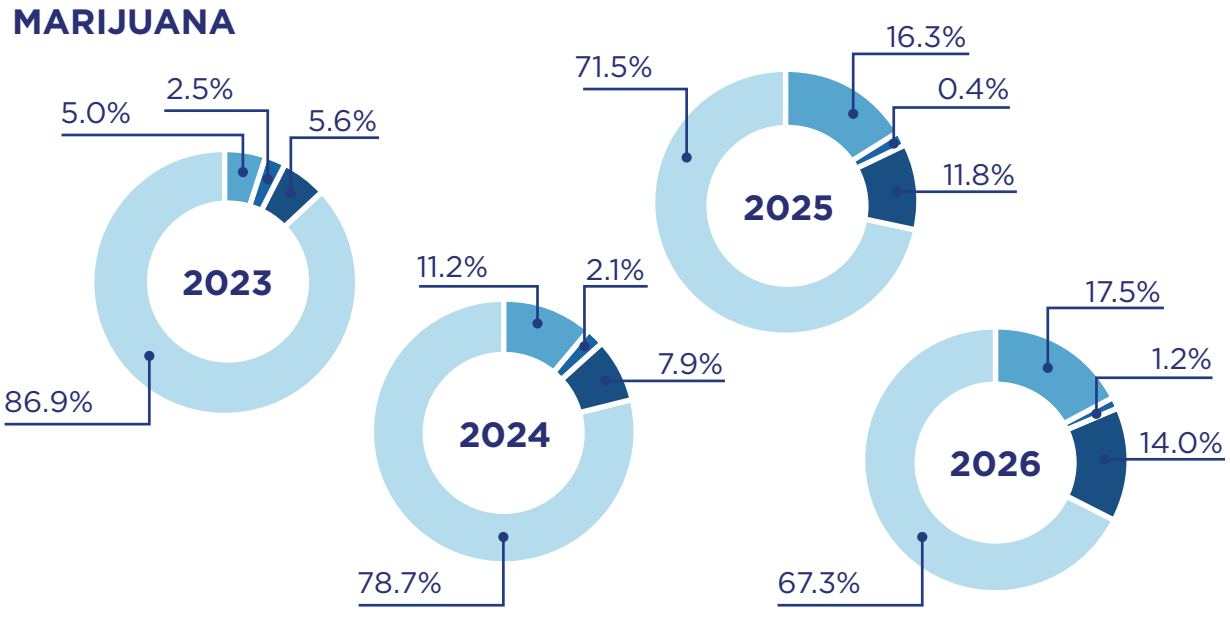
WOULD YOU WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO ATTEND ANDOVER?



ALCOHOL



MARIJUANA



SONior

Senior Remarks

Gentry Thatcher

Good morning, Andover!!!!

Thank you to everyone who selected me as a speaker at this ASM. It's nice to know that good old-fashioned bribery still is around.

A lot has changed in the four years since I arrived at Andover. Kington's approval ratings have gone up 1%, and the Deans have discovered an entirely new color to use in a school-wide email. I look around at the sea of my peers and know that you all have changed just as much: My friend James, for example, has become an eternal background character in everyone's most troubling story at Andover.

Speaking of troubling stories, let me tell you about my worst moment at Andover... I had set a list of goals for myself: Get a 6.0, Get a 6.0, Get a 6.0... Some really novel stuff. Anyways, I woke up earlier this year and found the envelope I had hidden in a secret location in my dorm with these goals (I stayed in the same dorm for four years due to some challenges) and realized I had dropped a 5.8 one term in Senior Winter. I CRASHED out. Like... Crashed out. I threw a pen across the room and clapped my hands once angrily and shook my head. I said... Trigger Warning... Dangit! I didn't know what to make of myself, my identity was out the window, the 5 in Ceramics would follow me for the rest of my life...

But recently I realized this isn't true. While your entire future is dependent on the grades you received in high school, Ceramics probably didn't matter, considering I had been a committed Harvard Hacky-Sacker since 10th grade. I still learned a lesson: Daddy can't buy everything.

Maybe bribery just isn't the way things work after all.

A Senior's Reflection on the Spring Term

Konnor Fortini

Why must I exist on this campus any longer?

I have already gotten into Merrimack, my bags are packed, and yet, I have to survive one last term. It will be over soon, hopefully; however, I just got a GAP for receiving 12 absences. I don't know how they are going to make me do all ten weeks, but I digress. Maybe they'll let me be a PG.

Being a PG would be a time of excellence at Andover. I would feel rejuvenated by one more year here. The looming j*b I must one day get is one more year away. And the '30s, oh how I could guide them throughout their Andover journey.

Anyways, Andover has given me the "life-long" memories it promised me. From walking into Borden late at night to the Sanctuary late at night (it seems Andover late at night is where it's at!), Andover has been stamped into my head; I will never let it go. As I move on to college, I will remember my Night on the Knoll.

My classes were good, I guess. I really got that "world-class education," I suppose. I don't really know how taking PHR542 "Fun and Games" will help me in real life, but to each their own. And actually, I'm really proud of my grades. I received a 4.2 GPA, which is considered above "Good" by our standards. It is great to know that for the future I can count on my Andover Intelligence rather than my artificial one.

Now, the question everyone's asking me: ***Will I donate to Andover <u>when</u> (not if) I become rich and famous?***
Funny.

My Startup Internship

Thiago Jollon & Gentry Thatcher

A few days ago, I was recruited (Dad texted me) to be a Junior Computer Engineer at the Newest, Most Unique Startup Company in the World: Silk Road AI. We're already on multiple top-ten lists (FBI), and Forbes puts us on the Fortune 500,000 as the top "money vacuum" in mid-size Mid-Atlantic cities. As an AI rapper that connects buyer to seller for ANY leafy green or new-age seasoning that you could desire, Silk Road AI connects anyone looking for illicit Middle Eastern contraband to their destination by means of a ChatGPT with a voice jumbler.

After watching "The Social Network" four times and cheating in all of my computer science classes, I felt prepared for my internship. I was surprised to find that the location of my internship was not Silicon Valley in California, but rather the depressed rubber factories of Southeastern Pennsylvania. Sandwiched in between Three Mile Island and Luigi Mangione's capture spot, I got to work. Although I was hired as a coder, I mostly handled customer service. Taking calls from our Serbian clientele sure has taught me a lot about the ability to think on my feet. After one of their flour shipments got disrupted, Yuri Bratislav made sure to make me feel cared for as he vividly discussed the health and safety of my family, dog, and penis.

Our 13-year-old founder, Pavel Павел, who actually holds a minority stake in Kalshi, has been an inspiration. Since I've been bunking with him in the squatted backroom of the abandoned rubber factory, I've learned a lot about what it takes to be a founder in the cutthroat startup world. Three Monsters before noon and multiple lip pillows are a prerequisite. To foster community, he has me drink a Monster with him, though I always feel really drowsy afterwards.

After I wake up, Pavel has me do some important work. I clean out the asbestos above my bed and pick up his used condoms (not sure who he's using those with) while he hops on Omoggle. And then boom, the day is done. Although I haven't done much coding yet, this internship has already given me so many learning experiences. Hopefully, next summer, things will get better! Since Pavel is on the run from the Czech tax authorities, I anticipate a lot of travel.

Best Things to do on Senior Probation!!!

Claire Bancroft

1. **Wage psychological warfare on the Deans**: Sanctuary yourself every day. If you have access to friends from different clusters, recruit them for your noble mission. You realize that this actually made your end-of-year packing job much easier, as the Deans somehow leave your room more organized than they found it, post rifling through food trash and stale socks.
2. **Begin the life of side hustles:** Since probation has confined you to your dorm, you realize it is time to expand your revenue channels (a more-than-likely preview into your next twenty years). You consider becoming a TikTok influencer documenting your "gap year," pimping yourself out to sell TikTok shop products, and advertising AI study tools (sadly, you do not fit the ABG archetype, so brand deals are limited).
3. **Get a J-O-B:** After your side hustle failure, it's time to consider becoming empl*yed. You apply to jobs all around Andover, and you get invited to interview at many of them! During your interview, you are asked plenty of questions, but due to your heavy reliance on various forms of generative AI Chatbots, you are unable to come up with answers. At one point, you continue to repeat, "Please reword in simple terms!!" before it turns into screams of, "ANSWER IN MY OWN WORDS!"
4. **Meet ALL the new students:** Due to old age, seniors are typically not allowed in classes like English 100 and History 100, but due to your probation, you are required to take lower classes to boost your GPA. You realize that this is the perfect opportunity to connect with all the new freshmen!! After just one week in their classes, you realize that you love the freshmen, so you make an effort to bond and share your wisdom to the future Andover generations (inferring that you do graduate and aren't held back with them)!
5. **Become an EBI Senior:** You've hit a complete rock bottom, so helping other students is the only way for you to process your emotions! You decide to apply to become an EBI Senior to prevent younger students from ever ending up in your situation. However, senioritis has hit too hard, and you are unable to attend the EBI planning sessions. Instead, you show up to every meeting and trauma dump about your Andover experience, helping the lowerclassmen build character (and to put it on your cooked college app.)
6. **Explore the outskirts of campus:** Since you have been banned from leaving campus or participating in many student activities, it's time to make the most of the campus you have spent 4 years at. You return back to your freshman dorm, Fuess, and try to find the secret underground tunnels (to no success). Then, you go to your dorm from lower year, Bartlet, that you were forced to go to after getting kicked out of Fuess for microwaving dry ramen. Yet, the center of campus scares you. So you return back to your mancave that you have built over the past few years, Bishop.

Fone.

Fall Term in Review

Konnor Fortini

The fall term is a time of new beginnings. New people come. Old people go. And sometimes the slightly older people take a liking to the new people. Either way, the new year brings new opportunities for all.

The cell phone policy arrived, and with that, Dr. Gardner ascended. He is no longer merely a dean; he is a deity. Students begin to pray to him, begging him not to enter Commons. Rumor has it that the Food Delivery Task Force was never about safety and equity. It was a tithe, a way of getting free food.

94% is the new 6, and suddenly the average GPA is a 4.8 (or so they say). This is fine, though, because a 4 is a "good" grade. In-class writing assessments are now the norm; your teacher tells you they will grade it "lighter than normal" and then docks 10 points because you spelled the word "come" wrong. "It was just a Freudian slip," you say. You then receive a "spur of the moment" GAP. All of this because of the Respondus browser. It always watches. :(

EBI somehow worsens, even though it's 50% less attended than last year. This is truly an impressive feat from the administration. EBI Seniors convene in the Den, not by choice but by instinct, drawn together by shared suffering. "They wouldn't even do the AI skit we made," one senior cried. No one responds. There is nothing to say.

It's not all bad for the underclassmen, though. At least they get clocks for their dorm... Never mind, those have been delayed for the Winter Term. On the topic of the dorm, students are no longer allowed to keep medicine in their dorms; it must be given to Sykes. These drugs allow Sykes to continue serving 24/7 care.

Fall 2025 was pretty niche, not gonna lie.
The class of 2026 was seen walking with Dr. Kington on the traditional Charles-Wormley Vista; they sighed, saying, "I'm really gonna miss it here." They followed that up by doing a weird face, puckering their lips, tilting their heads up, and closing their eyes.
Dr. Kington felt his heart fill with warmth.

Winter Term in Review

Konnor Fortini

Equipped with new year resolutions to be more "locked in," Andover students returned ready to handle anything that came their way. That was the case until Dr. Kington hosted a pajama party, in which he showed his true nature to the community. He desperately needed a comeback to make up for the fake Head of School day. Sadly, he could not recover from this grave mistake, leading him to announce his retirement and to initiate the search for a new HoS.

Stack applications were the talk of the town for a while, and competition could not have been more cutthroat. Groups found themselves having to "prove" their people have chemistry, no matter the cost. A house counselor recounts: "It was hard to choose between all these applications at first; however, once I saw that one group had a student with the last name 'Kim,' it was a no-brainer." Porgy Powers '26 described his experience living in a stack for two years, saying, "I feel the group's bond has exponentially increased as we stack, just like the Eiffel Tower. I know I won't find a community like the one we built elsewhere, so I'm going to savor every last moment."

MLK Day brought a surprise to all students and faculty on campus: the administration actually brought an engaging and likable ASM Speaker. However, they quickly realized their mistake and had Lowers learn about "The Trauma Cup" to understand that mean things upset people. Who would've known?

After three long weekends in a row, the students began to engage in some shenanigans. They overthrew the Football Head Coach and instated a new one, who supposedly will only make us lose by 5 games, not all of them.

In the end, Winter Term made one thing certain:
The Trustees will definitely allow us to give input on who should be the next Head of School.

Spring Term in Review

Konnor Fortini

Often considered the best term in the school year, the Spring Term is a time of turning over, finishing, and starting again. Especially with the Seniors, who turn over their leadership positions, finish out the school year, and then start again at a new school, which can be daunting. However, it is also difficult for the freshmen, who must come to terms with the fact that the PGs will no longer catcall them. Class of 2030 is coming soon, and with them comes a new math course: MTH100 - Math for students with no attention spans (why they didn't create this course sooner, I don't know).

Student body Co-Presidential elections were heated this year, and were NOT rigged this time. Candidates were praised for their bold and visionary platforms, and the people were especially excited about the optional formal dinner, which 98% of students said they would attend (the other 2% are currently on leave and send their regards). Losing candidates immediately set their sights on cluster Co-Prez, as the word "President" is one of great honor and glory.

In other news, Blue Key Head auditions went phenomenally for all except the Library staff, who were triggered by the loud sounds of children screaming, paired with the recording of the announcement using phones. "I hate that they announce the Blue Key Heads in the Library. I tried to put an end to that by auditioning as a Blue Key Head, myself, yet got weirded out when one of the questions they asked me was 'Do you like feet?'" said one librarian. It is safe to say that the Heads in the library will not be quiet.

Departmental prizes also characterized the spring. Most notably, the physics department prize was given to a student who analyzed the physics of dropping your fork at Commons. "Physics is...It's everything!" the student said, which @phillipsacademy then posted on ten different social media platforms as an embodiment of our school's intellectual rigor.

Navigating a Day with the Cell Phone Policy

Takunda Basvi

I rest on my mattress as I take a couple final sweet scrolls on TikTok of AI fruit Love Island. As I watch the clock tick, I jolt up. It's 10:58 pm. I check Microsoft Teams, and my house counselor is blowing my phone up with threats of restriction and cleaning the bathrooms in Fuess, unpaid and using my bare hands and their toenail clippings as scrubs... Shiver me timbers. As I run down the stairs, I walk past my Prefects, texting on their phones, and they all stop to point and laugh at me for being a weak little Lower. I savor my last moments as I plug my phone into the charging station, which runs on the same embarrassing power source as the Gelb elevator when you're late to class. The charging station devours my phone as I place it in its designated spot. I get goosebumps on my skin as I leave my child at daycare for the first time, scared that it will get ousted by the surrounding phones, because I didn't train it, and now the whole dorm has to hear my 6 and 7 a.m. alarms (no pun intended), reminding me that "I'm all in" and "Bleed blue!" Of course, I am so patriotic and loyal to Dr. Kington that I actually use my Andover alarm clock in the morning. I use it even when I have ten majors a week and run on the 10 minutes of socialization I get whenever the WiFi shuts down. (which isn't a problem because I use Morse code to the animals in the Sanctuary, and tip them the ripped soles of my shoes from hiking to school, because I'm in Pine Knoll). I return back to my room and hop into bed with my computer. I hug it tightly, and it's almost like I hear it singing a lullaby to me, but it's just Chat reminding me to pay 20 dollars per month to add one extra image, and tell me that it loves me. I don't oppose this as I see it as philanthropy for the 20 gallons of water lost somewhere in Idaho, per month, from fruit love Island and Skai Jackson's Snapchat stories. When I head to bed, my fingers flex into the air, holding onto what once was. I find myself beatboxing to emulate my white noise sounds for bedtime, which consists of everyone's favorite birds: the horned puffin and blue-footed booby.

Phaculty Phestivities

FACULTY SOTA

EIGHTH PAGE - FACULTY SOTA

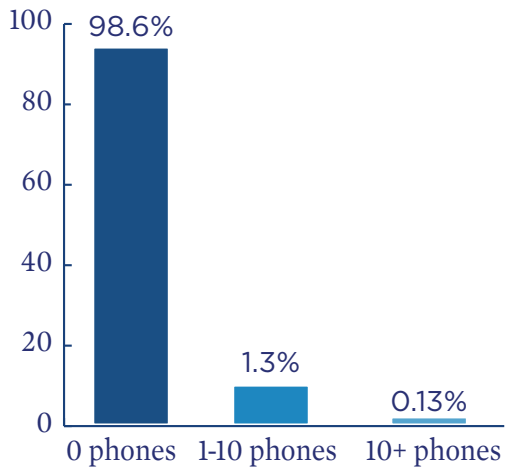
Written by Grace Chen, Thiago Jollon & Gentry Thatcher. This page of *The Phillipian* State of the Academy is SATIRE and should not be analyzed, or taken as factual statistics. For real statistics from the 2026 State of the Academy, visit phillipian.net or @thephillipian on Instagram to learn more.

AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON GRADING (2 HOURS ADDED)

2.43

Faculty members spend an average of 0.43 hours per day grading student coursework.

HOW MANY PHONES DO YOU TAKE PER DAY?



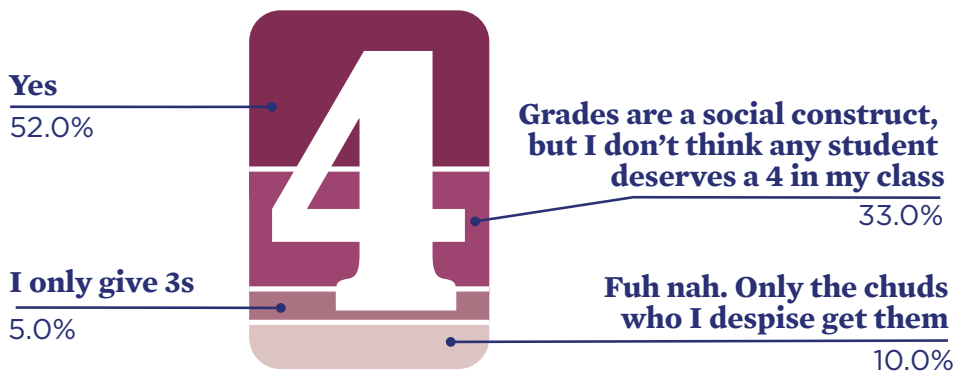
DEANS GROUPCHAT GETS LEAKED, WHO GETS CANCELLED FIRST?

100% of Dean-identifying respondents stated: We actually don't have a group chat! We still use carrier pigeon.

ARE THE BORDEN TUNNELS A METH LAB, AND HAVE YOU EVER BEEN?

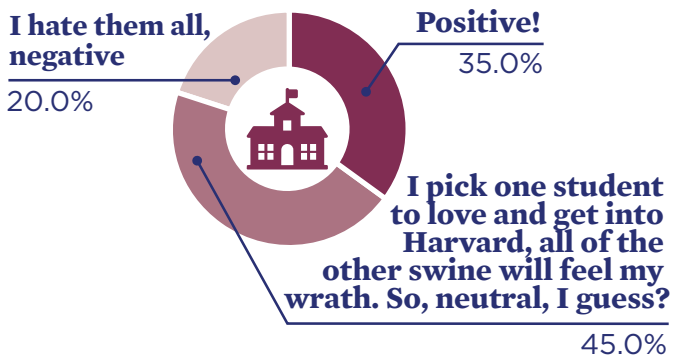
100% of respondents answered "Yes and Yes."

DO YOU THINK A 4 IS A GOOD GRADE?



ANDOVER AND COLLEGE

Do you think Andover has a positive, negative, or neutral impact on student college chances?



*Editor's Note: Roughly 35% of teachers reported being blackmailed around this time.

AI USAGE*

Which of the following do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI) for academic/educational purposes?

Grading	80.0%
Lesson Plans	75.0%
Feedback on Writing	25.0%
Personalized Midterm Comments	80.0%
Making AI content to supplement my Teaching Fellow Income	10.0%

*Editor's Note: For this question, respondents were given the option to select more than one answer if applicable.

GRADING DISPARITIES*

Are there discrepancies in how certain teachers grade?

Yes	20.0%
No	30.0%
Definitely Not	50.0%

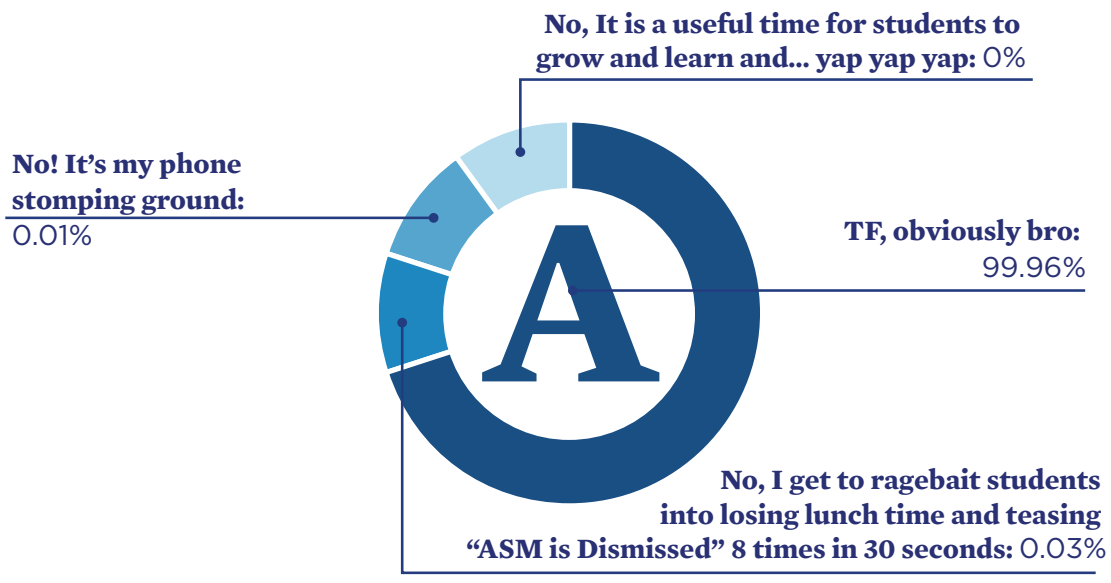
*Editor's Note: All of the faculty who answered "Definitely Not" are part of the English, History, or RelPhil Department.

DO TEACHERS CARE?

When asked whether they care about student health and well-being, 100% of respondents answered:

LMAOOOOO

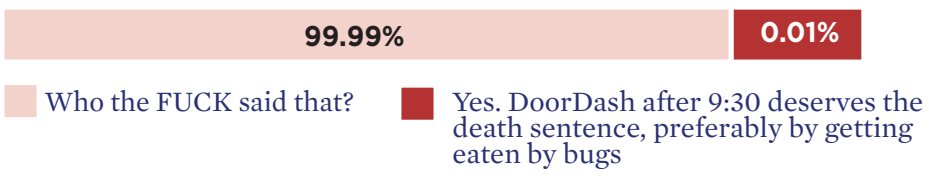
IS ASM POINTLESS?



HOW LEFT OUT DO YOU FEEL WHEN 3 STUDENTS REACH TO THE SAME HOUSE?

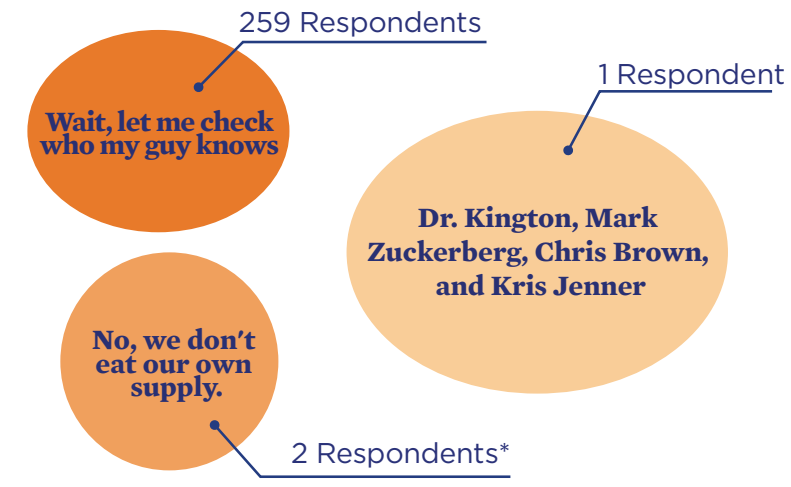
One of the OPP drones is trained on the house within 3 minutes. So, pretty scared that they might do something	50.0%
Man, these kids are like 14-18 let them have fun	25.0%
We are supposed to read those?	25.0%

DO YOU THINK DISCIPLINE IS TOO LENIENT?



BLUNT ROTATION

What would your dream (off campus) blunt rotation be?



*Editor's Note: These 2 responses came from an RV-looking-thing near campus with a recognizable three letter license plate, their validity is under question.

A. GUO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Phinding Nemo

Head of School Search Updates

Connor Chung

With Dr. Raynard Kington announcing his stepping down from Head of School, everyone is invested in the search for the next Head of School over the summer. However, with so many people to choose from, it's a very difficult decision. People are wondering how the selection process should work.

Many think that students should have a large part in the decision because they are the ones most affected by it. Many don't, thinking that the student body is too naïve to make a good decision (with some of the things I've seen going on in the library, I might have to agree with the latter).

However, the single most important factor to consider for the next Head of School is the naming of buildings. There are many buildings on campus named directly after former Heads of School as a way to permanently engrave their legacy in the school, for example, Pemberton, Taylor, Bancroft, Stearns, Chase, and Fuess. With this in mind, people are concerned with the selection of the next head of school. If we choose poorly, a conversation between an Andover student and their date downtown at La Fina could go like this:

"So, what dorm are you in?" "Uhh. I'm in Flagstaff."

"Oh, nice! Which dorm?" "Epstein house"

"Sorry, what the f-"

And then it ends. To potentially save the relationships of future Andover students (the ones in the highlighted example are likely watching Cocomelon on their iPads right now, which is why they are going to be placed in that specific dorm), we must be careful choosing the next head of school and consider this underrepresented factor.

Overheards of the Year

"No more DoorDash means no more McDonalds! Now that's not very McCool."

"Babe, why is it weird to FaceTime? The SOTA says 20% of students have digital sex..."

"Where's the Candace Owens MLK workshop?"

"Do we really have to go to Borden again? I prefer the Commons bathroom."

"Does age matter if it's a teaching fellow?"

"You're not going to believe what my house counselor's safe word is..."

"Yo, scan the QR code on that pumpkin." "Why is it asking if I'm 18 years old or Older?"

"If I won big on Polymarket, I wouldn't tell anyone, but there would be signs."

"Imma get with her Tonight dough, like Jimmy Fallon."

"Hey, worst comes to worst, you can always sue the school!"

"Would you still love me if I were a librarian?"

"When does it become macro-cheating?"

"Say Gex, how about a room visit?

"One more enchilada and OPP is not going to be happy."

"Redbull spelled backwards is llubder. Which is funny, cause I really llubder this time."

"You know what happens to nice guys like me in prison?"

"In prison you'd be worth 200 cigarettes."

"Hey, you wanna go out sometime... no?... haha April Fools'!"

"Rejection is redirection, deferral is lowkey blueballing."

"Wait, which Caribbean island are we going to for this Senior trip?"

"Call me J.P. the way I be lickin'."

"It's the cold weather, usually it's a little bigger!"

"We in the W, let us into the front of the Commons line."

"Girls are not allowed to play Clash Royale. It's MY safe haven."

Year's Top Headlines

- *"Rhyme Without Reason" Spirit Week Theme Leads to Interesting Fit with Yahtzhee Player and Friend*
- *Student attempts to "rawdog" 75-minute class without NYT games*
- *New Phillipian Masthead accompanied by an EIC rendition of Soulja Boy's "Crank That"*
- *Andover Alumni ('71) Inducted into the Hall of Fame in his girlfriend's ('21) heart*
- *Confused Andover Catholic submits MLK workshop proposal on why the crusades were awesome*
- *"Heavenly Goo" makes its mysterious return to commons. Is it Real or is it Cake?*
- *New study shows that Club Hub is second most popular "Hub" on campus*
- *Student Gets Caught Misinterpreting The Meaning Of "All In" Before Crucial Yes+ Meeting*
- *Statistics Students Predict How Many Land Acknowledgements it Will Take to Return Andover to its Rightful Owners (Casinos)*
- *PAPS Immediately Offers to Cooperate with the Feds After Being Offered Free Ice Cream*
- *Dean Of Students Office Confused On Why Cell Phone Policy Hasn't Decreased Digital Sex*
- *James Comey Indicted for Joke, Dean Esty Taking Notes*
- *Bartlet Freshman Rushed to Hospital After Horrific Misunderstanding on "Game of Sack"*
- *Blue Key Heads Judge Potential Blue Key Head for Next Positions*
- *24 Students Get a "Concussion" From Ruthless Walking Injury; Each of Them Had a 3 in Biology-500*
- *All Gender Housing to be Replaced by Iowa Frat Stack*
- *Dr. Kington Slams Phillipian: Calls it "AI generated slop-and not the fun kind"*
- *Andover Football Finally Released From "Hell on Earth"*
- *Andover Quarterback Set To Miss Weeks Of Play Because Of Hangnail On Right Labia*

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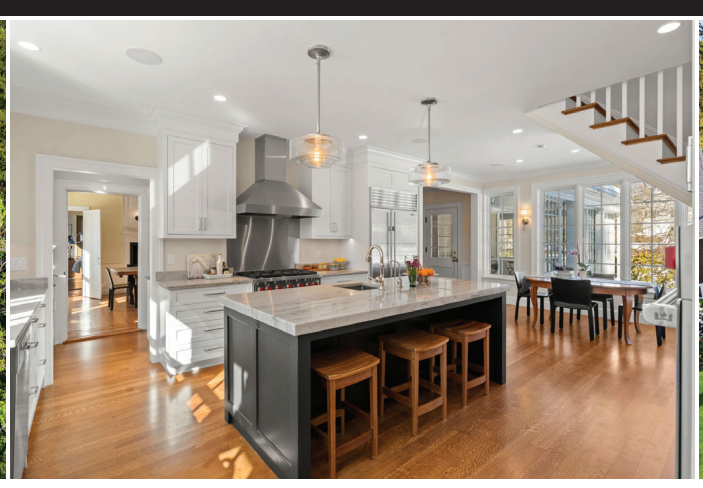
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CLUBS C9-C12

GEMMA PARK/*THE PHILLIPIAN*



Portraits, Poetry, and Penelope

CHARLIZE SOW

For Penelope Tong ’26, art has long offered a kind of freedom that few other parts of school have: room to think without pressure, to create on her own terms, and to produce something tangible. Over time, that freedom developed into a serious passion for the arts that she has carried through independent work, experimentation with new mediums, and personal interests.

For Tong, one of art’s greatest appeals is the absence of expectations that often came with academics.

“I like exercising my brain in that way without too much pressure or stress. I actually do enjoy academics and whatnot, but there’s this level of stress and expectations. I like being able to just do whatever I want and also create something. The time is going to pass anyway, so I might as well have something to show for it,” said Tong.

At Andover, Tong said her growth as an artist was shaped in part by classes that gave her more independence. In particular, in Art 550, Advanced Painting and Drawing, she began developing projects rooted in references that felt more personally meaningful.

“I think being able to pick your own references and what you want to do is really helpful in developing your style. If your art teacher gives you a prompt, that’s good to learn from. But if you really want to get into your own style, I feel like picking the reference is a super important part of my process. It’s nice to have classes that allow me to do that. Also, there are other classes that aren’t art classes that helped me. I took a poetry elective this year, and I don’t know why because I usually hate poetry, but that class kind of reshaped how I think about art, which was really cool,” said Tong.

That sense of independence continued in Art 600, a yearlong course Tong described as one of the most rewarding parts of her Andover experience. There, she worked on larger projects, pushing herself toward ideas that appeared more layered and conceptually demanding.

“We’ve had one [Art 600] exhibition already back in the fall, and we’re about to have a big show in May, I want to say. That’s going to be our big finale show...for my Art 600 project, I’m essentially doing a bunch of different portraits of different cuts of meat as my project. We were given a theme for the whole class to work around, so because it’s for class, I have to work on something a little deeper and more nuanced,” said Tong.

As the co-founder of Andover Collective Art, Tong has helped expand access to artistic creation for students who might not have regular access to materials or workspaces outside the classroom.

“The point of the club is to provide materials and studio space for people who aren’t enrolled in an art class, because students who aren’t enrolled in classes aren’t really supposed to use Elson [Art Center]. I kind of think that’s a stupid rule. I had no time to take art classes in Upper year, and I practice a lot. Not having a studio space is a big thing. It’s also not necessarily safe. If I wanted to practice with oils, I can’t do that in my room. So I think it’s important to have studio space. People who join this club get access to a ton of materials that we bought through our Abbot Grant, and they get access to the space. Then essentially we kind of guide people to create a body of work for an exhibition at the end of the year,” said Tong.



COURTESY OF PENELOPE TONG

Bella Shmuylovich ’26, a friend of Tong’s, said that Tong’s work had become more confident over time, especially in how she incorporates her personal interests.

“Honestly, I haven’t really seen some of her earlier work, but I can tell that even from the beginning of the year, she’s becoming more confident in the message she’s showing in her art and in the techniques she’s using, and she’s bringing her personal passions into the art classroom. I know taxidermy was something she did as a hobby, but bringing it into the classroom is definitely something that I think has stood out this year,” said Shmuylovich.

Julia Song ’26’s Path at Andover, Molded through Ceramics

CHARLIZE SOW

Long before she was hauling clay into the kiln, Julia Song ’26 was making things with her older sister at home: candy dispensers, squishies, and small crafts pieced together from whatever was around. That early interest toward art has followed her through Andover, evolving from a pastime into a passion for ceramics that now anchors her days in the studio and her contribution to this year’s Art 600 exhibition.

For Song, the appeal of art lies in the act of creation itself, the ability to take an idea and turn it into something tangible.

“I’ve gotten into art because I really like the idea of creation, which is, I think, the most unique thing about ceramics compared to other arts. It’s like the purple crayon. I can have any idea and make it come to life,” said Song.

That instinct to create found new outlets at Andover, where Song was able to explore mediums she had never tried before. She first encountered ceramics through an introductory class, drawn by the chance to try something new.

“I really like how Andover allows you to take a bunch of art courses that maybe you don’t have experience in. When I first heard of the ceramics class, I was really interested because I hadn’t really done ceramics before, and it’s cool how you can go from having no experience to being taught and led through a full term course. By the end, you really get to know the material that you’re delving into,” said Song.

Although Song had spent much of middle school drawing, ceramics quickly became the medium she gravitated toward most. The physicality of clay enabled a kind of creative freedom that two dimensional work could not.

“[Ceramics] was really different from 2D art, like painting and drawing, because it had an even higher level of creation to it. I did drawing throughout middle school, and while I liked it, ceramics was extra special because you can literally think of anything you want, and then make it come to life in your hands. 2D is a different version of that because you can’t really actually bring it to life, so I really like the 3D aspect of ceramics and how versatile it is,” said Song.

Song’s passion for ceramics has culminated in her Art 600 piece, a two hundred pound sculpture of a head. Like the rest of her work, the piece is closely tied to her own experiences, in this case, her connection with music.

“Right now I’m making this giant sculpture of a head, and it’s about 200 pounds and three by four feet. I started it in winter term and I put it in the kiln last week. It’s for our final exhibition, which is titled, ‘Epilogue.’ For me, it’s meant to represent how music has been something that has taken me through my Andover experience. The giant head would be a representation of that of some kind. It’ll be listening to music. I’ll put a pair of headphones on it, and it’s essentially conveying that message. I like how I get to incorporate ceramics in that journey as well,” said Song.

Although Song had been exposed to ceramics in eighth grade, her commitment to the medium developed almost entirely during her years at Andover. Claire Wang ’26, a friend of Song’s, noted her admiration for the trajectory Song’s passion has taken.

“My favorite type of art that Julia makes is ceramics, and I think that’s her favorite as well. The reason why I like it so much is because she developed this passion in the middle of Andover. Obviously she was great at it before Andover, I saw one of her pieces she made in eighth grade, but it wasn’t like that thing where you come to Andover and you have a thing and everyone knows you for it. She developed it over time, and now everyone knows her for ceramics. That is so cool because it’s so rare that people pick up a new passion while they are in high school and get recognized and become super good at it and just do it all the time,” said Wang.



JEREMIAH NUÑEZ/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Outside of the studio, Song treats ceramics as a way to step away from her phone and the demands of academics. While art has so far functioned for her as both a creative outlet and a way to make gifts, she has begun to think about what it might do beyond that.

“Throughout my life, art so far has been a way of relaxation and a creative outlet, and also making gifts for people. But maybe in the future, I’ll try to use it for storytelling. A lot of people have art that is maybe even political. So I would love to explore other ways to convey strong messages through my art,” said Song.

Song’s art has become a common highlight among her friends, who are often the recipients of birthday gifts and custom pottery requests. Wang spoke to Song’s habit of making art for others.

“I really like how selfless she is with her art, because she’ll always be sending Google forms to my friends and asking if we have any pottery we want her to make. On TikTok, if there’s a mug that looks really cool, she’ll be like, do you want me to make this for you? It’s so sweet,” said Wang.

Lucy Heyd ’26 Blends Stitches into Her Textile Art

RAMSEY SARKISIAN

Lucy Heyd ’26 approaches art experimentally, focusing on process rather than product. She works with collage, textiles, and sewing to bring her artistic visions to life. Through this artistic process, Heyd has developed not only a unique artistic style but also a sense of community and personal understanding through art.

Heyd described how she prefers to see where her art takes her, rather than planning it out to begin with.

“I don’t sketch a lot. I make sure everything is feasible and then I like to get started because I just like the making of it all. Then, sometimes, because I don’t plan a lot, I run into obstacles and I have to go back, but most of the time I just go with the flow,” said Heyd.

Rather than starting with a fixed theme, Heyd draws inspiration from her materials. In particular, Heyd uses textiles, including fabric, recycled materials, and magazines.

“I like to recycle fabrics. People know me now as someone who likes to do a bunch of projects, so they’ll give me old fabric or old clothes to work with. A lot of what I use is recycled, so sometimes I’ll start with that... and I’ll build a project around that. And the same goes for collage, too, because it’s mostly collected materials like mail and magazines,” said Heyd.

While Heyd has been making art for most of her life, she has recently become more interested in the intersection of art and academia. Heyd spoke about her class Phr-523, “Aesthetics,” in which she examines the philosophy of art.

“We talk about ‘what is art?’ and ‘what constitutes art?’” It’s interesting being someone who would consider myself an artist in that class, and thinking about the things that I make... We’ve drawn this distinction between ‘art’ and ‘craft,’ and I think I gravitate towards the craft side of things. I really am interested in the process, and different types of skills, and I’m sort of figuring out how that lends itself to the meaning of art, and how they go hand-in-hand,” said Heyd.

Heyd also spoke about how her broader academic experience at Andover has influenced her artistic perspective.

“My academic interest in art started, maybe, around seventh grade. I’ve taken some great classes...[Andover] has helped me branch out artistically, which is super helpful because you learn about important things like the elements of design...I’ve taken plenty of English classes...and even math [classes] that help me think about things differently and help me find interests that I then make art regarding. [Andover] has broadened the way I think about things,” said Heyd.

This year, Heyd has found a stronger sense of artistic community, particularly through Art-600, where students work on independent projects.

“I really like spending time with people in the studio and getting to know my classmates. [Art] is something that I didn’t always feel like brought me a lot of connection at Andover. I enjoyed all my art classes, but I never felt a super strong art community...I think I’ve stumbled upon it more this year, and I really appreciate it. It’s...nice, amongst the busyness of Andover, to find people that also appreciate dedicating time to art,” said Heyd.



JEREMIAH NUÑEZ/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

One of Heyd’s classmates from Art-600, Bella Shmuylovich ’26, commented on the sense of community in the course and Heyd’s creative experimentation.

“Our Art-600 class is very close, especially now when all of us are doing independent projects. It’s been really interesting to see how all of us kind of use each other to bounce off ideas and help each other figure out what we wanna do. I think that [Lucy] definitely puts herself outside of her comfort zone. She’s doing a quilt for our Art-600 final, something she’s never done, and she’s picked it up really well. I think I would definitely love to do that with my own art, just step outside of my comfort zone like that,” said Shmuylovich.

Elise Zhang '26's Multidisciplinary Approach to Art

TAYLA STEMPSON

Elise Zhang '26 has a hand in multiple baskets of Andover's art community, combining her interests in social justice work, fashion, art, and economics. Through a range of mediums, she has explored different approaches to art during her time at Andover.

Zhang has been creating art since a young age, growing up in a family with an artistic background. She was introduced to formal lessons early on, though she later found them restrictive and stepped away, only to return.

"I've [been doing] art since a very young age, always scribbling on my bedroom walls... a lot of people in my family do art, and I think that that creativity has really inspired me since I was younger. My parents caught on to that and put me into art classes, but... they would just make you draw something in front of you, and very quickly, my passion for art got quashed. But then afterwards, when I started picking up art on my own again, a lot of that creativity came back, and I fell in love with art again," said Zhang.

At Andover, Zhang has focused on fashion design and ceramics, while also working in other mediums such as painting. She described her interest in 3D art and its flexibility.

"With 3D art, I can just start with a blob of clay and turn it into whatever I want, and that freedom is really liberating when I'm creating art. With fashion design I think a lot of that same freedom remains as it does with ceramics, but I think there [are] also more boundaries because it's supposed to be worn by the human body, and there is so much about the human body and the form of the human body that I'm fascinated by, and so I think that's what draws me to fashion design," said Zhang.

Zhang's work has explored themes of identity, advocacy, fast fashion, and the intersection between economics and art. Her exhibits include an interactive collection created for Art 600, where viewers could take pieces of the art with them, and a solo exhibition supported by the Marblehead Arts Association.

"I was invited to have a solo exhibition at the Marblehead Arts Association, and there I exhibited, I think, more than 20 pieces exploring art as the pulse of economics, and I think that was an incredibly valuable experience to be able to not only create the art but show how my art is presented and talk to people about my art," said Zhang.

Some of Zhang's fashion designs were also featured in a New York Fashion Week exhibition, focusing on sustainable fashion. Instructor in Art Junko Pinkowski highlighted Zhang's self-motivation and engagement beyond the classroom.

"She will go out, seek [opportunities], not just in the classroom, but also outside. I mean, of course, that solo exhibition was a great opportunity for her and for her own growth, but also she's always kind of thinking about [the] outside, not just about her, [but] about what she can do with art, and I think [that's a] great kind of quality of hers as an artist," said Mrs. Pinkowski.

One of Zhang's friends and peers from Art 600, Francesca Dizon '26, highlighted Zhang's work ethic and passion.

"What inspires me most about Elise as an artist is that she's very driven. Her work is very motivated by current things that she's passionate about.

A lot of her work dealt with fast fashion and consumption. I remember that... she was also giving talks about that simultaneously. So I think it's really cool how she's able to... speak out on certain things that are extremely relevant, through various mediums, and I think that art is the best way to address that, or just a very powerful way to. So I think it's really cool how she does multimedia approaches to such things," said Dizon.



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*



From Studio to Stage: Mayen Etuk '26's Growth as a Dancer and Choreographer

DYLAN KANG

Under the bright stage lights, Mayen Etuk '26 moves with a balance of control and fluidity, her genres ranging from performing hip-hop, Afro-Caribbean, and contemporary pieces. Etuk's dance reflects a range shaped by years of exploration. What began as a way to understand her own body has evolved into a way to express identity and tell stories.

Etuk's introduction to dance was not rooted in performance, but in learning how to navigate the world around her. At a young age, her parents enrolled her in ballet after concerns about her coordination.

"I started dancing when my parents put me in a ballet studio because I've always been really tall, and my preschool teacher had concerns about my ability to navigate the world. She said I had proprioception issues, meaning that I didn't know how to move around or my surroundings. In response to that, my parents enrolled me in ballet so that I would have a better sense of how to move around and find confidence within that," said Etuk.

While her early experiences were meaningful, Etuk became aware of how much instruction shaped her development. The quality of training influenced both her confidence and technical growth.

"The studio quality is a real thing. The ability to teach really well or not is a really big factor. Some of the studios I was at were not as great at instructing ballet. As someone who needed good instruction, ballet is very specific about the features it requires, like flexible feet, flexibility, and a certain elegance. I have really inflexible feet, so it would have been better for me to go to more structured studios as opposed to more lax ones," said Etuk.

Arriving at Andover marked a shift in how Etuk approached dance. What had been centered on ballet quickly expanded into a broader range of styles.

"At Andover, the beauty of the school has been that I've definitely stretched the bounds of my dance variety. Before Andover, it was ballet. I would go to the studio and come back from it. I came to Andover and within my first two weeks, I auditioned for both Fusion, which is a hip Afro-Caribbean dance group, and Hypno, which is the hip-hop group here. Those two already added to my repertoire," said Etuk.

Over time, one group became especially meaningful. Fusion provided both a creative outlet and a sense of connection. It became central to her growth as both a dancer and a leader.

"I love all the dance groups that I'm a part of, but if I had to highlight one that's definitely been instrumental for me, it'd be Fusion. [Fusion] also just has that cultural connection, because it is an Afro-Caribbean dance group. It's a great reminder of home whenever we do an Amapiano piece or we tap into the Nigerian Afrobeat sphere," said Etuk.



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Her senior project, a THD 902 independent choreographic piece, marked a culmination of her time at Andover. The process, both demanding and transformative, challenged her to define her voice as a choreographer.

"The most memorable thing for me in my Andover dance career was definitely my 902. I was really stressed going into it because we had around seven weeks to make it happen. I was in the studio a lot last term. Sometimes I'd wake up at six just to walk over to Snyder [Center] and dance or come up with new choreography, and then stay later in the evenings doing the same thing. I watched it from the wings as they were performing it, and I was just so proud of everyone for trusting in the process. It really did come together in the end," said Etuk.

That experience reflects Etuk's broader approach to dance. Her choreography shifts depending on context and intention, and each piece carries a different purpose.

"For my 902, the driving themes were repatriation, grief, freedom, and subjugation. With Fusion, what we try to embrace is joy and a little bit of sass. I want to put on a student showcase and have people perform what I create. It really puts dance into perspective, and I want to do that again. Dance means the world to me, and I'd hate to not continue doing it," said Etuk.

Through Every Step: Marisol Tang Rasmussen '26's Life in Dance

AUTUMN XIA

Before the curtain rises at Grasshopper each year, the members of the Asian Performing Arts Club (APAC) close together in a tight circle. One by one, they hype each other up, celebrating the hard work put in during weeks of choreography, rehearsals, and solidifying every last detail in the routine. As Marisol Tang Rasmussen '26 recounted her dance journey, the portions before Andover, and the influential parts of her Andover dance career, she expressed that specific act to be her "recurring favorite moment."

That Grasshopper circle represents everything dance has come to mean to her.

"I first started dancing at two years old. My uncle was the one that introduced me to the studio that I started at back home. Automatically, I really liked it. Dance was my sport, and I didn't really do anything else after that. I was classically trained in ballet, and I also did traditional Chinese dance, in elementary school as part of the Chinese association that I'm in. Once I reached high school, I knew dance was definitely something that I wanted to pursue as a club and hobby while I'm here, all four years, to not only keep me fit and active, but also to build a really good community with the other dancers on campus," said Tang Rasmussen.

Her journey at Andover, from an eager freshman year to lead choreographer, was shaped not only by her own drive and love for dance, but also the mentors and communities she found along the way.

"I will definitely say my first two years here really made me a better dancer. I had amazing [APAC] co-heads, who really wanted me to hone in on my capabilities as a dancer, but also as a leader in dance. So that greatly helped with my experience and overall success. So I definitely credit most of my capabilities to my co-heads. Freshman year, it was Ashley Park ['23] and Vanessa Fan ['23]. My Lower year, it was Ashley Park ['24], and Gloria Chen ['24]," said Tang Rasmussen.

Tang Rasmussen joined APAC's board during the Spring term of her Junior year and has remained on it ever since, ultimately becoming main choreographer as well as co-head with Elise Zhang '26 this year. As main choreographer, Tang Rasmussen approaches her work with a clear purpose and goal in mind.

"The main message that I want to get across with my work and choreography/teaching the other girls is truly embodying the ethereal and beautiful dance styles and movements, as well as, educating and visually showing Chinese culture and Asian culture to our audiences who watch us, regardless of their ethnicity," said Tang Rasmussen.

She expressed her favorite and most meaningful performances of the year.

"My favorite [choreography] this year was our Grasshopper performance. I loved the song, and I loved the dance that I choreographed with the help from Adelyne Liu ['28] and Kaya Hurteau ['27]. I just think it really came together. The fluidity of it, the different small group things that we did, and then the little senior piece at the end was amazing," said Tang Rasmussen.

Beyond APAC, Tang Rasmussen has also performed with Hypno and Fusion, rounding out what has been a full and consistent dance presence on campus. When asked which genre she feels most drawn to, she resisted settling on any one answer. Instead, she set her focus on her near college future, where she will continue to explore genres of dance and further pursue her love for the sport.



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"Lyrical, or something more like jazz, so strut for example. Those types of dances are so fun, and the way they articulate the bodies is just amazing. Props to all of those dancers... I really hope that I can join some of the dance groups in college. I know that will be significantly more competitive. But I'm hoping that after four years here, and the past 16 years of dancing, I'll be able to join those groups. I'm definitely interested in hip hop. And if there isn't a traditional Chinese or Asian dance club there, then I'll definitely think about starting my own," said Tang Rasmussen.

Oboe, Biology, & Ballet Slippers: Morgan Hsu '26's Dedicated Dance Career at Andover

RAMSEY SARKISIAN

Morgan Hsu '26's dance career at Andover has been extensive: Hsu is a part of Blue Strut (Strut), a Dance Producer, and involved in numerous annual performances including Grasshopper, Andover Dance Festival, and several 902 performances. Hsu's dedication to dance has been a place where she has found lifelong friendships, academic interests, and a deep love.

Although a primarily classically trained ballet dancer, Hsu explored a broader range of styles at Andover.

"I grew up very strictly classically trained, so when I came to Andover I was initially very rigid in sticking with only ballet. But, as the years here went by, I tried a bunch of different styles, and, although I'm not technically inclined toward all of them, some of them have stuck with me. IIt's just made me a more open-minded dancer, both as someone who enjoys watching and someone who enjoys performing it," said Hsu.

Hsu's exposure to new styles also affected her dancing, helping her to become more fluid in her expression.

"[Trying new styles] made my upper body less stiff. I used to think about 'port de bras' as keeping your arms in the same position as best as possible, but expanding into different styles has just made my upper body more expressive. My teacher, when I was back in Hong Kong and very young, was very focused on getting the correct positions. That definitely set me up really well for dance in general, but it also did make me an extremely stiff dancer. Over the years, I've just learned to make the movement in between each position count rather than just the positions themselves," said Hsu.

Hsu had arrived at Andover also as a musician, playing the oboe at the New England Conservatory. Though she ultimately gave up music to be able to spend more time on dance, Hsu continues to be influenced by her musicianship.

"I found dancing to be a nice blend of moving my body [and] also incorporating things I've learned from music. I was spending a lot more time dancing, and dance is one of those things where I'm able to enjoy it every time I do it, but also I'm able to feel very deeply about it, which to me has typically been something mutually exclusive. With music, I really only enjoyed it while I did it, but I didn't feel a very deep connection to it so, ultimately, I thought it would be better for me to just devote that time to dance. The musicality part between dance and playing an instrument has a lot of overlap," said Hsu.

Hsu's experience with dance at Andover has, overall, been one of connection and community. Hsu spoke about getting to work with friends and her experience with 902s.

"The 902s are always really enjoyable because learning choreography that my friends have come up with is really so special, and I can see which parts of them they're trying to express or how they came up with something," said Hsu.

Hsu also performed with close friends Anna Tsvetkov '26 and Tara Wei '25 in an All-School Meeting (ASM) celebrating Abbot and Andover's 50-year merger. She spoke about the excitement and nerves surrounding the performance and how camaraderie shaped her experience.

"I had done a piece choreographed by Ms. [Katie] Clark with Anna and Tara, and we had done it for Andover Dance Festival, and then to celebrate Abbot's 50-year merger with the Academy, there was an ASM with a bunch of student performers. [We] were asked to perform and so we did, and



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I remember, before we went on stage, we were so nervous, our hands were clammy, and we got up there. It was the scariest thing in my life, but because I was standing next to two of my best friends, we were laughing the whole time. Now, when I go back and look at the pictures, we're smiling ear-to-ear, so it was a good blend of a new challenge [and] a fun memory because we were laughing so much," said Hsu.

Hsu's passion for dance intersects with her love for science as well. Hsu spoke about her Biology 600 project, which researches dance anatomy, and how that combines two of her passions.

"I'm taking Biology 600 right now, which is the independent laboratory research course, and my research project is about whether the male or female anatomy is more suited for going on pointe, or whether it's just a societal convention that only female dancers go on pointe. I've been using pig tendons, sheep tendons, and 3-D printed foot parts and trying to model that. I actually find it really interesting because I love science and I obviously also love dancing, so something in the realm of biomechanics is really interesting to me [and] I hope to pursue that going forward," said Hsu.

Nina Torrens '26: Jazzed For Dance

TAYLA STEMPSON

Nina Torrens '26 has been expressing herself through movement for as long as she can remember. Now co-head of Blue Strut (Strut) along with Yumi Lai '27 and Eliza Francis '26, Torrens credits both the group and Andover for introducing her to the world of choreographing and deepening her love for jazz.

As a child, Torrens explored painting, singing, and a variety of dance genres, from hip hop to lyrical. Through her trials in the arts, she began to focus more on jazz and choreography at Andover.

"I started taking ballet classes as a really little kid... I stopped dancing at the end of the third grade and started doing rhythmic gymnastics instead. Then, in fifth grade, my gymnastics gym had a dance company connected with it, [and] I was at a rhythmic gymnastics competition, and the head of the dance company was like, 'I think you'd be better in dance.' So then I joined that dance company, and that's when I first started doing competitive dance...I've been with that company ever since," said Torrens.

She continued, "Before coming to Andover, I liked contemporary [dance] more. Ever since being in Strut... I'm obsessed with jazz. I feel like I get into such a good energy whenever I'm doing jazz."

Torrens joined Blue Strut, Andover's 11-person jazz dance group, in her Junior year. She credits much of her experience and improvement in stage presence and fluidity to the group.

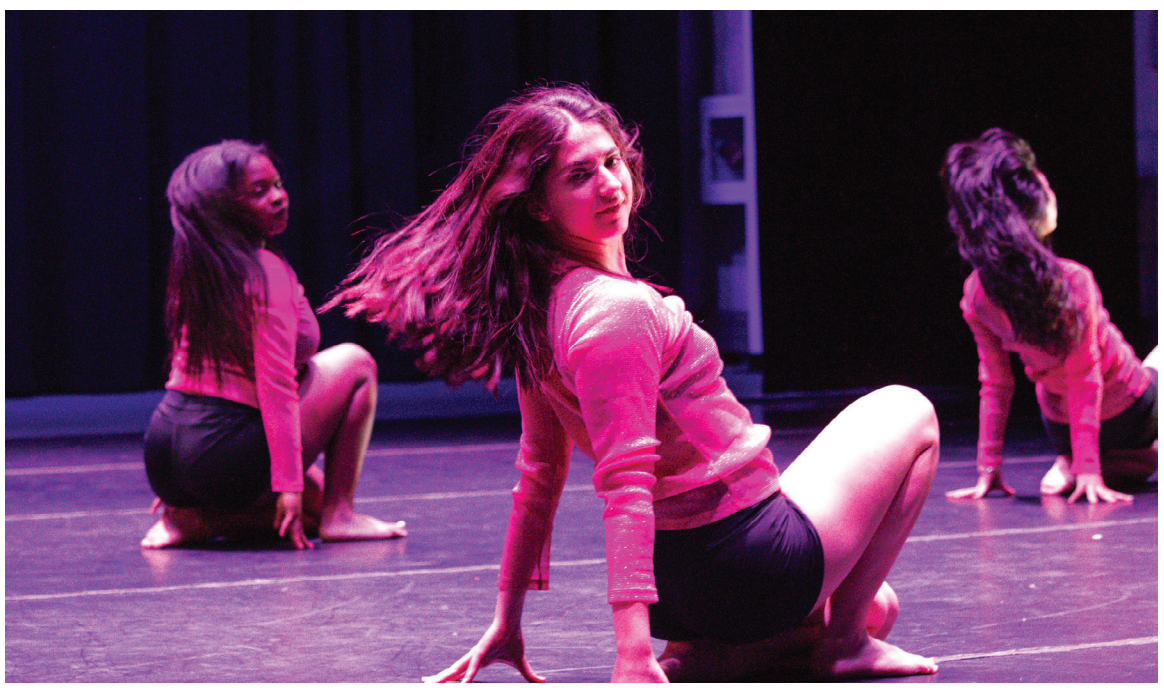
"When I first started competing or first joined the competitive company, you can dance on stage, and then you can perform and express with your face, but also, [express] with your body, and I think that through Strut, I became a lot more comfortable doing that. So I think it made my movement quality and, again, my emotional expression better on stage, both in Strut and at my company for solos," said Torrens.

Through her work with Blue Strut and in the Choreographic Elements class, Torrens said she has grown more confident experimenting with choreography and described her philosophy.

"I've become a lot more creative, and I've tried funkier things... With other choreography stuff I've done outside of school or with people at school but outside of class, and Strut, or in my choreographic elements class as well, it really depends on the style if I'm going for something a little bit more lyrical-y, contemporary-ish.

Usually, I try to give it more emotional depth and not necessarily just be sad or happy, but to tell a bit of a story. Yumi and I did a small choreography piece to Purple Rain outside of class, and the song is, like, "such a shame our friendship had to end," so we kind of made about two people growing apart, which was very interesting to have that kind of intention behind it.

I kind of go based on vibes



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a lot of the time. If I'm feeling very stressed one day, I'll probably do something a little bit sadder, but if I'm feeling very excited and happy, it'll probably be more jazzy," said Torrens.

Beyond campus, Torrens still competes for the dance company she joined in 5th grade, where she dances hip-hop, jazz, ballet, lyrical, contemporary, and more.

"With that [group], I go to dance conventions. This year, I actually went to 24-7 with Yumi and Adelyne [Liu '28]. That's a really big convention. I'll usually go to one or two a year with my dance company, and that one I just did for fun with my Andover friends," said Torrens.

Her co-head, Lai, expressed her adoration for Torren's versatility and expressive range, alongside her dedication to dance.

"It's really inspiring to see how adaptable she is to all different kinds of dance styles. For example, she's able to bring a lot of emotion and show that on her face...those upbeat pop dance styles like Blue Strut or jazz, you can see that she's having so much fun on her face, and when she's in another style, when she's in that slow kind of lyrical dance, you can see how she feels every beat of the music in her face and how she's so absorbed in that," said Lai.

Looking ahead, Torrens hopes to continue dance in college, including trying out for a Division I dance team this spring.

"I really hope to continue dancing in college, whether that's on the Division I team or just in clubs in general. I would love to choreograph for a club. It was so cool to do that with [Blue] Strut this year, and who knows? [There are] so many opportunities. There's a really cool studio called Steps on Broadway in New York City, and I want to start going to more classes there more often because they just have some really, really cool choreography and a bunch of different styles," said Torrens.

Eliza Francis '26 Finds Her Voice in Motion

RUBY LIN

Eliza Francis '26 is involved in multiple dance groups at Andover and serves as Co-Head for BlueStrut and Footnotes. From standing in the back of her first dance class at Andover to leading her own self-choreographed 902 (THD902) dance her senior year, Francis has grown as a dancer while leaving a mark on Andover's dance community.

As a fidgety, restless, and excited child, Francis often felt the urge to move her body. She attended Broadway shows and ballets as long as she could remember, and recalled being enthralled by the movements of dancers on stage.

"I always had a love for art, and that paired with the need to move was enough for my parents to enroll me in dance. I didn't start taking it super seriously until I was 11 or 12, but it's been a part of my life forever. Being able to know how your body moves and manipulating it has given me a sense of assuredness and how I walk through the world, and I'm very grateful for it," said Francis.

Francis expressed what specifically about dance drew her in.

"I found [dance] to be the most captivating form of storytelling. I love words. I love music, and I find all those ways of crafting a narrative to be really valuable, but I think dance unlocks a certain level of communication with an audience and yourself that is something I am continually inspired by. I think dancing is also perhaps the best way to build confidence," said Francis.

Francis's unique style is based on Giordano's style of jazz, which she is trained in. She is also familiar with Horton, Graham, and Limon, and experiments in contemporary and commercial jazz. Francis explained her preference for freer movements.

"I prefer more free movements that have less roles attached to them. I feel like that is when the best choreography emerges when you're not trying to adhere to conventions, but you're instead trying to see how far you can push your body," said Francis.

Beyond Andover, Francis returns to her home studio to teach and take dance classes. Each year, every Monday before Thanksgiving, she teaches a jazz class to ages 11 to 18.

"I do less [dance outside of Andover] now because I feel so enriched at Andover, but the summer is quite long, and I don't like to go that long without being in my body and getting to move. So, I love returning to my home studio where they do summer intensives and bring in new emerging choreographers and artists to set pieces for us," said Francis.

One of Francis's most cherished memories of dance at Andover was her performance in her friend's Theatre-902 production, dedicated and centered around his friend who had passed. She described her meaningful experience portraying that friend.

"I remember his mother coming up to me and holding my hands and saying how much it meant to him and their family. And, I remember all his friends being in the audience,



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and I was so anxious because I wanted to portray his story to its truest and most magical form. And, I think I got fairly close," said Francis.

In her Senior year, Francis created her own Theatre-902 performance, exploring the concepts of love. She explained how the experience was one of the most rewarding things she has done at Andover.

"[Love] was the perfect canvas for each dancer to imprint their own experience... I know we often think of our time at [Andover] in terms of accolades, winning X awards, getting X GPA. But, I think it was that moment of my [Theatre-902 production] where I really felt like I had done something good. And, I will try to seek that out in the future, because it really is the cherry on top of my Winter term," said Francis.

Hluma Mangcu '26 Leads Fusion with Contagious Energy and Lively Stage Presence

TAYLA STEMPSON

Hluma Mangcu '26 has brought energy to the Andover stages for the past three years. As co-head of Fusion, an Afro-Caribbean dance group, and a member of Hypnotic (Hypno), a hip-hop-focused dance group, she has learned how to stun and shine in any performance she's in. Whether it be prepping for Grasshopper, performing in the pep rallies, or just weekly rehearsals, Mangcu has learned the ins and outs of expression through dance and what it means to her.

Mangcu got her start in dance early. After starting ballet classes from the age of four, she stuck with it. As she grew up, dance became an integral part of her childhood and her identity. At Andover, Mangcu picked up dance after seeing the groups at her revisit show.

"I remember watching the revisit show and seeing all the different dance groups perform, and I was honestly mesmerized. I thought they were so good, and they also just looked like a really fun community to be a part of. When I got to campus, I was friends with a lot of people who were [in] different dance groups here at school, and they would just talk so highly of them. So I thought, why not try something new and just audition for the dance groups," said Mangcu.

Mangcu explained how being involved in Fusion and Hypno has greatly facilitated her improvement and leadership abilities. She credited her growth in confidence to her gained experience and collaboration within her dance groups.

"The confidence and the stage presence that I've developed is tremendous. My Lower year, which was my first year in Fusion, I really felt like I was trying to prove myself and prove that I was a good dancer and that I should be on the team. But I think something that's come with age and experience is, first of all, knowing that I'm a good dancer, being confident in that, and then being able to build off of confidence to have a really good stage presence," said Mangcu.

As co-head of Fusion, Mangcu has utilized her experience to encourage her group and foster a collaborative dynamic. Friend and fellow dancer Gracie Aziabor '26 lauded Mangcu's contagious spirit and detail-oriented way of leading, as well as her way of capturing the stage.

"She's very welcoming, and she's really good at making the people around her feel comfortable. That is, [for] one, really good for the team aspect of our dance groups, Hypno and Fusion, but I also think it works with the audience as well, because you can see how her facial expressions and her energy also [bring] the audience in, and [have] the audience feeling more comfortable watching the performance and more excited to cheer and everything," said Aziabor.

Mangcu's fellow Fusion co-head, Mayen Etuk '26, expressed a similar sentiment. Etuk emphasized how lively Mangcu is as a dancer and her unique stylistic creativity.

"Hluma always uses a lot of power and energy when she dances. The stage lights up when she steps in. She always uses 150% power when she moves and looks like she's having a lot of fun. She also isn't afraid to get a little wild and lose inhibition, which is very important in dance. Some people play it safe and look a little boring as a result. Hluma always adds spice with a little twist," said Etuk.

Mangcu tries to bring her story and her culture to the stage whenever possible. Through Fusion's choreography, Mangcu was able to introduce people to core parts of her identity and inspirations as a dancer.

"With Fusion in particular, since it's an Afro-Caribbean dance group, it's really an opportunity for me and the other co-heads to bring our culture to the stage. I grew up in South Africa, and through Fusion, I've been able to share the music I grew up with or different dance moves I grew up doing [with] the Andover community and share my culture in that way," said Mangcu.



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Dance at Andover has been an experience in which Mangcu has made unlikely friends, gained community, and learned the importance of leadership. Mangcu expressed her gratitude for what Andover has taught her, and how she intends to apply those lessons in her life after Andover.

"I'm really grateful for my Andover dance journey. I think it's made me grow as a leader and as a person... I've made some of the most amazing memories through my spaces here in Andover, and I've made so many friends that I never would have made otherwise... Fusion and Hypno have given me a space to just connect with people in a different way, and I'm really grateful for that. And I will take everything I learned at Andover with me to my future dance spaces," said Mangcu.

Co-Head Cindy Yang '26 Speaks on the "Allure" of Photon

CHARLIZE SOW

Every year, Juniors crowd into club fair eager to kickstart their Andover careers and enlist themselves in as many clubs as possible. Cindy Yang '26 was no exception, and the allure of spinning, glowing lights of Photon were enough to draw their interest. What began as a passing interest eventually became their main club at Andover and the space where they developed as an artist and as a leader.

Yang reflected on what first drew their attention to Photon and what made them stay. Though initially drawn in by the visual appeal of the spinning lights, they found that the community kept them invested long after Junior year.

"Initially, [I joined Photon] because the flashy lights seemed really cool. In freshman year, I was signing up for a bunch of clubs even if I didn't go to all of them, but I did end up going to Photon's first meeting, and I really enjoyed attending the weekly meetings. When I began to become more proficient in the props and started to perform, I also really enjoyed the sense of community that came with that. Those are the two big reasons I stuck with Photon for so long," said Yang.

Serving as a Co-Head has not been an easy feat. For the past two years, Yang has taken on various responsibilities ranging from scheduling rehearsals to mentoring new members through difficult tricks.

"Photon is my main club on campus, so I feel like Photon has done the most in terms of teaching me leadership skills. For example, on the most basic level, how do you coordinate meetings? How do you schedule rehearsals? How do you get everybody to come at one time and focus on learning choreography? But there are also more soft skills, people skills, like how do you encourage people who are trying to learn a trick but aren't really getting it? How do you teach people in a way that's empathetic to them? Photon has really taught me a lot in terms of how to be a leader," said Yang.

Fellow Photon Co-Head Allegra Lee '27 has worked alongside Yang over the past year and credited them with guiding her through the unfamiliar responsibilities of leading a club.

"Being the youngest Co-Head of Photon, I saw this as more of my training year, because I had no idea what I was doing. I had never really choreographed before. I'd never run meetings before, and I didn't really know how to reach out to adult advisors or access club funds and so Cindy spearheaded all of that and helped me figure out what to do. That kind of patience is something that I don't always give to myself, and so I really appreciate it coming from Cindy," said Lee.

Alex Lin '28, a member of Photon, has watched Yang lead the club since her Junior year. As Lin prepares to take on more responsibility on the board next year, she reflected on the kind of leader she hopes to follow.

"Cindy has always been the legendary person who was really cracked at everything they do in terms of Photon. [They are] someone I really look up to and someone a lot of people really look up to. As of recent, because we, the rest of the board, know they're graduating, so we're trying to pick up some [of those responsibilities], but they've been doing just genuinely so much for the club in terms of funding and planning things and meetings, and administrative stuff. It's always them who is on top of everything and getting the rest of us to do our job," said Lin.

Lee shared similar admiration, crediting Yang not just for their leadership, but for the technical skill and patience they bring to the club.

"Cindy is also one of my biggest inspirations in Photon. They are really, really good at yo-yo, but also really an amazing choreographer. From my freshman year all the way up until now, I've never not been impressed by how they can just run the club so well and help people so well. The way that they teach people tricks and help people through routines as we're preparing in rehearsals. It's just that magic touch that kind of makes everything work," said Lee.

Looking back on four years in Photon, Yang highlighted the community as the most integral part of their experience.

"Even though it's small, even though it's niche, [Photon] has a very strong sense of community. It has a very strong sense of mutual support and wanting and loving to see each other succeed and cheer each other on. It's really important to lean into that culture, to lean into the community of flow at Andover, and get to know the people, get to know each other, pick up a new prop you never have before," said Yang.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*



Anny Wang '26: Connection On and Off the Keys

HAYLEY FAN

With her passion and talent on the keyboard, Anny Wang '26 has spent her four years at Andover exploring and growing her musical skillset. From a beginner first starting jazz piano to a leader in her ensembles, Wang has demonstrated immense growth as a musician.

Wang's musical journey began with a bold step outside her comfort zone by starting jazz piano in middle school. As a beginner, she was not familiar with the form, but this didn't stop her from joining a jazz chamber ensemble once she arrived on campus.

"There were these jazz chamber groups, which are small groups of jazz that we could set up to do, even if we didn't make it to the big jazz band, and I did that. It turned out to be what became Goose&Moose in the future. I really, really enjoyed the jazz chamber because it was a place where I felt super welcomed even though I wasn't the best or as experienced as the Seniors were. They were super nice, kind, and supportive. I felt like I was able to make mistakes in a super safe place. So, it became such a big part of my Andover life," said Wang.

One particular jazz chamber group Wang participated in her Lower year grew to become something more. Its members, including Ethan Liu '26 and Claire Wang '26, slowly transitioned to form a campus band, Goose&Moose.

"We did a bunch of performances and we became really good friends. By winter-ish spring, we wanted to name ourselves and then that's where the name Goose&Moose came. We also signed up for some events outside of the school performances such as Night on the Knoll. That was our first show. We kept Goose&Moose alive, even though two of the Seniors graduated, and we slowly expanded Goose&Moose. Back then it felt different, but it always has and will feel like a family to me. It's just always super supportive. Everyone loves each other and we love spending time together," said Wang.

Wang's experience as a part of many musical groups facilitated the creation of many joyous memories. Music at Andover has allowed her to experience working with a wide range of styles, instruments, and musicians. When asked about her favorite memory with music at Andover, she recounted the work and payoff of her band Goose&Moose when it was striving to enter Grasshopper for the first time.

"In my freshman year and my Lower year, Grasshopper was so competitive, they had so many rounds. There were so many student bands as well. Goose&Moose really tried so hard. We had these morning rehearsals at 6:00 a.m. I would get everyone Panera. It was really funny. We had these morning rehearsals two or three times a week, and then we got into Grasshopper. I remember when I got this news, I was in the library and I was so excited. I literally told everyone around me. I was like, 'Oh my god, Goose&Moose was going to perform at Grasshopper,'" said Wang.

An important aspect of Wang's music are the relationships and connections it builds. The many roles she has taken on are often in collaboration with others and performed to a cheering, enthusiastic audience. Whether it's as a pianist for her band or jazz chamber group, Wang embraces the interactive aspect of music, and the role it has in inspiring others.

"For me, music is all about building a connection between your audience, yourself, and the people who you are playing with. Jazz especially is such a collaborative form of art. You can't really have your own solo and you always have to acknowledge other people. You're always listening to others. You're always adjusting with other people's energy and emotions and attitude. So it's all collaboration which is such a big part of jazz music and the music I play," said Wang.



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Claire Wang '26 Strings Her Own Path in Andover's Music Scene

CHARLIZE SOW

While the violin is most often heard in classical settings, Claire Wang '26 has spent the past four years bringing it into jazz. Whether playing in Goose&Moose, leading various ensembles, or jamming it out in a practice room, Wang has found joy in redefining a long-time passion and inspiring other musicians at Andover to step outside their comfort zone.

Wang's journey with the violin began at the age of four in a Suzuki group class. Even so, she credits her initial interest in the instrument less to those lessons and more to her mother's enthusiasm and encouragement.

"I had my first recital for my studio. My mom recorded it and posted it on YouTube. She titled it 'five-year-old debut.' I'm not sure what came over her, but it was so funny. Every single day, she probably tells me about that video. It was not even that good a playing, but to my mom, somehow it was just so moving. It's probably my mom and her support, because she's the mom that will hype you up over the smallest thing. You could turn in your math homework, and my mom will be like, 'Oh my God, you're gonna win the Nobel Peace Prize,'" said Wang.

That early enthusiasm has carried into a practice that now consumes hours of her day. For Wang, the appeal of playing the violin lies in the satisfaction of watching small efforts add up over time.

"When I'm working on a piece, you never really see improvement until maybe three months later, four months later. You just have to practice every single day, super slowly, and it's this delayed gratification that is super satisfying. That's what really draws me into it. Knowing that I'm putting in the hours every single day without guaranteed results, but still choosing to do that anyway. There's something very addicting about that," said Wang.

At Andover, Wang began to expand beyond classical music into genres where her instrument rarely appeared. This shift occurred at the end of her freshman year when her friend Anny Wang '26 invited her into Goose&Moose, a student band on campus.

"[Anny] brought me [into Goose&Moose] and I've continued jazz since then. I found my teacher Ms. Varo at Andover, who taught me how to improvise and play in the jazz style. Because of that, I've gotten to do so many performance opportunities I would have never thought of doing. For example, I play with my band Goose and Moose. We do on-campus gigs, and we also have our own den show. We play pop music. I also get to play with a bunch of other bands, and it's just so nice being able to explore different genres after coming to Andover, having the resources and friends to help me do so," said Wang.

Beyond exploring new genres, Wang has also grown into a leader in her ensembles. Anny Wang, who plays alongside her in both Goose&Moose and chamber music, commended her dedication and ability to guide her peers in rehearsals.

"She is a leader through her music. It's super apparent in our chamber music. She's always signaling the music structure and tempo. Another thing is that she's really hardworking. Whenever she shows up to practice, she's always super well prepared. She's ready for the solo. You can tell that she has really mastered the piece because she marks her page so much, and she understands the emotion that she wants to convey through the piece, and she leads the band [Goose&Moose] through that," said Anny Wang.

Wang's decision to pursue jazz despite early struggles has rippled into the wider music community at Andover. Younger students have begun improvising on their instruments, and her presence in groups like Goose&Moose has inspired others to form bands of their own.

"When I came into the school, the first time I played with the jazz band, I couldn't improvise. I couldn't do anything. But then I



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just decided to stick through with it. To see that me choosing to stick through with it, and putting the hours into practicing and getting better, has inspired so many other string-players to follow my footsteps. I'm really glad that, not to toot my own horn, that I would potentially be their role model," said Wang.

As Wang reflected on her music journey at Andover, she pointed to a takeaway, that the most rewarding parts came from the willingness to take a risk.

"A big part of my journey was taking a risk with starting jazz, knowing that there were no teachers. When we talk about resources at Andover, we limit ourselves to what's available. There's this vast collection of resources that are not put out to you. [But] it's there through the community, you going out and making it happen for yourself. Jazz was something for me where I just went ahead, I found my friends, I asked them to play with me, and I used what I could to develop a skill that I didn't have before coming to Andover," said Wang.

Pianist Wooba Song '26: The Heart of Chamber Music

BENJAMIN PARK

At the matriculation ceremony when Wooba Song '26 first entered Andover, he sat in the audience as William Ge '25 filled the performance room with the sweeping excitement of Debussy's "L'isle joyeuse" on the piano. For Song, the performance did not just sound impressive, but felt like an invitation to Andover's musical world, showing him that music at Andover can become a path of growth, community, and possibility.

"When I heard [William Ge performing], I was just awestruck, because he's my close friend and role model. At that point, I saw the lack of limits of how far I could go with my [music journey at Andover]. After that, I signed up for chamber music, auditioned for [wind ensemble] on the saxophone, and I also auditioned on piano for chamber music. I remember going to the [Cochran] Chapel and being so nervous about playing a piece in front of Ms. Plummer. But then it turned out to be a really nice and chill experience," said Song.

Long before Andover, Song's relationship with music began at home, when he was not even four years old. His mother's casual piano playing drew him toward the instrument, and Song's interest for music came from his own fascination rather than pressure.

"I started [playing the] piano when I was three years and nine months old, so almost four years old. At that time, I begged my mom to let me take lessons, even though she actually didn't want me to. She knew that a lot of parents really wanted their child to be good at [an] instrument, and she didn't want to fit into that stereotype of forcing their child. She played piano for a little bit, so when I was young, she would always play for me, and I really liked it. I begged her to either teach me or let me take lessons, and she eventually gave in," said Song.

At Andover, some of Song's most meaningful experiences with music have come from the people around him, especially in intimate spaces where rehearsals and ensembles turned into friendship and camaraderie. Claire Wang '26, a friend of Song and the other Co-President of the Academy Chamber Music Society, has seen Song's collaborative spirit in the way he supports other musicians, even when doing so requires extra time, preparation, and musical flexibility.

"Wooba is so selfless. I've asked a few too many times for him to learn wildly random piano parts, and he does it. Obviously, he's amazing [at] sight-reading, but he's just such a dedicated person. There was one time before an Abbot cluster meeting where we were trying to find a really sight-readable classical piece for us to play. Obviously, that doesn't exist. I [suggested],

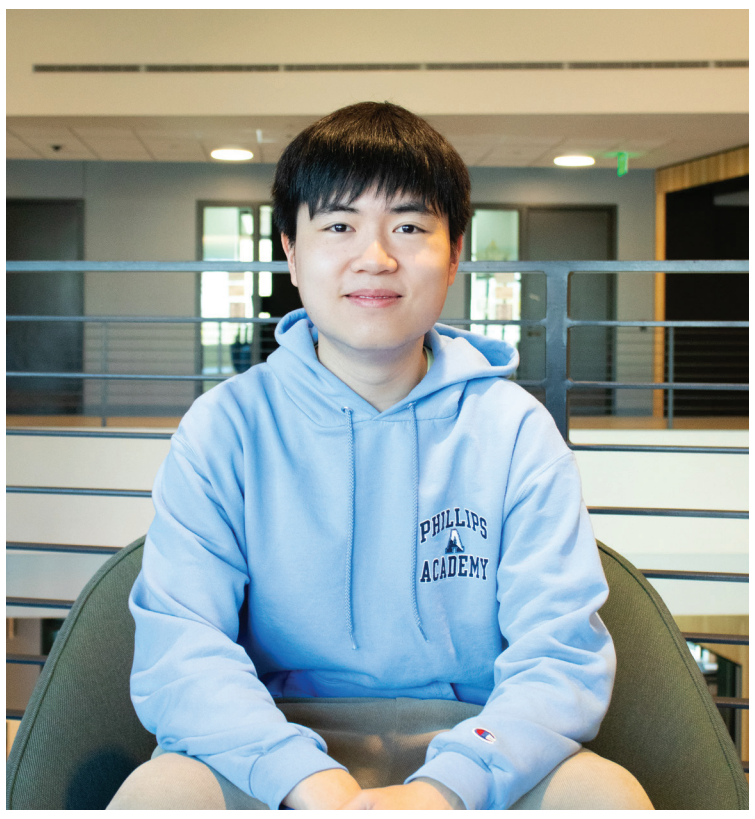
'What if we play something jazz?' Wooba doesn't play jazz piano, but he literally went back, took the score, wrote out everything by [himself], and annotated it. He did that all in one night just for the Abbot Cluster meeting," said Wang.

Song's musical philosophy reflects the same meticulous attention to detail. When approaching a piece, he tries to not only understand the notes, but also the composer's intention, historical context, and various emotions behind the music.

"When I perform, I try to both bring that through the music and also give my emotion and my mental state to the audience, so that there's a genuine connection between me, the instrument, the music, and the audience. Like any language, music really has no right or wrong. It's completely up to the intention of the musician. Even if you sometimes don't like an artist or a piece of music, there's always something to be learned or appreciated in all genres of music, whether you like it or not at first," said Song.

Over four years at Andover, Song has grown from an aspiring performer into a devoted musician focused on heartfelt communication through music. The same student who once nervously stepped onto the recital stage now approaches performance with great enthusiasm.

"I definitely got a lot more confident with performing throughout my time at Andover. I remember when I first played in my first student recital, I was really timid. I walked on stage, and I didn't know whether I should bow or not, so I did a half bow. I bowed really quickly and ran off the stage. Through learning with all the mentors and all the other musicians, I developed a lot more confidence. Now, I carry myself a



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lot better when I'm on stage. My focus is a lot more on the music itself and less on stage fright or having to play for an audience," said Song.

As Song looks toward his future and college, he is still deciding whether music will become a double major, minor, or serious extracurricular commitment. Regardless of what form it takes, however, he hopes to keep music as a lasting part of his life beyond Andover.

"I know for a fact that I want music to last in my life. I want music to be with me for the rest of my life, either as a hobby or as something more serious. One thing I definitely see myself doing, though, is playing a lot of chamber music. I really enjoy the process of making new friends and broadening my repertoire through chamber [music]," said Song.

Playing in E Minor, But Cellist Ian Gu '26 Finds Major Frequency at Andover

BENJAMIN PARK & SOOHAN CHO

In January, during the Senior Soloist Concert, the warm, sonorous sound of Elgar's "Cello Concerto in E minor" filled John Barry Hall, drawing the audience into the profound depth and emotion of the piece. The performer was Ian Gu '26, for whom playing the cello has transformed into a steady source of expression and inspiration, much more than a simple extracurricular.

Gu's journey with the cello began in elementary school. Although choosing an instrument was initially something his school required, Gu was soon genuinely drawn to the cello due to its deep, unique sound.

"I started playing the cello back in fourth grade. My old school made us each choose an instrument. Our school let us try out all the different instruments beforehand, and I liked the sound of the cello the best. I felt like it was the most similar to the human voice and you can really sing with the cello. I especially liked the low, deep sound of the C string," said Gu.

What began as a simple interest in the instrument's rich tone carried Gu through his years at Andover, where he is now actively involved in music at Andover through ensembles, chamber groups, and countless performances.

"I'm part of two orchestra ensembles on campus, the Andover Symphony Orchestra and the Andover Chamber Orchestra. It's been really fun being able to play with friends and getting to see them every week at rehearsal. I've also been a part of a lot of chamber [groups] here with the Andover Chamber Society. I feel like I've gained a lot of experience playing in small groups. It's great that the school is able to provide that opportunity to connect with students through music," said Gu.

Gu reflected on his experience in the Senior Soloist Concert in January, describing it as memorable due to the supportive environment around him. Gu also spoke with excitement about his final major recital at Andover, his Senior Recital.

"[The Senior Soloist Concert] reaffirmed my belief in how Andover has such a supportive music community where the students can attend each other's concerts and really support each other at different recitals. I'm also doing a Senior Recital on May 20. I'm very excited for that because I feel like it'll be another event where I can bring together all of the people who have consistently supported me through my musical journey here and outside of Andover. [The upcoming Senior Recital will be] the culmination of my music journey at Andover," said Gu.

Although Gu originally expected the environment of Andover to be competitive, he later came to value the collaborative side of music at Andover.

"I was initially worried that [the environment at Andover] was going to be competitive. As I got to know the music people at Andover more and make connections with them, I definitely felt like music here has a lot of collaboration. My experiences with music at Andover is one of the main reasons why I love playing music with other people because I feel like I am not merely competing, but [creating something together]," said Gu.

According to Gu, his friends at Andover have influenced him in lasting, positive ways, encouraging him to take on challenges, pursue new opportunities, and find joy in short moments that music can create.

"With my experiences here with different chamber groups, my friends have definitely pushed me to take advantage of opportunities to attend or participate in competitions, and also play at events like matriculation. My favorite [memories are] when I'm practicing in the practice rooms at Falls. My friends, passing by the hallway, sometimes would barge into my practice room. Then, we would spontaneously play some music together, such as cello and piano duets," said Gu.

The warm, supportive atmosphere created by his friends and Andover's music community have helped deepen Gu's musicality, as he is more accustomed to performing in front of a crowd with emotional honesty.

"Through the years, I've become more comfortable playing



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more expressively in public at concerts or recitals. When I first came to Andover, I was a little bit hesitant to fully immerse myself in the music, but now I feel like I'm able to be in contact with emotions in public and allow my audience to feel what I'm trying to convey through the music," said Gu.

Gu hopes to continue pursuing his strong interest in music, possibly by exploring more modern and experimental forms of it in the future. As a student interested in science, Gu suggested that he might be willing to explore work that bridges music with scientific ideas such as physics.

"In the future, I would like to create experimental music because I'm really interested in science, and I want to do something to bring music and science together. Physics would probably be the easiest to connect with music. I actually did a project over the summer where I simulated a bouncing ball and created music that modeled the trajectory of the ball [and the physics behind it]," said Gu.

The Motivated Musicality of Meara Wang '26

JIA-YI ZHI

As a supporting pillar in two different performing arts departments, cellist and dancer Meara Wang '26 dedicates much of her time to honing her craft. Wang performs with the Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, as well as other chamber groups on campus.

Wang described her interest in music, specifically classical music, as a journey. Initially lacking interest in the genre, Wang stated that she has grown to appreciate the depth of the classical musical world.

"I didn't actually start seriously learning [to play the cello] until sixth grade, which is when I got my private teacher, whom I'm still with now. [But] for a lot of people, they start music at a young age, and you don't really say, 'I want to do music.' Your parents just put you in it. And then at a certain point, you either drop it or you realize, 'Oh, I actually do really enjoy playing music.' When I got here in ninth grade, I definitely was starting to enjoy classical music. I didn't find classical music particularly engaging when I was in middle school until I found TwoSet Violin, which is a classic pipeline. They made classical music less elitist, I guess. They made it funny," said Wang.

Wang also reflected on how this journey impacted the music she continues to play and create. She mentioned how exploring the nuances of the classical music world prompted her to include repertoire that exposed Andover students to a variety of classical music.

"I want more people to understand that classical music in mainstream culture is portrayed as only a few things. You got your Beethoven and your Mozart, and your very, very classical era stuff. What got me to see that there's a whole world outside of that was the romantic era of music, which is very passionate, emotional music, and it's often very dramatic. [So,] when I play music, I try to include a variety of different styles," said Wang.

Wang's friend, Eliza Francis '26, specifically noted how Wang's growing confidence pushed her music to new heights.

"Meara has become more confident in herself as a musician. She has always had the skillset to be an excellent soloist and chamber musician, but she's come into herself and taken on more opportunities because of this newfound confidence. She recently won the Concerto competition, where she'll be performing Shostakovich Movements I and II. She would tell you, at least two years ago, that she would have never imagined herself winning that, let alone auditioning. She's currently in three chamber groups, which is kind of absurd," said Francis.

Wang also discussed how the prestigious yet encouraging environment at Andover pushed her to improve and explore musically.

"The environment at Andover is very prestigious, so it pushes you to practice really hard because there's kind of an air of 'everyone is just trying to get better because they love what they do.' It's very motivating to see older musicians play repertoire that I thought only professionals could play, which helped me think that maybe I could be like that one day. Another part about the music community here is that you see a lot of people branch out from whatever styles they came in with. The environment here kind of just pushes you to explore different genres," said Wang.



KAYLA LYONS/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Francis reminisced on the performances she got to experience firsthand, specifically noting the beauty of Andover's diversity, as well as how Wang played an important role within that framework.

"I love seeing my best friend do what she is best at. We have people who are so specialized in singular areas, and we get to see them live and breathe their passion because there are so many opportunities available to us. Many people are concerned with their legacy, but she doesn't have to be because I know that she'll have a permanent imprint on the music department," said Francis.

From Chorus to Center Stage: The Musical Journey of Amina Gorman '26

HAYLEY FAN & DYLAN KANG

For Amina Gorman '26, music has been a constant presence shaping her identity from an early age. Through years of experience and exploration, she has developed her voice across multiple genres and performance spaces.

Her passion for singing was deeply influenced by her family's involvement in music, with both parents and even grandparents connected to music in different ways. That environment helped shape her early identity as a musician.

"My parents are both musicians, my mom likes to sing for fun and she's been singing to me since I was a little kid, and my dad is really deeply involved in the music industry, and so are my grandparents. Music has just been a part of my life for as long as I can remember," said Gorman.

At Andover, Gorman has expanded her musical horizons far beyond what she had done before. She has explored many new styles and performance formats that challenged her and helped her grow.

"I think that it's definitely helped me to come out of my shell a little bit. There's a lot of types of music that I had never done before coming to Andover. I had never sung in a musical or done anything like that before coming to Andover. I'd never done a cappella, those were new avenues for me to try out my music," said Gorman.

Her involvement on campus reflects that wide range of experiences. From a cappella groups to musical theater and band performances, Gorman has immersed herself in nearly every aspect of Andover's music scene. Her leadership roles and performances highlight her commitment.

"I am currently the Co-Head of Keynotes a cappella, and a Co-Head of Fidelio Society. Being a part of Fidelio Society, you're also part of Academy Chorus. I'm the lead singer in the band Goose&Moose. I did 'Assassins' my freshman year, 'Shrek' my Lower year, 'Chicago' and 'Mamma Mia' my Upper year, and right now I'm in 'The Lightning Thief.' So I've done five musicals here," said Gorman.

Gorman highlighted her favorite memory, one in which engagement with the audience played a large role.

"My favorite memory would have to be Den Show last year. Den Show is the two-day-long performance that my band puts on in the Den, and I really love Den Show because it's an opportunity for it to not just be a performance, but an interactive experience. Everyone is allowed to sing along with me. I really love seeing how excited people get when we start playing a song that they really love," said Gorman.

As a mentor and leader, Gorman provided some advice to the young, aspiring singers who will come after her.

"You never know unless you try. I remember my freshman year, the first time I ever performed with a band was with the Repercussions. After a choral performance, one of the Uppers in that band asked me if I would perform with them at their Den Show, and I had never done anything like that before. I was really scared and nervous that I wouldn't sound good. But everybody told me that I should do it. Giving myself that opportunity, even if I was scared, was something that I will always be grateful for because that's what started me performing with bands and joining a cappella and doing all those other things," said Gorman.



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Ethan Liu '26 Identifies with Improvisation and the Practice of Jazz

BENJAMIN PARK & RAMSEY SARKISIAN

Ethan Liu '26 has spent the past four years developing a voice in jazz that is as attentive as it is expressive. A longtime musician who came to Andover focused primarily on classical music, Liu found himself drawn to jazz after arriving on campus, where improvisation and collaboration reshaped the way he understood performance.

"Jazz improvisation allows us to communicate something that's so innate and so beautiful that I hadn't felt before in classical music. Outside of just being inspired by others, I was inspired by the music itself and the richness that came with improvising," said Liu.

Before coming to Andover, Liu's experience with jazz was limited. It was only after hearing older students perform that he began to see the form differently. Their playing felt less like interpretation and more like conversation, and an exchange of ideas unfolding in real-time.

"Actually, before high school, I didn't do as much jazz. I played in the middle school jazz band, but I don't think that really counted. I was more of a classical musician coming here. However, seeing the people here with the amazing talent of jazz, they really inspired me to take on this art form and try to improvise myself. And now four years later, it has completely become one of the main art forms that I love to play," said Liu.

That realization led Liu to immerse himself in jazz throughout Andover. Harry Wang '27 pointed out Liu's inspirations, leadership, and presence within the jazz community.

"When someone asked where his sound came from, he didn't talk about Coltrane or Bird the way most of us would. He talked about ink painting, traditional Chinese brush work, and the way a single stroke carries the weight of freedom. That's where his tone and the liquid quality to his bending notes comes from. In any band setting, Ethan has this quiet authority that doesn't demand attention. His physical expression is great, you watch his body and you know where the music is going before it gets there. His phrase-building is generous in a way that pulls everyone into the pocket with him, and the way he grows a groove always inspires me," said Wang.

In addition to his work in formal ensembles, Liu is leader in the student band Goose&Moose, which blends jazz with pop and other contemporary influences.

"We have a student run band called Goose&Moose. We play jazz fusion pop and all different genres. Throughout campus, we've performed at recitals, ASMs, and the annual Den Show where Goose&Moose hosts jazz concerts, a prevalent music form around campus," said Liu.

Liu also engages in composing his own jazz music. Many of the pieces he performs are original compositions inspired by his experiences growing up in Florida, as well as the friendships he has formed at Andover.

"A lot of recent pieces I've played have been original. Many of them reflect on my experiences back home in Florida, how I grew up, the nature that I experienced there. It honors my background and also the people that I met there and the friendships. My music definitely has narratives that I hope to honor," said Liu.

Looking ahead, Liu hopes to continue exploring new ways of combining artistic forms. He is particularly interested in filmmaking as a way to bring together his interests in jazz and photography, creating work that pairs sound with visual storytelling.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

"For the future, I really hope to bridge my love for photography and jazz together, filmmaking being this medium where I can create soundscapes and then match that with imagery that I composed through the camera. I hope creating film scores or films in the future can help inspire others," said Liu.

Christopher Fu '26 Vocalizes Community

WESLEY PHAM & BOSON BAI

In his four years at Andover, Christopher Fu '26 has discovered himself and his relationship in the arts. From his musical expertise to writing as a creative outlet to his participation in Classics, Fu is driven by a deep-rooted connection to the arts community. Fu holds several leadership positions in Andover music, writing, and classics and has found that he is driven by a goal to give back to the camaraderie that he was offered as a new student.

As a fresh arrival to the Andover Music Department, Fu initially played the trumpet, participating in various ensembles. However, he eventually decided to end his instrumental journey in seeking a distinct path.

"I was playing trumpet in the Symphony Orchestra and in the concert band. But I was really becoming less passionate about playing the trumpet. It was becoming more difficult for me. It was hard for me to practice, and it was just less fun," said Fu.

This is when Fu truly found his passion for choir and vocal music, ramping up his involvement in Academy Choir, Fidelio Society, and Downbeat, a student-led a cappella group.

"Singing was something I was still doing. I was still taking lessons, and it was still really enjoyable for me. I auditioned for the a cappella groups. At that time, there were three groups, the Yorkies, Keynotes, and Downbeat. I auditioned for all three. I got rejected by the Yorkies and Keynotes, and I got into Downbeat. I'm really glad I did, because that has stuck with me for the entirety of my time here at Andover," said Fu.

As Fu progressed as a musician, the community amongst the musicians of Andover kept him driven. Notably, Fu's trip to London with the choir helped bring that sense of community home.

"The people here make singing so enjoyable. I personally did not find the same sort of camaraderie in the instrumentalist groups. In the a cappella groups and in chorus, I got to know people better. They were just much more open. Home is not really about the place, but definitely about the people. That's what I saw on the London Tour. Even though we moved away from campus as a choir, as a chorus, we were still very much a family, and we made home wherever we were," said Fu.

Today, Fu holds Co-Head positions in Fidelio and Downbeat. His leadership style seeks to create a welcoming environment for all.

"What I love about being a Co-Head and a leader, more than any of the actual work that I do, is the fact that people feel that they can rely on me, and people feel that they can come to me and ask questions. The music groups for me are sort of pockets, nexuses of camaraderie, places where people come because they want to," said Fu.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*



Maya Clark '26 On Stage and Behind the Script

CHARLIZE SOW & ALEXANDER TONG

What began as an after-school activity taken on a whim in elementary school has since grown into a central part of Maya Clark '26's time at Andover. Over the years, theatre has become both an outlet for her to express her identity and a platform for engaging with the social issues she cares about most. Between the Identity Show and her own 901, Clark's has moved between roles as a performer and director, shaping her instincts as an actor and the stories she's drawn to putting on stage.



ALLEGRA LEE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Clark first connected with theatre because of how naturally it suited her personality. As someone who described herself as outgoing and full of energy, she found the stage to be one of few settings where those qualities were welcomed and useful.

"Theater is a really cool way of self-expression, and it's very versatile. I love doing it. I think I'm a very extroverted, talkative person, and I feel like when I step on a stage, there's this on button that flips, and I'm able to just [perform]. It's a really good outlet for me to put all of how extroverted I am to use, because it gives me a place to put all that energy. I don't really get stage fright or anything," said Clark.

That interest in theatre as a form of self expression deepened during Clark's Lower year, when she performed in the Identity Show. In the production, cast members like Clark had to write and perform pieces drawn from their own lives.

"I would definitely say that in the Identity Show, I was able to mix talking about parts of myself with theater, which was really good. It is such a big form of self-expression. The Identity Show forces you to dig deep and honestly learn things about yourself that you might not have known," said Clark.

Beyond acting in the Identity Show and productions like "Uncommon Women," Clark began taking on work behind the scenes. From taking a directing class to directing two productions, Clark's view of theatre has extended into areas beyond performance.

"Andover has allowed me to try different aspects of theater beyond just performing on a stage. I've had the opportunity to direct, so it has exposed me to different types of expression in theater. Last year, I took directing. Then this year, I directed the Identity Show, and I directed a 901 titled, 'I and You,'" said Clark.

Clark's work as a director has gravitated towards themes of justice, identity, and social change. She noted that the scripts she chose often reflected subjects she was already thinking about in her own life, including ones tied to her experience being biracial.

"I'm really into themes of social justice and social change and social movements expressed in the theater world. My 901 was originally written as an interracial love story. I'm also biracial, so obviously I'm going to gravitate toward that. In the Identity Show, you have to talk about identity," said Clark.

As Clark reflected on her journey as a director, she credited much of her growth to the faculty she worked with at Andover, particularly Mr. Grimm and Ms. Douyon.

"I will say I was really lucky that I had really good advisors and teachers, including Mr. Grimm and Ms. Douyon. Mr. Grimm taught me in directing, and then he was my faculty advisor for my 901, so he was very influential. Ms. Douyon is also a theater person on campus [and] she was just really helpful to talk to about that type of stuff. Given how much acting I've done and how many directors I've experienced, I knew what I liked and what I didn't as an actor, and so I tried my best to bring that to my ensemble," said Clark.

Between acting in various productions and directing her 901, Clark has taken on theatre at Andover both behind the scenes and within. The range of roles had made her more confident in her work and clearer about the kind of theatre she wants to keep pursuing.

"Throughout the years I've just gotten more confident in it, and confidence is so important. I've gotten more confident in different types of theater and all the different avenues you can pursue with theater. I really just hope I keep exploring it and all it has to offer. I hope I keep acting and directing. I don't know exactly what that will look like in college, but I'm excited to continue what I love," said Clark.

From First Audition to Director: Sheila Argueta '26 on Theater and Community

DASHA GOMEZ & ALEXANDER TONG

From rehearsals to performances, theater at Andover involves close collaboration between cast members. Having taken part in multiple shows both on and off campus, Sheila Argueta '26 described those connections as central in navigating her theater journey.

Argueta began theater in middle school and said she initially found the audition process at Andover intimidating before she joined her first production, "Assassins."

"I went into my audition for ['Assassins'], not knowing what I was doing. Brought a terrible choice of a song. I couldn't read well, so I also butchered that, and I still got in. It kind of shocked me, but I found it was such a privilege and a great opportunity because even though I didn't feel as confident with my audition, [Instructor in Theatre and Dance Allen] Grimm still believed in me," said Argueta.

Since then, Argueta has continued participating in productions both on and off campus. She encouraged students to consider auditioning and discussed the accessibility of opportunities in the Theatre Department.

"Whenever I see an opportunity for an audition for something that I may be decent at, then, I just say, just go for it. Because I know that they're so open about giving roles too, especially when it's bigger ensembles. It's just a cool opportunity in general, even for those who don't really do theater, I've seen many just jump into it and they love it," said Argueta.

In her Upper year, one of the productions Argueta performed in was "Ride the Cyclone," which she cited as her favorite experience.

"Overall, our cast dynamic was phenomenal. I love the people that were in it. It was also my dream role, so [I was] really grateful for the opportunity. And the director [was] really close friend of mine... Why the cast dynamic was so [great] is because I already knew the people that were in the cast. So, being in the previous shows that I was in, 'Shrek' and 'Assassins' and all these. So we were already close friends beforehand," said Argueta.

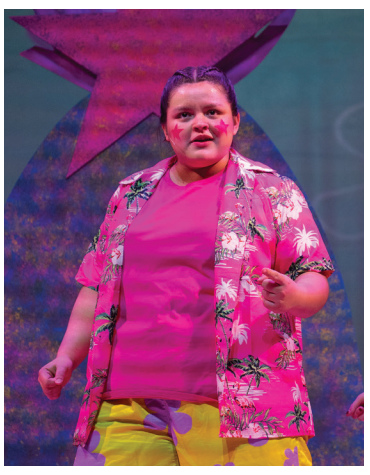
Argueta said she is particularly drawn to musical theatre, citing her interest in singing.

"I would say it's because music is just a big part of my life. So being able to express [myself] in song is just cool. I also find it a way I express myself as well," said Argueta.

Looking ahead to "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," the Theatre 901 production she is directing this Spring, Argueta connected its themes to her experience at Andover.

"'Spelling Bee' [is] about these six kids who are all amazing in their own way, and they all have their little quirks, and they all come to this one place to bond. I find that interesting because at Andover, we're all kids coming from our own places, from our own schools, from our own homes, and we're coming to this one place to do the same thing, which is [to] be great students and be great individuals. And for that, we need each other, and we form these amazing connections later on," said Argueta.

Argueta also said she hopes to create a positive environment for her cast.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

"The show is just such a relatable show in so many different ways, and I just want people to have fun with it, and truly see the hard work being paid off by my cast as well," said Argueta.

WRITING

From Chamber Music Quartets to Creative Writing Electives: Maggie Fulop '26's Engagement with Andover's Arts Scene

ELIAS JEON & CHARLIZE SOW

At Andover, students are encouraged to pursue a wide range of intellectual and artistic interests, often developing passions in unexpected ways. Maggie Fulop '26 took advantage of this setting, which enabled her to explore both creative writing and music in depth while developing her artistic voice across disciplines. What began as an unplanned introduction to creative writing gradually developed into a meaningful pursuit, shaped by academic opportunities and a strong community.

Fulop's interest in creative writing stemmed from a camp she attended on a whim. Despite initial skepticism, the experience gave her a newfound sense of creative writing as something worth pursuing independently.

"My mom had signed me up for a summer camp when I was in 8th grade, just because she had heard from a friend that it was kind of fun. It was a creative writing summer camp, and the camp was okay, but it just exposed me to a small community of people that do creative writing and teens who are into it. So for that I tried writing a story and it wasn't very good, but over the summer when I was bored, I ended up writing a couple more and then, when I got to Andover, I had the knowledge of something that I was interested in exploring later on," said Fulop.

Once Fulop began pursuing creative writing, she found herself drawn to one form of writing in particular. Personal essays, rooted in school work done in earlier years, became the genre she kept returning to as her writing style grew.

"The first kind of writing I did was always for class and it was analytical, and English class in school did get me into personal essays, which are still my favorite form of creative writing. That's something that I've been really grateful [for]. I've been able to continue throughout high school and I have a lot of opportunities in class," said Fulop.

Beyond creative work she did in class, Fulop further noted the significance of finding a wider community of students at Andover who shared her interest in writing.

"[Andover is] a very big and well-researched school with a lot of students who are actually quite passionate about creative writing, and so it was really nice to get involved with the community here, whether it's through all the magazines or in creative writing senior electives, where I get to meet friends who have similar interests. Right now I'm co-editor-in-chief of The Courant and I've taken fiction and creative nonfiction here," said Fulop.

Fulop shared her appreciation towards the many available arts opportunities at Andover, especially the music department. Between creative writing electives and chamber music, Fulop's journey as an artist has encompassed a wide range of experiences.

"[Music at Andover is] kind of similar to writing [in that for a high school] not technically arts focused, [there's] a lot of opportunities in the arts. The music department here has been really amazing. I found a lot of community in orchestra and chamber music, which I've done all four years here," said Fulop.

Upon reflecting on her time in music at Andover, Fulop highlighted Andover Lawrence Strings, a community engagement program where Andover students teach children to play instruments, as the source of her fondest memories

"I feel like I have a lot of fond memories about music here, but [especially] the recitals we hold with our students at Andover Lawrence Strings. We order food and our students get to show off their skills to their parents, so it's a really nice event. I'm also planning on serving as a soloist with the orchestra, so all our rehearsals together and the jokes we make and the fun we have are very fond memories," said Fulop.



COURTESY OF MAGGIE FULOP

Looking back across her four years at Andover, what Fulop valued the most was the freedom to engage in both her different artistic pursuits rather than choose between them.

"Andover is, generally speaking, really great with the arts. If you're interested in multiple forms of art like I am, it allows students to explore that. I never felt the pressure to pick and choose between whether I wanted to spend my time writing or spend my time playing violin," said Fulop.

Small Things Worth Writing: The Words on Keren Song '26's Page

CHARLIZE SOW & BENJAMIN PARK

For Keren Song '26, writing began as a way to navigate a new language and gradually became a consistent practice and a place of comfort. Over the years, she developed an interest in creative writing, marked by dorm room writing sessions, literary publications and clubs at Andover, and an eagerness to keep exploring new genres and styles.

Song first encountered creative writing in middle school through a yearly school competition. Though it was initially structured as an assignment, she continued writing beyond the requirement.

"I'd say I started creative writing around eighth or ninth grade because my old school had a yearly writing competition where we would spend the term writing a creative essay that we would later submit toward the end of the term to a schoolwide competition. So I was, I guess, kind of forced into it, which is a very passive way of talking about it, but I really enjoyed it. I started doing a little more personal writing on the side, exploring other genres other than creative essays, and so on and so forth," said Song.

Writing also became a way for Song to work through language, as English was not her first language.

"I only started speaking English around age six, maybe first grade. So writing was a way for me to express my thoughts, emotions, and memories in English while having the time to revise it and perfect it so that it reflected, not the exact way, because it's very hard to get anything exact that's in your mind, but as close as possible to what I'm thinking and what I have in my mind," said Song.

In her writing, Song often focuses on personal experiences and smaller moments, rather than broader themes.

"There's always this thing that people say, that all writing is about life and death, which is really true in my writing as well. But I often try to focus on the small feelings that we as teenagers feel, as opposed to the love of the century or going through really hard things that I haven't personally gone through. I think that would be overstepping my role as a writer in my local communities, as there are probably people out there who can write better about those things, people who have actually experienced those things and have a great grasp on them. I really try to focus on really small things that don't get enough attention, like that one middle school crush I had or that one time I pinched my grandma by accident, those small experiences that I have full confidence that I am the expert on. I think those are the ones that I really try to go for," said Song.

Patrick Xu '27, a friend of Song's, noted that Song's writing maintains a personal quality even as she experiments with different styles and tones.

"I think she's quite experimental with the styles and the tones that she brings in. And it just feels very personal. And when I read it, I feel like I can relate to a lot of the things she's writing about and that the emotions can be felt through the page," said Xu.

At Andover, writing became less solitary for Song. She joined literary publications and clubs on campus, where she connected with other students who shared her interest in writing and creative expression.

"Before Andover, writing was definitely something more solitary for me. It's something I would just sit in my dorm room and do alone. But I think coming to Andover, I've been able to find, create, foster, and belong to various communities of people who are like-minded and similarly passionate about various aspects of writing and creative expression through text...In [my Lower year,] I joined 'The Pariah' board... In [Upper year], I became the co-head of Poetry Club, and then there was the Writers' Alliance. [Also,] I was the Prose Editor for 'The Courant.' Right now, in 12th grade, I am still the co-head of Writers' Alliance and Poetry Club, technology manager for 'The Pariah,' and I'm the Co-Editor-in-Chief for 'The Courant,'" said Song.

Some of Song's most memorable experiences came not only from writing herself, but also from helping shape spaces where other students' work could be read and appreciated.

"I really liked being involved in 'The Courant's' selection process this year. I really enjoyed reading forty poems and forty essays and trying to figure out what we could select to curate the best possible narrative throughout a volume, or I guess in this case, an edition. It was just very exciting to see the variety of submissions that we got



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in terms of themes, memories they dealt with, different emotions, and similar emotions expressed in different ways," said Song.

Beyond editorial work, Song also valued the moments of collective expression that emerged through workshops and shared writing spaces.

"The second favorite memory I had was with the Poetry Club. My lovely co-head is Ethan Liu. One time we had this workshop, it was very sparsely attended by Poetry Club standards, but it was still my favorite because we got to just sit and write poems, and then we would recite them, and Ethan would improvise some jazz music on the piano while we were doing that. It was just very inspiring. I always like to see some intersection of the arts," said Song.

Xu also pointed to Song's writing process and her role in supporting other writers.

"I think more about the way she writes. I think she's able to get ideas [on] paper really quickly. And I think her train of thought when it comes to writing is just very fluid, and that's something I really admire about her. And it's something I've been working on, and she's been helping me with it," said Xu.

Looking ahead to college, Song plans to continue writing and explore new genres.

"I think I want to explore more genres, especially in the long form, now that I won't be a high school student bound to all the high school things that I have to do. I really want to read more sci-fi. I've never written sci-fi, but I want to write some sci-fi just because it seems like a really fun genre. I definitely want to continue writing all the things that I'm writing right now, like poetry, but in terms of forms, I want to diversify it. I think in college I'll maybe join a few student theater groups to see if I can try my hand at playwriting," said Song.



APAC at Andover Fosters Close-Knit Community within Cultural Dance

JIA-YI ZHI

APAC, Andover's Asian Performing Arts Club, led by Co-Heads Marisol Tang Rasmussen '26 and Elise Zhang '26, brings a frequent visually vibrant presence to Andover's dance scene. Rooted in traditional Asian dance, the group, though not audition-based anymore, is a frequent performer at Grasshoppers, Pep Rallies, and Andover Dance Festivals.

Board member Kaya Hurteau '27 emphasized how the Co-Heads have intentionally fostered such a caring environment.

"Marisol has been so engaging with the whole group, and she's so good at having fun with us and also making sure that we get everything done. Elise is really helpful when it comes to K-pop and things like that because she's really good at covering a variety of styles... I became more comfortable trying new things that I hadn't done before. Especially with choreography [and] becoming a board member this year and having to be more hands-on," said Hurteau.

Julia Xu '28, another board member, mentioned the encouragement she received from the two to be more involved within the club's inner workings.

"I really love how supportive Elise and Marisol are. They always show up for us, in a way that says they're not just our Co-Heads. They're people that you can talk to at any time, and you can talk about anything with them, eat dinner, go downtown... they've really inspired me to take a more active role in the club by helping out the newer dancers," said Xu.

Tang Rasmussen, who has over a decade of experience dancing, described the kinship and connection she felt through APAC, especially to her fellow dancers and heritage. She also recalled her favorite memory with the group.

"I've made some very long lasting friends who I will definitely be in contact with even after I graduate. It's really connected me to my culture as a Chinese American, and the art style and being able to choreograph it for the past couple of years has been so rewarding... we always do a picnic at the end of the year for the new board. I always love being able to sit out on the great lawn and eat food and snacks with all of the other board members. It's also very special because we take photos and we have a whole little photoshoot with spring dresses, and it's so fun," Tang Rasmussen said.

Zhang also discussed her own experience with Asian dance styles and what APAC means to her.

"I first joined because I've always really enjoyed dancing, and I truly believe dance clubs are the best way to get involved with dance at Andover. Everybody finds their own value in APAC and the clubs that they're in, and being able to communicate that with people, being able to coexist with the vision that you want the club to be, while also being able to know where you're needed most in the club and when it's okay to either step up or step back is an important skill I've learned," said Zhang.

She emphasized that having fun should be a part of the APAC experience, leaving the message to APAC's current and future members.

"Just have fun. To be able to put on these truly incredible showcases and really refined performances does take a lot of serious effort, but that can absolutely coexist with just having fun in the studio. One of the things that I loved the



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most about APAC is being able to just let loose and have fun in the studio, to goof off but be able to lock in when we're learning choreography," said Zhang.

Tang Rasmussen's message to APAC reflected on her time with them, her gratitude to each and every one of them for how they've helped her and the club, and her hopes for the future of the group.

"I'll say what I said last night to them before we went on for our last show. I'm so proud of every single one of the members. I really cherish these girls so much, and they are such great dancers, and I really hope that APAC, in the next few years and for however long it lasts, can continue fostering a healthy and positive community with amazing dancers from all heritages. I want to shout out Adelyne [Liu '28] and Kaya for helping me with the choreography this year. I also want to thank Julia for working so hard in the background and really helping with the logistics. And Elise, my Co-Head, who's always so sweet. She really brightens the mood when we have our practices, and she always has something funny to say," said Tang Rasmussen.

Hypnotiq Captivates All

JIA-YI ZHI



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

As a prominent hip-hop group on campus, Hypnotiq, colloquially known as Hypno, brings its hypnotizing confidence and flair to every stage it steps on. Led by Co-Heads Gracie Aziabor ’26, Yumi Lai ’27, and Anielia Jones ’26, Hypno attracts performers from all grades.

Hluma Mangcu ’26 reflected on some of her favorite moments with the group. From performances to preparation, she highlighted the beautiful community and kinship Hypno fostered.

“I have a lot of favorite memories from the club. Grasshopper is a big one, just because we spend so much time working towards it and refining all our pieces. The energy builds off itself and there’s a huge adrenaline rush onstage. Even the random rehearsals in preparation for whatever it be, Grasshopper or ADF or Pep Rally, build a really good community. We’re able to step into the studio and forget our homework, forget the stress of school, and just have fun with each other,” said Mangcu.

Lai, a non-graduating Co-Head, also agreed that Grasshopper was her favorite memory yet, highlighting the group’s, especially the seniors’, contributions towards her own growth.

“As someone who’s worked with Senior Co-Heads and Seniors on the team in general, I’m just very grateful for them showing me the ropes of Andover and also how the club works. They’re always showing up and being such great collaborators with me. I feel ready to take on the next year without them because I feel like they have set me up for success when they graduate,” said Lai.

As a graduating Senior and Co-Head, Aziabor reflected on her experience managing the team.

“I’ve had experience with the more traditional side of school leadership either with student council or club boards and things like that, but I, at the time in Lower year, had never been the captain of any team or something like that. And obviously, you just learn a lot with sports and dance and arts. It’s very different from school, so it’s a new leadership style. I learned to choreograph and got better at that, and, like I said, it exposed me to a whole new side of campus,” said Aziabor.

Aziabor shared her advice for those interested in getting involved with Andover’s dance scene.

“Anyone who’s reading this article, if you’ve ever felt like you want to start dancing at Andover, or you really want to be involved with that in some way, you should just put yourself out there and do it. Dancing is one of those things where, if you just put your mind to it, you will improve. If you keep trying, you’ll get it and it’ll get more comfortable. If you want to take that risk, I would suggest that you take it. I’m glad I did. It was definitely one of my favorite parts of my Andover experience,” said Aziabor.

Footnotes Opens the Floor to All Students

CHARLIZE SOW & BENJAMIN PARK



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

The crisp sound of tap shoes, the coordination of moving feet, and the shared energy between students define Footnotes, Andover’s tap dance club. As a club devoted to tap dancing, Footnotes brings students together throughout the year through rehearsals, workshops, and performances.

Unlike many dance groups at Andover, Footnotes does not require auditions or previous experience. This openness has been one of the club’s most important qualities, as it allows prospective students to try and explore a new style of dance. Eliza Francis ’26, one of the Co-Presidents of Footnotes, elaborated on this long-standing approach.

“I think [one advantage about Footnotes] is that Footnotes is truly an open club. Many of the dance clubs at Andover are audition based, and require some previous experience or a skill set. Footnotes is an open club, so we invite everyone. And the barrier to entry is quite low because about three years ago, we were able to secure an Abbot Grant that supplies tap shoes to interested tap dancers. So if you’re interested, you don’t have to purchase equipment. You just [have to] come, and be ready to be engaged in learning a new style that is really rewarding and fun,” said Francis.

Because of this openness and welcoming atmosphere, the club has become a place where various people from different parts of campus can come together and spend time in an enjoyable way. Francis described Footnotes as a “microcosm” as it brings together students who might not usually interact.

“I feel like Footnotes is a wonderful collaboration of all the different people that make up Andover. It very much is a microcosm because we have people who would probably not interact with each other in any other spaces come together and get to dance and perform. I remember that we had someone who was a STEM person and had never danced before, but decided he wanted to become a tap dancer because he became engrossed with the rhythms and how the steps fit together. We [also] had someone who was a musical theater person who wanted to broaden their skill set by learning tap dancing because those [fields] are pretty complimentary,” said Francis.

Allegra Lee ’27, the other Co-President of Footnotes, described the atmosphere of Footnotes as one that balances devotion with a sense of camaraderie, allowing members to improve together without feeling pressured or judged.

“I think Footnotes is one of the more serious dance groups I’m part of. We’re not super serious, but the environment is that we get things done, polish them, and make sure everything looks good. At the same time, it’s still lighthearted. If we’re having trouble with something, no one gets put down or is given a hard time. We all just do our best and have fun listening to music. So [the atmosphere is] hardworking, but also fun,” said Lee.

Workshops have served as a way for Footnotes to introduce tap dancing to students who may be interested but partially hesitant. Francis explained that these workshops give students a chance to learn basic steps and moves, try choreography, and experience tap dance in a setting with lower pressure.

“Sometimes committing to regular rehearsals for an upcoming performance is a bit too hefty of a task for people who are perhaps a little shy to venture into tap dancing, so we hold these workshops. One of them is a Christmas scene workshop where we essentially create a combination and walk the students through it and show them some of the basic tap steps. Once you learn the essentials and foundations, you can almost do any steps and you can get to perform it in front of the people who attend the workshop. This has always been really fun because we typically get a good turnout and it’s also a good chance to recruit people,” said Francis.

Along with workshops, performances have shaped some of Footnotes’s most memorable experiences. Francis recalled one spring performance in which Footnotes had to quickly adjust their choreography as a team after learning that the performing studio floor would not be suitable for tap shoes.

“A favorite memory of mine would probably be my first time with Footnotes in our spring performance. The flooring that the studio had was not permissible for tap shoes [because] the tapping could damage the floor. We quickly had to pivot to only using tap boards, which are very small pieces of wood, which totally changes the entire visual component of a dance. So I remember being really stressed, but it was fun figuring out how we were going to now translate the existing choreography we had into this new format. We absolutely succeeded in the end and it’s one of my favorite dances to this day,” said Francis.

Drumline Sets the Rhythm and Shapes Energy on Campus

SOPHIA KIM & SOOHAN CHO



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Drumline often begins playing before the crowd has fully settled, cutting through the ambient noise of conversation and movement. Within moments, attention shifts toward the field as its rhythms take hold, signaling the start of the program. Drumline is a percussion ensemble that extends beyond traditional music groups, bringing students across all experience levels together to create high-energy rhythms for events across campus.

Ethan Liu ’26 joined Drumline during his Lower Fall term, initially motivated by a desire to step outside of his comfort zone. Having previously focused on melodic instruments, he saw Drumline as an opportunity to explore a completely new style of music-making.

“I joined in my Lower Fall term as a sport, and I had never done drums before, so it was my first time. I wanted to try something new because I had never played anything percussive before, since I was always into more melodic instruments,” said Liu.

For Kwadjo Adjepong ’27, Drumline is a way to keep going with a passion he has already been pursuing for years. With a background in percussion, including in an Afro-Latin ensemble, he joined with a clear sense of how he hoped to contribute.

“I’ve been playing drums for as long as I can remember. In middle school I was part of an Afro-Latin percussion ensemble, and so percussion has been a big part of how I connect with my community. Coming to Andover, I wanted to find a way to liven the community and the environment through my talents,” said Adjepong.

Unlike genre-specific ensembles, Drumline favors a flexible approach. Its set list focuses less on technical display and more on creating energy and engaging the crowd.

“One of my favorite parts of Drumline is the opportunity to rile up a crowd, get people energetic, get people excited. The feeling of playing a song and seeing other people dancing, smiling, or cheering is what keeps me motivated,” said Adjepong.

That proximity to the audience sets Drumline apart from many campus music groups. Rather than staying on a stage, the group plays from within the crowd, reacting in real time. Adjepong recalled one of his earliest experiences with the group.

“It was probably the Fall A/E pep rally during freshman year. I wasn’t doing Drumline as my official sport, so I had to learn all of the songs a day before. Playing the recordings over and over again and trying to figure everything out as I went. I’ve grown a lot since then,” said Adjepong.

Liu pointed to similar experiences at large campus events, where the crowd’s energy feeds directly back onto the players.

“Some of the best memories are from playing at the pep rally and ASM, drawing energy from the crowd makes everything feel bigger. It’s not just about the music, but about being part of that moment with everyone there. That’s what makes it really memorable,” said Liu.

Technique and Trust Anchor Blue Strut's Jazz

SOOHAN CHO & DYLAN KANG

Under the leadership of Co-Heads Eliza Francis '26 and Nina Torrens '26, Blue Strut (Strut) has cultivated a space where technical precision goes hand in hand with personal growth, creating performances that are powerful and moving.

Francis, who joined Strut in her Lower year, was drawn to the group through its distinctive style and energy. Having trained across multiple genres, she saw Strut as an opportunity to return to jazz while further developing her technique.

"Jazz has always been one of my favorites, and I was trained in Giordano-style Chicago jazz. Strut gave me the opportunity to explore that. I was also drawn to the energy and technique, they felt unmatched," said Francis.

Similarly, Torrens discovered Strut through her long-standing connection to jazz. After arriving at Andover, she explored the club with uncertainty but quickly found a sense of belonging.

"I tried out not really expecting anything, but I made it, and it's been such a great experience. I've stayed because it's a great community and we get to do really cool dances," said Torrens.

As Co-Heads, Francis and Torrens emphasize that leadership extends beyond choreographing to maintaining the group's culture and positive environment.

"I've taken on more responsibility in creating the culture of the club. That includes not just making routines and picking music, but also creating an environment where everyone gets along and it feels like a family," said Torrens.

Francis added that she approaches leadership by focusing on both the dancers' experience and the quality of performance.

"I balance choreography with leadership, trying to create a space that is supportive and encouraging while still maintaining high standards of technique and performance," said Francis.

That balance between structure and support is reflected in the descriptions of the group's younger members. Isabella Huang '28 pointed to Strut's environment as strict, collaborative, and encouraging.

"There's a strong expectation that you show up, have good attendance, and are ready to learn choreography. The Co-Heads are really prepared, especially for auditions and deadlines like sending in music. That level of organization shows in our performances, we look put together," said Huang.

Members also highlight the blend of styles within Strut as a defining characteristic. Kate Bourgeois '27 describes how different training backgrounds help make the group and its dances more diverse and dynamic.

"I think what makes Strut really strong is the combination of different dance styles. Eliza comes from more classical jazz, while Nina does more competitive jazz. The mix is really interesting because we still have fundamental elements of jazz that you don't always see, combined with a more commercial style that shows off our skills and brings energy. That combination is what makes Strut special," said Bourgeois.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Bourgeois further commented on the encouraging culture in Strut and how it's driven her improvement.

"Sometimes you come to practice after a long day, and the choreography is fast, but they make sure you not only know it but feel comfortable doing it. They don't show just one 'right' way to do something; they guide you. That's helped me grow not only as a dancer, but also by looking up to them as people," said Bourgeois.

In moments leading up to performance, Bourgeois recalled how Strut's Co-Heads helped maintain both trust and confidence.

"I think my favorite memory was before Grasshopper, when we were all getting ready and feeling nervous. [Nina and Eliza] reassured us, pumped us up, and really brought not only energy but also trust in us to do our best. That felt like a sign of great leadership, they were able to calm us down while also getting us excited to go on stage," said Bourgeois.

Torrens reflected on the group's evolution over the years as she graduates from Andover.

"Even though there are new people each time, the energy always stays positive, and it always feels like a family," said Torrens.

Ink to Page: The Courant Creates Space for Student Writers and Artists

RAMSEY SARKISIAN

The Courant, Andover's literary magazine dating back to 1873, publishes completely in print, offering Andover students a physical outlet for their writing. For many contributors, seeing their writing physically on a page transformed their words into a lasting and meaningful artifact, reinforcing the value of their voices and ideas.

Co-Editor-in-Chief Keren Song '26 first joined the publication out of a curiosity to see her writing in print, inspired by her English teacher's encouragement and the idea of experiencing her work beyond a screen.

"I decided to submit because my English teacher had told me about the Courant and I was always interested in seeing how it would feel to see my work in print. My English teacher, Ms. McQuade, had said a lot of things about the value of being able to see your work published and physically in front of you, so I was very curious as to how that would feel. And once I did have that feeling and I had that moment, I really wanted to help other people be able to have the same experience or similar experience because for me personally it was very inspiring to see a poem that I had only seen on my Google Docs screen on my computer to be like on a physical page in front of me," said Song.

For Song's Co-Editor-in-Chief, Maggie Fulop '26, joining the Courant was a natural extension of her growing interest in creative writing, which began in middle school and continued into high school.

"I had gotten into creative writing during middle school, and I was interested in it when I first got to high school, so I remember I asked my English teacher at the time what ways there were to get involved in creative writing. The Courant appealed to me, especially, because it publishes in print, which I had never had the opportunity to do and it seemed very special. I wanted to get involved pretty early on, and by the end of the year I was happy to be involved," said Fulop.

Fulop, Song, and Prose Editor Cindy Yang '26 all began their involvement with the Courant by publishing their works in the magazine. Yang spoke about how their experiences as an Editor helped them to branch out and read more styles of writing.

"Reading something with the perspective of an editor makes you appreciate the quality of the writing in a more artistic way, rather than just trying to find entertainment in reading. It's two different ways of reading. Being an editor forced me to come to these pieces that we were reviewing and editing for submission with a different lens. Having this more critical lens and being more focused on the craft rather than entertainment has really helped me gain a broader understanding of what creative writing can look like," said Yang.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

When speaking about the rarity of getting to work as an editor, Yang's advice to younger students was to strive for as many opportunities as possible.

"Being an editor is not something everyone gets to experience, so really take advantage of this experience and expose yourself to as much writing as possible. Take the opportunity to really get to know how other people write. See what you can learn from them. Keep an open mind. I enjoy getting to talk to the fellow prose editors about what they liked and what they disliked about a piece because, obviously, our opinions could vary quite widely," said Yang.

Song left younger students involved with The Courant with a piece of advice.

"The Courant's role on campus as a student literary and arts magazine that was established in 1873, being the longest standing and most premier of Andover's magazines, its role will become more prominent and more important as the years go by and the world changes more drastically, and I hope the younger kids remember that, yes, they have the duty to keep up what we've been doing and perhaps improve it, but also their opinions will matter more than ever. I hope they take pleasure in that as well," said Song.

Keynotes: Voices in Harmony

HAYLEY FAN

The bright stage lights flare to life, illuminating a group of performers at center stage. "One, two, three, four." Their voices rise together, and a soloist steps forward. For Keynotes, an a cappella group at Andover, each performance features a balance of individual voices harmonizing while shining through.

Among the many vocal music options at Andover, there are around 4 active a cappella groups on campus, Keynotes being one of them. A capella is a style of vocal music sung in a group without any instrumental accompaniment, and displays vocal control, musicianship, and collaboration between singers.

Co-head Amina Gorman '26 described how she came to join Keynotes.

"Before keynotes and basically before coming to Andover, I mainly performed in operas and choral groups. I had never done musical theater, a cappella, sung in a band, or anything like that. The closest I ever got to pop music was either choral arrangements of pop music or a karaoke night," said Gorman.

Gorman continued, "I joined keynotes at the beginning of my Lower year... When I got to Andover, I really only participated in Fidelio and Chorus but I wanted to branch out musically. I wanted to try different music groups and things that I had never done before. A lot of my friends did keynotes and they told me to audition."

Co-head Gabbie Kawooya '27 recounts her favorite memory with keynotes.

"My favorite memory from keynotes is probably Grasshopper. Both this year and last year because they're just such a fun time. That's when we do group bonding initially, get to know each other, and get used to each other. The whole process of preparing for grasshopper is just an insane amount of fun," said Kawooya.

With various vocal lines, arrangements, and songs to explore, a cappella is a versatile musical style. Keynotes member Eden Dunleavy '29 reflected on how Keynotes has helped her grow as a singer.

"The people in Keynotes inspire me not only to train my voice to become better, but also to try new things and take risks...Keynotes has evolved to perform more advanced medleys and songs over time as well as taking in new members that are equally as talented and bring a lot to the group. Overall, I've met some very amazing people in Keynotes, and I'm so thankful to have been chosen to be a part of that acapella group," said Dunleavy.

As a graduating Senior, Gorman shared advice for the future generations of Keynotes.

"Keep trying new things, new types of songs, new artists, new groups. Just keep pushing yourself because that's where you can find more people who are like you and where you can find what you really love doing," said Gorman.

From the Caribbean to South Africa, Fusion Unites Andover Dancers

OLIVIA TEMPLE

Fusion, Andover's Afro-Carribean dance club, blends cultures and diverse dance styles to create original choreography. Led by Co-Heads, Mayen Etuk '26, Hluma Mangcu '26, and Rosie Tabuke '26, the three leaders compile each sequence while also listening to all members of Fusion, ultimately organizing pieces with an expansive amount of represented styles.

With members in Fusion coming from various cultures, Mangcu helps organize the dances to come together to represent any cultures desired to be included.

"A South African dance style is called Amapiano, and there's a lot of our choreography that draws from that dance style. Mayen is from South Africa and Nigeria, and Rosie's from Kenya, so we bring aspects of our different cultures to the choreography that we create. There's different music that we grew up listening to or different moves that we've seen based on where our families are from. Cultural cooperation is very fun," said Mangcu.

As member Shelby Aime '28 anticipates auditioning to become a future Co-Head, she shared her plan for future choreographies.

"It's helpful because we each have a bit of a different background. One girl is from Jamaica, so she definitely shows us a lot of Caribbean moves. And then me and another girl are African, so some of that can come from us. We also get our creative juices flowing. Sometimes we will watch videos and be like, oh, I like that they did this, and you can pull that out to combine that into something beautiful," said Aime.

Along with building routines together, Fusion also builds community and relationships between the members. Mangcu described the close-knit community and sense of safety that Fusion supplied for her.

"When I step into rehearsal, no matter how stressful the outside world is, how much work I have, it all kind of just disappears. When we're in that space, we're having a really good time together and focused on creating something that represents us as individuals. Even the lower classmen, or people who aren't Co-Heads, their opinions are really valued, and their song suggestions. We take their input on what kind of outfits people want to wear for the shows, things like that. It's a really collaborative community. Sometimes I forget I'm a Co-Head in a way, because we're all doing it together," said Mangcu.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

SLAM: Bringing Energy and Pep To Raise School Spirits

OLIVIA TEMPLE

During Winter Term, the Spirit Leaders of Andover Madness (SLAM) bring energy, school spirit, and community to the sidelines of both Girls' and Boys' basketball games. The Co-Captains of SLAM this year, Maya Clark '26, Rosie Tabuke '26, and Yumi Lai '27, lead daily hour and a half practices and create their own steps, unique for every halftime and dance performance.

A performance at basketball games can last hours, and can sometimes be considered a double-header, which is when two games are back to back. Tabuke helped lead the team through all of these performances, and used her leadership as a Co-Captain to maintain high spirits and energy.

"Honoring people's wishes and doing what the team wants to do helps keep the energy up because they're excited to perform stuff that they've prepared for. But then people do usually get exhausted. We do usually have times where we have to give people breaks. We've had times where we've had to not go to certain games because everyone's just burnt out. But, for me, checking in with the team a lot, seeing what they want to do, and adjusting my expectations usually helps," said Tabuke.

Before departing to college, Clark left behind a piece of advice for future SLAM members.

"Just have fun and it's okay. It's hard. Just enjoy. Fun is the most important thing on the team. How we look is important and how our presence is important, but at the end of the day, if you're not enjoying it, then it doesn't mean anything. So just have fun," said Clark.

Lai helped lead some changes in SLAM for this year, such as introducing cardio before practices while using loud voices throughout.

"The Co-Captains and I tried to cultivate it more as a varsity team because prior to this year, sometimes it was more treated as a life sport. We worked to see what the team liked and what we didn't. We also had a new coach this year, Ms. Douyon. In the beginning, there were definitely a lot of mixed reactions, and that was totally okay. But with the help of our coach and changing our mindset and perspective, we were able to bring more attention to the SLAM team in general," said Lai.

As described by Anny Wang '26, SLAM has recently made long-awaited uniform changes, shifting from pants and a tee-shirt to a more traditional cheerleader look. Wang mentioned their difficulties in obtaining resources provided by the school, specifically the uniforms, which other varsity sports have access to.

"I would definitely say that we're underfunded, which has been a struggle for us. I get it partly because I know a lot of people don't consider us like a varsity sport, even though we are considered one by the school, and a lot of people don't necessarily value what we do, even though we work really hard. So we honestly have to fight tooth and nail just to get uniforms and basic things," said Wang.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

An Upbeat Look at Downbeat

BENJAMIN PARK

Every Sunday morning, twelve singers gather at Falls Music Center, rehearsing before their voices reach the stage. A dozen unique voices blend and adjust until they settle into one unified chord. As Andover's co-ed a cappella group founded in 2018, Downbeat performs throughout the year at various events such as Grasshopper and Abbot Cabaret, bringing together students who share a passion for singing.

Downbeat's music depends on each singer listening closely to the voices around them, and collaborating to create a rich, harmonious sound. Christopher Fu '26, Co-Head of Downbeat, said that singing in the group requires a different approach from his previous experience in classical opera and musical theater.

"I had to think of singing in a completely different way [when I first joined Downbeat]. My classical experience had been very focused on details in terms of solo singing, working on songs, and building technique. Singing in this a cappella group, where we have twelve people, meant that I had to listen to other people a lot more. I had to focus on harmony and the mix, as we call it, mixing our voices together to make one unified sound," said Fu.

This focus on blend has become one of Downbeat's defining qualities. Rather than centering its performance around soloists, the club often prioritizes a combined sound, choosing pieces that highlight long chords, blend, and dynamics.

"[I think what makes Downbeat unique] is the camaraderie. People really enjoy being with each other and spending time together. Moreover, the type of music that we sing [makes Downbeat special]. We do not usually sing very mainstream, fast-paced music, but we sing more edgy music and slower, more harmony-focused songs. Compared to other a cappella groups on campus, we are focused a little bit less on solos and more on our combined sound and perfecting harmony," said Fu.

Downbeat has shown this musical identity clearly during major performances such as Grasshopper. For Fu, Grasshopper has remained one of the club's most meaningful events because it allows the group to experience the full process of performance together.

"For me, Grasshopper is [my favorite performance]. That whole journey of learning a song, getting it perfected in rehearsals, doing tech rehearsals, and then finally performing is [incredibly fulfilling]. Those five shows, the Senior show and then the four shows for parents from Thursday to Saturday, is a real blast. It really gets you immersed in the performing world at Andover. That was my highlight for Downbeat every year," said Fu.

This year, Downbeat's Grasshopper performance was especially memorable because the club performed a self-arranged Radiohead medley. Through adapting existing sources and shaping them for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices, the group was able to make the performance more personal and student-driven. Kaya Hurteau '26, Downbeat's other Co-Head, elaborated on this year's unforgettable experience.

"[Chris and I] arranged a Radiohead medley this year for our Grasshopper performance. We wrote our own version, our own transcription of 'No Surprises.' Then we combined that with a score of 'Creep' that we had found and adapted, and then a score of 'Exit Music for a Film' that we also adapted. The score we found was for chamber string instruments. So we adapted that to fit SATB, or soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices. This year, performing that medley that my Co-Head and I had arranged ourselves was especially meaningful," said Hurteau.

Beyond its performances, Downbeat is also defined by the relationships between its members. Fu said that the group's intimacy makes the rehearsal process enjoyable, even when members have to meet early on Sunday mornings or work through demanding preparation periods.

"My favorite part about the club is definitely the camaraderie. Singing the songs is good, but what keeps people coming back is that we all enjoy spending time with each other and singing with each other. It is not the easiest to wake up on Sunday and go to Falls for rehearsal [at 11 a.m.,] especially on a Sunday. What keeps Downbeat solid is that people find joy in the process of singing [through friendship]. That is what makes the process fun, especially when we are cramming songs during rehearsals," said Fu.

As Downbeat continues to shape its identity and grow, Hurteau hoped the group would remain both musically grounded and open to new singers. To her, the club's balance comes from taking the music seriously while still making the rehearsal and audition process feel welcoming.

"A good word [to describe Downbeat] would be fun. We always have fun in our rehearsals, and we all get to know each other really well through the process. I would also say [Downbeat is] inclusive. Anybody who wants to try auditioning should certainly come audition. It is a fun experience, even just the auditioning process. [Downbeat values] not taking it too seriously, but also having a passion for what you do," said Hurteau.



KELVIN MA/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

The Phillipian
SPORTS

50/50 good boy/bad boy

Volume CXLIX | Commencement

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2025-2026 ATHLETES OF THE YEAR





Girls Volleyball Rose to New Heights, Beat Exeter for the First Time in Ten Years

OLIVIA WANG

Girls Volleyball closed out its Fall 2025 season of determination and team growth with a record of 5–11. Co-Captains Nneka Ezeike ’26 and Kate Rodgers ’26 led the team with confidence and strived to create a positive, supportive environment. The team’s highlight was its first matchup against Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter), whom they beat for the first time in a decade, despite losing later at the annual fall Andover/Exeter (A/E) game.

Danielle Han ’28 praised the Co-Captains for their uplifting presence that they brought to daily practices and provision of constructive criticism.

“Our captains, Nneka and Kate, brought really good energy to practice, and they were also really open to feedback. Overall, they served as role models for a team. They were both [outside hitters], which are the positions that carry a lot of attacking responsibilities. It made sense for them to be a natural leader on the court. Around them, there’s a sense of support and encouragement,” said Han.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

Co-Captain Nneka Ezeike ’26 hits the ball.

Sophia Fang ’28 stated that although the A/E match was a defeat, the team delivered a strong performance and displayed its ability to remain resilient under immense pressure.

“The most intense match was definitely our last game, which was A/E. Volleyball is a mental sport, and when you’re put in a high pressure environment like Andover/Exeter, where there’s two full bleachers of people there to watch you, it can definitely change the way you play and that pressure can get to you. Also, we had pressure to perform our best in that game because it was the last game of our season and a lot of our seniors were graduating. Before A/E, we beat Exeter, and people were expecting us to do it again,” said Fang.

Gracie Aziabor ’26 commended Selene Xu ’27 for her impressive qualities and improvement throughout the season as she grew more comfortable as a leader.

“Our setter Selene, she’s stepped into a really good leadership role this past season. She became a lot more confident in herself in her playing abilities, but also she’s going to be a Captain next year and you can really see how she kind of grew into her space on the team. She’s a great player to be on the court with. Her mentality was awesome to have on our team because she’s very positive, but she’s also really good at giving constructive feedback and taking constructive feedback,” said Aziabor.

Xu commented on her own growth and development during the season, complimenting her Co-Captains for their instruction while expressing her enthusiasm for her opportunity to emulate them in the coming season.

“I learned from the captains a lot. Their leadership really got me to act as a leader on the court as well. I’ve grown so much in my third year on the team. There was just a completely different experience. It set me up to become a great leader and I’m excited to take on their role in the fall. Skill wise, I’ve been working with highly skilled people. We’ve run many plays that were pretty crazy,” said Xu.

Fang described the atmosphere during their practices as relaxed and enjoyable, and said the team had bonded together over time.

“We’re all friends, and during practices, we make jokes with each other and it’s really nice to be able to play a sport that you love with people that you feel really comfortable with joking around. During games, we have that same energy. If we make a mistake, people would just make a joke, tell us to shake it off,” said Fang.

Girls Soccer’s Season Defined by Culture and Connection

WYATT ORRACA-CECIL

Girls Soccer put together another strong season, finishing with a record of 11–4–3 under the leadership of Co-Captains Wylie Roossien ’26 and Emily Decker ’26. With an average winning margin of 3.7 goals, the team consistently showcased its talent and chemistry throughout the fall. While Girls Soccer narrowly missed the NEPSAC playoffs, its season remained defined by resilience and close bonds.

Murathime Daisley ’26 spoke to the commitment each player brought to the team, which carried on to the team’s chemistry on the field.

“Coming off of team prep in Maine and into preseason, we hit the ground running because everyone is very intense about it, which is great. I also think that the nature of having a smaller team, 18 or 17 girls this year, makes it so that we have much closer bonds, and it also allows us to be more comfortable with each other and have a lot more fun,” said Daisley.

Roossien credited previous captains with setting a standard that she and Decker hoped to carry forward in their Co-Captaincy.

“[Girls Soccer] has always been a group that I know I can depend on, and the people on GVS are so incredibly selfless and supportive. Decker, my Co-Captain, and I were trying to continue to keep those core values, and we realized the incredible talent that this team had this year, and we’re trying to balance what high school soccer is all about, which is the memories and having fun, but also holding a high standard in general that we know we could reach and trying to keep that day by day out,” said Roossien.

Roossien pointed to the team’s Andover/Exeter game and its game against Choate as two of the most memorable moments of the season. She elaborated on the team’s tie against Choate.

“We’ve had a long-standing rivalry with [Choate] and not for any obvious reason, I guess, it’s always a competitive game. They always show up and give us their best. So we knew going into this year that we really wanted to bring our best as well, and they were the team that knocked us out of the [NEPSAC] tournament last year. We ended up tying that game this year, on the turf under the lights. And I just think it’s an incredible experience to be on the turf with so many people cheering for you because it’s exciting. It’s also a time for us to really come together and support each other in our individual moments and then, our team successes, where we put one in the back, the net off the set piece, which is not something we are typically the best at or we’re the best at. So that was a really great game and I don’t think I’ll ever forget when Keaghan [Murphy ’27], I think she was like 40 yards out, sent a laser, absolute missile, and it pinged off the crossbar, and then Sarah [Powers ’26] cleaned it up. At that point in the game, I was absolutely exhausted. That was just pure joy,” said Roossien.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Sarah Powers ’26 leaps over two Rivers defenders.

Boys Soccer Develops Chemistry and Resilience in a Rebuilding Season

SARAH WANG

Boys Soccer fought through a challenging season, finishing with a 3-11-4 record and wins over St. Paul’s, Austin Preparatory School (Austin Prep), and Pingree. The team also earned a tie against Tabor, who went on to win the NEPSAC championship. The season marked an important rebuilding year after more than half of the Fall 2024 season’s roster matriculated. Under the leadership of Co-Captains Kai Myles ’27, Edrian Vargas ’27, and Liam Vitti PG ’26, the team worked to build chemistry, resilience, and a tight-knit culture.

Vitti saw the season as a test of patience and adaptability. He pointed to the team’s ability to stay committed through changes and setbacks as one of its biggest signs of growth.

“We’re a very young and new team, and we changed formations and tactics many times. But over the course of the season, we got a lot more used to playing with each other and found a flow at the end of the season. When you start to flow and when the play starts to get more fluid, it’s just a better environment, and it’s really fun playing,” said Vitti.

Brandon Walton ’28 pointed to the team’s youth as a defining aspect of the season. After losing many Seniors from the previous year, the team had to adjust quickly to build a new foundation.

“We gained a lot of chemistry as a young team. We lost a lot of seniors this year, so I think this year was really like a rebuilding stage for us. It was really helpful to build more chemistry throughout the whole team. Our captains, Kai, Adrian, and Liam, were really helpful, especially during practices, making sure everybody was organized and driven every single day,” said Walton.

Adam Sealfon ’29 elaborated on how the three Co-Captains kept the team organized, motivated, and focused on improvement.

“They led us through the tough times that we had as a team and built us up as a team. They were like the creators of most of the plans on the team, and they organized practices even now [in the Spring Term], like captain’s practices. Additionally, Liam, even though he was a PG, who only had one year to make an impact, he really did make an impact, both as a person and as a soccer player on the team,” said Sealfon.

Boys Soccer’s first win against St. Paul’s was electric for the team, both as a morale booster and as a standout performance. Sealfon reflected on the game from his position as a goalkeeper.

“Everyone played like a team. It was 3-0, Liam Vitti had two goals, and overall, we kept the shutout defensively. As a keeper, that’s my number one goal. And then we also created a lot of changes offensively, which overall boosted both our morale and our play,” said Sealfon.

Another game that stood out to the team was its Andover/Exeter (A/E) match on November 18, which concluded its season. Sealfon described the team’s focus leading up to this match, noting the energy from coaches, players, and the student section.

“I think our best game of the season, and a game that everyone enjoyed playing in, was the A/E weekend game. Everyone was hyped for it. There was a bunch of excitement leading up to it, and our [Co-Captain] Kai Myles took us into the huddle and hyped us up. It was just a fun experience to both play and prepare for,” said Sealfon.



ISABELLA BORJAS ANDRADE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Matteo Damian ’28 runs alongside a Worcester Academy player.

Football Builds Culture of Unity and Growth Through Challenges

ATHREYA YEGNESWARAN & JOHN LEW



MIKE STOUT/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Co-Captain Ollie Velez ’26 stands on the field at sunset.

Despite ending with a record of 1–8, Football built a resilient culture as it navigated adversity, one rooted in unity, growth, and accountability.

Elizandro Pereira ’27 emphasized the team’s high expectations entering preseason, particularly during its time at Williston Northampton (Williston). Pereira reflected that teammates’ early energy and talent were evident, but consistency proved to be a season-long challenge.

“We started off the season high. The players we brought in had good energy, and the postgrads brought a lot of energy and motivation to practice. That energy didn’t always translate onto the field for the whole game... we were up 14–0, and something that became a recurring theme happened, that we lost momentum during halftime,” said Pereira.

Trevor Morasse ’29 described Football’s culture as one of bonding in the locker room, pushing each other in practice, and leaning on one another during difficult stretches.

“Biggest strength of the team throughout the season, I’d say, is our basics. With our teamwork, we all lift each other up. In practice, if somebody’s not playing great, we all help each other out and buy into that teamwork. That’s the only way I can really put it, just helping each other out on and off the field.”

Morasse also reflected on how the team’s chemistry grew steadily as the season progressed.

“Some days in the locker room, hanging out with each other, listening to music, and talking with each other helped us grow more. Our practices got harder throughout the season, and we [started] to bond more and spend more time with each other,” said Morasse.

The season’s brightest moment came in a road win at Suffield Academy. Scott Carmichael ’27 described Football’s strong preparation and collective focus going into that game.

“We were stacking great days in the week going into practice, and the whole game we were really strong. The energy was high, we grew momentum, and it was really just a great way to capitalize off a really strong week,” said Carmichael.

Pereira similarly pointed to Football’s match against Suffield Academy as a highlight of the season, noting that it was rare for all three phases of the team to click at once.

“Our offense was finally able to move the ball, our defense was solid all year, so it was just great to have all three phases of the team working: special teams, offense, defense. And a favorite moment for me after the game was when we all just ran to the scoreboard to take a picture as a whole team,” said Pereira.

Carmichael shouted out many players on both offense and defense.

“First, in the offensive line, we had a great [Post-Graduate], Jacob Quinlan [PG ’26]. He’ll be going to Merrimack next year, he was insane. Trevor Morasse is a freshman. He really stepped up when we needed him. Another great, super hard worker. He was super consistent throughout the season. Will Mascena [’27] and Michael Vallarelli [’27] were both super strong receivers for us. Will Mascena can basically catch any ball. Michael Vallarelli, super tall, great catch radius. You can tell him what to do, and he’ll do it to the best of his ability. Jun An [’27] was really a great guy and a glue guy. He made sure to get everyone involved. Thane McCormick [’27] on the defensive side of the ball, he was a great, hard-hitting presence. Him along with Brock Feinberg [PG ’26] and Richie [Indresano PG ’26], two Post-[Graduates]. They did great... and then I would say Cale Barker [’28] also had to step up in a big role. If he hadn’t, we wouldn’t have been able to win Suffield [Academy] or any of our other wins without him,” said Carmichael.

The program will enter next season under Interim Head Coach Ernie Adams ’71, who previously served as football research director for the New England Patriots, contributing to six Super Bowl championships. Football looks forward to turning this year’s adversity into a foundation for growth next Fall.

Boys Cross Country Grows in Speed and Closeness

EVA JACKSON

Boys Cross Country had a season full of growth and personal bests. The team capped its season finishing fifth at the NEPSAC Division I Cross Country Championships. Performances earning All-NEPSAC at the meet belonged to Captain Robert Budzinski ’26, who placed nineteenth, and Charlie Gillick ’27, who finished fifteenth. Henry Zimmerman ’27 earned an All-NEPSAC Honorable Mention for his twenty-seventh place finish.

This season was full of athletes stepping up and creating much greater impact than the previous year. Budzinski described the team’s growth and successes.

“[This season was marked by] stepping into new roles and stepping into not only new placing roles, but also new roles of maturity. Secondly, throughout the course of the season, we definitely grew a lot in performance. I think a lot of our guys dropped [their times] between their first race and their last race or their best race of the season,” said Budzinski.

At the beginning of the season the team welcomed the new runners with open arms and an excitement to get to know everyone. Newcomer Kalis McCoy ’29 described the strong team culture.

“When I first joined the team, everyone was really excited to get to know me, and that’s what I saw with a bunch of other runners. Everyone on the team wants everyone else to do their best. They want everyone to thrive, they want people to grow. And so it’s just a very supportive environment,” said McCoy.

Not only were the team’s athletes supportive of each other throughout the season, but they also pushed each other to be their best. Ronal Dominguez Hernandez ’28 commented on the team’s eagerness to improve and the profound impact of the coaches on the culture.

“In general, there was a culture of improvement where we didn’t necessarily compare ourselves to other people, but we were competitive because we wanted to improve ourselves, which was really important. [Head Coach Garrett] Richie and [Girls Cross Country Head Coach Patrick] Rielly were the coaches of the boys and the girls teams, respectively.



JULIE CHAN/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Henry Zimmerman ’27 competes alongside Exeter runners.

I think did a good job of establishing a culture of self improvement,” said Hernandez.

Budzinski shared his pride in the team and how it was able to change the culture of the team.

“It was shaping up to be a very different kind of season, a season of rebuilding culture and rebuilding performance and things like that. I really think we succeeded beyond any expectations that I could have had in that. While we were least competitive as a team of any of the seasons that I had been on the team for, it was my favorite season, just because of how good we were able to make the culture. The ability to see people really improve over the course of the season and things like that was really nice,” said Budzinski.

Part of what made the team successful was its closeness, but also how it gave each other space to grow and do their best. Hernandez described the growth of the team and how each person became more comfortable.

“In general, people that I didn’t know I got to know a lot better, and the team really just grew in the closeness aspect. People got more comfortable with each other, and I think people found partners to run with during practices, or they found their own spaces, or they kind of got into a groove. And I think there was a lot of personal growth, but there was also a lot of growth with the team,” said Hernandez.

Girls Cross Country Dominates and Strengthens Bonds

AVIAD AWA

Girls Cross Country capped its season in a dominant fashion, securing its second consecutive victory in the NEPSAC Division I Cross Country Championships. Its success this season also extended far beyond times and placements. Despite impressive times across all grades, this season was defined by team work and connection.

According to Anya Budzinski ’26, who earned All-NEPSAC honors for her seventh place finish at the NEPSAC Championships, the team culture was noticeably strong.

“The camaraderie was very special and unique this year. The Varsity girls felt like the most supportive and unified group that I’ve experienced at Andover. Everyone was super friendly and happy to be there, and even extending beyond the Varsity group, every Friday, we would do a pre-race huddle and say what we were grateful for, and everyone would always say they were grateful for the team. There was just a lot of really good energy, and that really translated into good race results.” said Budzinski.

Budzinski praised Co-Captains Chloe Song ’26 and Zoe von Eckartsberg ’26 as the driving points behind the team’s cohesion.

“Zoe and Chloe did a really great job of leading the team and making it a super supportive environment, encouraging everyone to be friendly, have fun together, and also work really hard at running. The way they were enthusiastic every day, showing up and bringing a lot of energy, was a really good example for the underclassmen. I would credit a lot of the positive team culture to the Captains,” said Budzinski.

Hannah Jung ’28 described some of the details throughout the season that allowed the team’s chemistry to grow and strengthen naturally in the way it did.

“Every practice before a meet, we would meet on the steps of [Samuel Phillips Hall] after our easy run and do a secret tradition, then do some strides on the Great Lawn, as well as some mental imaging of what the race might look like, because it’s like meditating. I really liked the team dinners we had. Even though our Girls Cross Country team was split into several training groups, everyone was equally connected across all of them,” said Jung.



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Anya Budzinski ’26 and Amelia Alvazzi ’26 race on Andover’s home course.

Budzinski spoke on the legacy she hopes the team will leave behind. As a Senior, she shared that she felt grateful for the team and offered hope for the future of the program.

“I hope that the team this [fall] will have created a really positive culture that is very supportive and hard-working, and that everyone is having as much fun going to cross country every day like I did. I hope that the Captains, Seniors, and everyone on the team this year are able to leave that as a norm for the team, being really supportive, working hard, and having a lot of fun, so that all of the future members of [Girls Cross Country] are able to have that same supportive team experience,” said Budzinski.

Boys Water Polo Exemplifies Hard Work in Bounceback Season

EMILY NEY & HAOYU ZHANG

Boys Water Polo (9–6) ended its season with dominant wins and tight losses. Led by Co-Captains Ethan Zhu ’26 and Oliver Stabach ’26, the team fused discipline with chemistry in striving for constant improvement. Boys Water Polo reached the NEPSAC tournament for the first time since 2019, seeded fifth of six teams. The team fell to Greenwich Country Day with a score of 11–12 in the quarterfinals.

Two-year player Lincoln Tomlinson ’27 highlighted the development of water polo skills that players grew this year together, regardless of their previous experience with the sport.

“We started off rocky with a clear skill gap, but through evolution of the teams chemistry and sharing of knowledge of water polo skills in and out of practice, we turned into the most solid team [Andover] has seen in many years. Culture over the season was [to] always [have a] growth mindset. We all had things we could work on and counted on each other to hold us accountable, we looked after each other and made sure we worked hard,” said Tomlinson.

Winning over Deerfield by just one point as their fourth game of the season, Hugo Appen ’27 highlighted that match as a key victory that exhibited the team’s adaptability and coordination.

“Our coach wasn’t there for that game, so we had some struggles to stay ready and execute the gameplan. It felt like the game was slipping away after we were up by 3 goals at halftime. Our offense went stagnant and they pulled it back to 6–5. However, our defense really locked in and we managed to hold a 1 goal lead to win the game. The last play they had about 15 seconds to run a final play to tie the game and they just missed the pass to the guy back door to set up a potential game tying goal. We really had to come together as a team and communicate to pull off the win, and I remember being so excited I slapped the water in exhilaration when the clock expired,” said Appen.



ISABELLA BORJAS ANDRADE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Andrew Cai ’27 credited the lingering presence of former captain Zach Godsey ’25 as a motivator for the season’s success.

“We challenged Zach’s power and pushed through and proved a lot. We saw a lot of growth throughout the season. As a former captain, his support and presence kept our morale up. I also feel like the memory of him being in the pool, swimming in the same water as him, unlocks some hidden powers for me personally,” said Cai.

Tomlinson highlighted Victor Hillier ’28 and Appen’s performances throughout the season.

“Victor was a major playmaker throughout the season and contributed the most by far towards our points. He had water polo wisdom that he shared with the whole team, bringing us all up throughout the season. Hugo was our primary goalie, and made huge blocks by sacrificing his body but making sure that ball didn’t go in the net, and was one of the largest contributing factors towards our qualifying for our championship this last season,” said Tomlinson.

A Decade of Dominance: Field Hockey Secures Sixth NEPSAC Title

TIGER WANG

Field Hockey secured its sixth NEPSAC Class A Championship in the last decade, extending its undefeated 38–0 record over the past 2 seasons. This season, the team scored 111 goals and allowed only 5. Field Hockey’s strong results were the manifestation of the team’s perseverance and adaptability.

Abi Nager ’27 reflected on the early-season momentum that continued into the season.

“Our first few games were dominant, which set a good tone to start the season, and we kept that momentum going. We had a lot of strong leadership, too. Our goalie, Josie [Sarno ’26], was incredible and only let in three or four goals the entire season. Our captains and all the Seniors were great leaders both on and off the field,” said Nager.



ISABELLA BORJAS ANDRADE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Autumn Christian ’27 controls the ball between defenders.

In addition to its stable defense, Field Hockey’s offensive end developed strong chemistry. Vanessa Hall ’28 described how this enabled smooth cooperation throughout the field.

“Getting to know each other on the field, communicating well, and learning to read one another was essential. It can be difficult to build that chemistry heading into the season. But, as we practiced together, we grew closer. We started moving the ball really well and capitalizing on our opportunities,” said Hall.

Regan Driscoll ’28 gave insight into how the team focused its preparation.

“In practice, we focus heavily on game situations, such as our press or offensive and defensive corners. Doing that allows us to stay confident in games and generate more opportunities. Our practices are incredibly competitive. Whether it’s a 3-on-2 drill or a 7-on-7, everyone wants to win. Pushing ourselves like that helps us consistently improve every day and builds a collective confidence that everyone is working their hardest,” said Driscoll.

Field Hockey’s dominance was bolstered by its tight-knit community that went beyond the field. Hall described the positive team culture.

“This was the most successful season. We won NEPSAC, but the team, not even just in a field hockey sense, was really great to be a part of. Everyone was such good friends with one another, and there were never any issues. We had so much fun on and off the field. But on the field, we had so much talent and work ethic that made playing so much more fun,” said Hall.

Next year, the program again faces the challenge of a roster turnover. Nonetheless, Nager expressed optimism for Field Hockey’s continued success.

“We graduated a lot of Seniors this year, so those of us returning are focused on carrying forward the momentum we built last year. Our motto is ‘Don’t Settle,’ and we’re maintaining that mentality by continuing to expect the best out of ourselves. We aren’t letting the loss of the graduating class determine how we feel about next season. We still expect to have a great year,” said Nager.

COACH OF THE TERM

Coach of the Term Kate Dolan Highlights Assistant Coaches Following Field Hockey’s Second Consecutive Undefeated Season

DAVID SIAHAAN

With back-to-back NEPSAC Championships and two undefeated seasons, Field Hockey has maintained a successful record. Head Coach Kate Dolan’s philosophy, “never settle,” has shaped the program, and Dolan also credits her Assistant Coaches — Martha Fenton, Taylor Ware, and Jen Weissbach — for contributing to the team’s development and strength.

Dolan discussed how each coach contributes their unique skill set to the team.

“They all do great things across the board. Whatever we are doing, they do a great job, bringing all they have to offer to the team. They bring unique strengths that I don’t. They support the kids in ways that I don’t. They fill in the gaps. They do a great job in their respective roles. It is never the same. That is what helps us. It is a great blend of their respective bests. They each bring their best, and that is pretty extraordinary. We are super lucky to have them. We are losing a coach, but she is going to be the Dean of Students at Brooks, and that is really great,” said Dolan.

Fenton echoed Dolan’s message of allowing each coach to play to and support their strengths. Fenton also highlighted the idea of shared trust and responsibility among the players and coaches.

“As coaches, we emphasize to the team that each player, regardless of playing time, skill level, or years on the team, shares an equal responsibility for our success. The same is true for us as coaches — we all bring different experiences, personalities, and skills to the coaching staff, and Kate Dolan allows us each the space to lead. We have a trust between us as a coaching staff, rooted in shared values and years of working together towards a common goal,” said Fenton.

Field Hockey Co-Captain Maren Boyle ’26 noted each coach’s strengths and how they support the team.

“Coach Dolan is the mix of everything. She brings intensity and constantly supports us and gives us feedback. Coach Ware is the mother hen of the team. She checks in on everyone, is our biggest supporter, and makes sure everyone’s energy is high and they have the support they need. [Coach] Weissbach is similar in that she makes sure everyone is super fired up, gives us more technical feedback, which is super helpful, and keeps us locked in. [Coach] Fenton was able to connect our experiences on and off the field to a greater purpose and to tell each and every day to be grateful for the opportunity to play,” said Boyle.

With several coaches working with the team, Dolan emphasized the importance of trust and communication among the coaching staff.

“You recognize that you don’t always have the answers. You try to rely on other people, count on other folks, and trust other folks because you don’t always have the answers. Recognizing that kids respond to other people and other coaches really helps them. Through trust and through communication, appreciation in recognizing each other’s strengths. Recognizing a shared purpose and realizing that it’s all for the team. It’s a shared goal and a shared purpose,” said Dolan.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

From left to right: Assistant Coach Martha Fenton, Head Coach Kate Dolan, Assistant Coach Taylor Ware, and Assistant Coach Jen Weissbach.

Dolan credited the players for setting the team’s standards through their expectations, leadership, and dedication.

“Credit goes to the kids. They do all the hard work. They make coaching easy. They are dedicated, committed, and share our purpose. Credit to them. They are the ones going in day in and day out. I give all the credit to the players and the assistant coaches. We had great senior leadership. They are the ones who set the standards. Their level of teamwork is very high. Their expectations for each other are very high,” said Dolan.

Beyond the team’s record, Dolan hopes to create an experience that players will value after the season ends.

“I want to be the type of coach who helps to provide an experience for all team players that enables them to say, ‘I am glad that I did that. I am glad that I was part of that team.’ That is my aim, each and every season,” said Dolan.

Sports: Winter

Boys Swimming and Diving Extends its Dynasty of Dominance

NICHOLAS JUNG



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Boys Swimming and Diving continued its dominant run this past season, finding success in both the regular season and postseason. After going undefeated in regular season meets, the team placed second at Easterns, where 87 percent of swimmers achieved personal bests. Andover then hosted and won the NEPSAC Championships, extending its streak to 10 consecutive New England titles and earning the championship for the 15th time since 2007.

Co-Captain Ethan Zhu ’26 reflected on the pressure that came with maintaining the team’s tradition of success. After graduating a strong Senior class the previous year, the team welcomed new talent and emphasized focused improvement rather than results alone.

“Considering we had a lot of newer people joining, it was important to go meet by meet and make sure we did the right things. Going into meets like NEPSACs, where we have a long tradition of winning, and Andover/Exeter, where we’ve beaten Exeter for the past several years, there was definitely pressure. But in swimming, I think pressure pushes a lot of us to swim faster. It encouraged teammates to cheer for each other and support each other regardless of the results. Everyone executed well, and we were able to win NEPSACs and beat Exeter,” said Zhu.

Beyond the team’s success in competition, Zhu emphasized the close relationships that shaped the season.

“We’re all especially close. We had some newer people coming up and joining the team, but the transition went really well. We hang out downtown, celebrate each other’s birthdays, and eat at [Paresky] Commons together every day. Even in the offseason, a lot of us are still training in the pool together, playing other sports together, and eating together. We all respect each other a great deal, not just as swimmers, but also as students,” said Zhu.

Nathan Egbuna ’26 reflected on the personal lessons he gained from the season, emphasizing how the team’s competitive and supportive environment helped him stay motivated through difficult practices.

“I learned that having a competitive mindset and keeping your goals in mind is really helpful. Being supported by the team also pushed me to push myself. Sometimes you do not feel like going to practice because you know it is going to be hard, or you do not want to get into the cold pool. But by the end of practice, you realize that you can do it,” said Egbuna.

Joao Gabriel Carreiro ’27 emphasized that the team’s success was built through consistent effort and positive leadership. He also pointed to the growth of many teammates.

“Overall, we had a really good season. We won every regular-season meet, and that did not just come from nothing. We practiced every day, and sometimes practices went beyond two hours. Everyone earned that success. A lot of the top swimmers stayed really positive, which helped keep the team together. I also saw a lot of younger swimmers grow this year, especially Lincoln [Tomlinson ’27], who did really well at meets and broke a record. The biggest lesson I learned from the seniors was positivity, because when the seniors bring good energy, it affects the whole team,” said Carreiro.

Reflecting on the season, Zhu emphasized the close bonds the team had built and the importance of leaning on one another for support.

“This team is a family. Even though we may be competing against each other in the pool every day, these are the people who will support you the most and be the happiest for you when you succeed, whether that is in or out of the pool. Always make sure to share your struggles, but also your achievements, because there are so many people on this team who are willing to support and congratulate you,” said Zhu.

Girls Swim Embellishes Undefeated Season with NEPSAC Title

LUCY VINNAKOTA



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Girls Swimming and Diving prepares to begin a race against Exeter.

Girls Swim capped off another strong season, winning all four regular-season meets and medaling at both Easterns and New Englands. Andover also won the NEPSAC Division I Championship, defeating strong opponents such as Brunswick, Exeter, and Deerfield.

Chloe Ru ’27 recalled how the team drew contributions across the roster, with new swimmers playing an especially important role in adding depth.

“We had some really strong [Junior] recruits this year, which helped our overall performance. Last year, we only had two new [Juniors], but this year, we brought five [Juniors] to New England, so that was definitely an improvement, and a reason we performed so well,” said Ru.

Ru described how the team built team chemistry and close bonds by continuing its traditions.

“We continued our yearly tradition of team dinners, but we also did more activities this year. For Easterns, we made bag tags for each other, where everyone was anonymously assigned a teammate. We got our person socks and made them a personalized bag tag, which was really fun,” said Ru.

Annabelle Zhang ’29 detailed her own experiences as a new member of the team.

“As a [Junior], I unfortunately do not have multiple years of experience, but our performance as a team was great, we all worked really hard, and I made tons of progress. There was a lot of team bonding, with students from different grade levels getting to know each other. On a normal day, you could find a freshman playing games with a Senior, an Upper spreading wisdom to the team, and the Lowers already in the pool, motivating everyone,” said Zhang.

Looking ahead, Maddie Yang ’29 noted that stronger practice attendance and preparation could help Girls Swim improve even further next season.

“Coming to practice is a big thing. I know the times can sometimes be difficult, especially during finals week, but getting the entire team to show up and work hard is something we should work on. Prioritizing getting to practice on time and making sure everyone stretches before practice would also be beneficial for the team,” said Yang.

Wrestling Posts a Season of Success with Emphasis on Determination and Resilience

JOHN LEW



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Serra Akyali ’28 holds down her opponent.

Wrestling (14–2) experienced a season of noteworthy success, capping its season second at the NEPSAC Class A Championships with six champions. The team was led by Co-Captains James Bae ’26, Julian Rios ’26, Tasha Bohorad ’26, and Ophelia Lee ’26.

The balance between hard work and fun was a consistent theme throughout the year, according to Bohorad. She also recognized the mental challenges that come with wrestling.

“We try to keep the cultural positivity and discipline, but also not taking things too seriously, because the days before a meet or tournament can be difficult, whether you’re trying to maintain your weight or you’re nervous about your opponents,” said Bohorad.

Bohorad continued, “We try to go into [competition] with a very positive light. I always emphasize focusing on what you want to focus on. We talk a lot about visualization. I always say I have one goal that it doesn’t matter if you lose or win, but you have to take those little steps in order to get better.”

Hendrick Chen ’29 pointed to the team’s home matchup against Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter) in its Andover/Exeter (A/E) matchup as a defining moment of the season. The final score reflected a dominant 72–12 victory, though Chen emphasized that the energy surrounding the match was what made it truly memorable.

“The score wasn’t the only thing [that was] important. The energy was actually really there. When we had wrestlers compete, even after the varsity meet itself, they tried to taunt us. It was very funny because they tried to taunt us using the tomahawk chop. Every time they did it, they actually ended up losing, and we just did it back. I thought it was gonna be a long, painful day, but it ended up being really fun,” said Chen.

According to Chen, Rios stood out as both a skillful athlete and effective leadership.

“He’s an amazing wrestler, one of the best. In terms of energy, he really brings it to practice. In general, he’s always having fun. As a Captain, he really helped us secure our confidence. He’s always a reliable person that we can look to when we need to win on the board,” said Chen.

Robinson highlighted the team’s Senior Co-Captains for their impact on the team.

“[The Co-Captains] all brought really strong energy. Even varying throughout the skill levels, they all had a mindset of, ‘let’s get better every day, let’s put in work, and also not lose sight of the fact that wrestling is a sport.’ It’s a battle, but it’s a sport, and you enjoy it. You’re supposed to have fun,” said Robinson.

Beyond competition, much of the team’s growth came from the time spent training together. Robinson shared that extra sessions after practice, where coaches worked closely with athletes on specific techniques, helped accelerate improvement across the roster.

“After getting our work in, our coaches would usually stay for an extra 30 minutes to an hour, and all the coaches, being there, helped us work on our moves,” said Robinson.

Strong Finish Caps Boys Hockey's Resilient Season

BEN KAZLOUSKI

Boys Hockey (16–11–4) capped off a rocky start to the season by winning four of its last five regular-season games and making it to the second round of the NEPSAC Large School playoffs. Despite facing unexpected ups and downs, the team kept its bond strong and proved a substantial competitor in the division.

Nate Kreppner '27 shouted out goalkeeper Edouard Lord '26 for his dominant performance throughout the season, particularly in the team's game against Cushing. He also shouted out Jack O'Dell '28 for his play in the game against Kimball Union during the Flood-Marr Tournament.

"[Edouard] had one of the best stat lines in the league for a goalie and was a big force who gave the team confidence. Knowing that, if something got past you and there was a big shot on Lord, he was going to make the save, which gives the team a lot of confidence when they're playing offense. We didn't have to score many goals to win, which was great. A key moment was against Cushing. Our team only scored one goal, and we still won because he put up a shutout.



ALLEGRA LEE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Nate Kreppner '27 pursues the puck against Winchendon.

That win in the middle of the season knocked them out of being able to go to the Elite 8 Tournament, and he was the sole reason for that," said Kreppner.

Senji Kimura '29 also highlighted Jack O'Dell '28 for his consistent defense throughout the season.

"[Jack] was a rock-solid defender all year. He scored in big moments. He ripped one against Deerfield, and that gave us momentum. He also scored in our first playoff game against St. Paul's, which kept the offense going at that time. Overall, Jack had a great season. He played really strong defense and was one of our best defenders. At the same time, he scored a lot of goals, which is not easy as a [Lower] while also playing great defense," said Kimura.

Michael Barrett '28 shouted out the team's Co-Captains for their selflessness and for building a supportive team environment.

"[Co-Captains] Alex Small ['26] and David O'Neill ['26] and also Louis-Felix Beaulieu ['26] [were key players], they're the three captains and they really kept the group together through the highs and the lows. And David O'Neill, it was against Northfield Mount Hermon, he had a four-assist night, and it just shows you how unselfish he is. He's always passing the puck to get a better score and opportunity. And he loves seeing the younger guys score, and he was big for me, helped me out as a younger guy to feel involved in the group," said Barrett.

Kreppner cited the most memorable moment of the season as Boys Hockey's dangerously close game against Exeter.

"Walking out at Andover/Exeter day in our rink was so cool. I had so much stadium pulse. There were so many people there, and to see our school rally behind us when we were down in a game, where we ended up coming back in the third period, was a great memory. I'll remember that for the rest of my life," said Kreppner.

Barrett said the team's biggest strength was the close bond among teammates, and discussed the team's consistent determination.

"Some strengths for the team were how we all bonded together. Everyone was eager to get to the rink every day. Everyone was early and on time for everything. We gave our full attention, whether it was to a pre-scouting team video or in practice. During practices, our competitive level was high, and everyone was working to make the team better and make everyone around them better," said Barrett.

As a new player on the hockey team, Kimura credited the team's focused environment with the development of his skills and work ethic.

"As a team, everybody cares about each other. There is obviously some arguing, but that is part of getting better. Everybody shows up to practice on time. They show up for film, they are focused, they pay attention, and as soon as we get on the ice, everybody is going 110%. Nobody sits back or takes it easy. Everybody works hard, and that creates a great environment for a successful team. It definitely made a great environment for me this year. Learning from the older kids and seeing their work ethic made me a better player and improved my own work ethic," said Kimura.

Girls Hockey: Pushing Each Other to Succeed

EVA JACKSON

With a record of 19–2–1 in the regular season, Girls Hockey delivered a dominant performance, despite losing in the second round of the NEPSAC Tournament.

An incredibly competitive team, everyone held each other accountable and pushed each other to be their best. Vanessa Hall '28 described how the team had a balance of hard work, fun, and togetherness.

"In the moment of the drills and in the games, we were all really serious, but then after a drill or in the locker room, it was always fun and everyone was laughing and talking and stuff. And there wasn't any drama or anything this year. Which made a really good season because everyone was just friends and happy to be together," said Hall.

What brought the team success was not only their hard work, but their ability to work together and lift each other up. Al Hartmann '28 described the team and its three strongest attributes.

"I would describe our team as resilient, supportive, and competitive. Resilient, because we faced challenges, such as injuries, and tough losses, but came back even stronger. Supportive because we always pushed each other to be better, and had each other's backs. Competitive because we showed up ready to compete every day," said Hartmann.

One of the team's sweetest wins of the season was their 5–0 win over Loomis Chaffee (Loomis), whom they had previously lost to four times in the last two years. Hall commented on the win over Loomis, her favorite game of the season.

"We came out really strong and beat them 5–0 and we were just all over them. We didn't give them any chances at all, honestly.

And we just dominated them the whole game, and it was just really refreshing and awesome. Everyone played really well as a team. No one was being selfish," said Hall.



ANDREW PIZZI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Girls Hockey gathers for a huddle.

Hall elaborated on the team's chemistry and how constantly shifting lineups drove improvement.

"We have a lot of really good chemistry by the end, and the lines were always changing, so everyone was playing with new people all the time. You never knew who you were going to play with until the end. But it was just really good to be able to play with everyone, and you had to work for your spot because everyone was just so interchangeable. So it just kind of made the team grow and work even harder," said Hall.

Though the team didn't get as far as they had hoped, they had an extremely successful regular season. Maya Kou '28 described the improvement of the team throughout the season and how it approached practice everyday.

"We evolved a lot throughout the season from the start. And all the way until the end, we had a really strong regular season, but unfortunately, our playoff run wasn't what we had hoped for. I just feel like, as a team, we grew stronger and stronger, and we came to practice every single day with the mindset of getting better, and helping others get better too," said Kou.

Boys Squash Sees Success During Regular Season Matches, at Nationals, and Against Exeter

TIGER WANG

Boys Squash (13–3) reached the quarterfinals at the U.S. High School Nationals (Nationals) in Philadelphia, PA. In its home matches against Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter), Andover prevailed 5–2.

Reflecting on the season, Co-Captain Corey Shen '26 described the intentional mindset that the team took to its daily training sessions. He also emphasized the focus on fitness as a basic component to the success of the team.

"Every session we make sure to get in at least one type of fitness, whether that be lifting, doing medicine ball workouts, running, or doing footwork. You can't play a match unless you have good fitness, and fitness is one of the easiest things that you can work on," said Shen.

Shen continued, "We really wanted to emphasize that if you come to practice, you should come with the mindset that you're going to improve. You need to know what you're going to work on so you can make your practices as intentional as possible, and not just waste that time fooling around with your teammates."



JULIE CHAN/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Kevin Wu '29 leans in for a shot against his opponent.

Such a disciplined approach to training was intended to carry the team through the physical toll of the season. However, according to Kevin Wu '29, a string of unforeseen injuries struck the lineup in the season finale.

"We had a good team going into the season, and Franklin [Kozol '27] and Aaron [Bai '27] were all improving. At the end of the season, our main challenge was everyone getting injured. JJ [Luo '28] sprained his ankle and was out for Nationals, and Jonathan [Xu '28] got a concussion during Nationals," said Wu.

Such challenges gave rise to other members of the team. Co-Captain Alexander Yang '26 complimented Philip Meng '26's key contributions to the team as someone who had to step up from his original role as a member of the travel team to Nationals.

"Shout out to Philip Meng because we didn't have JJ to play for us. We had to have other players from lower on the ladder [substitute] for higher spots. Philip was one of these players. He came with us to [Nationals] as part of the traveling team, thinking that he probably didn't have to play at all and was just there to support us. He ended up actually playing most of the matches, and that was really great on his part to be able to do that for us. We probably would have just lost by default because we didn't have enough players," said Yang.

Looking toward the future, Shen and Yang described their confidence in the program's continued development as their time on the Snyder Center courts has come to an end.

"As graduating Seniors, it's a bittersweet goodbye to the team. We hope we were good leaders as Co-Captains and that we showed the new freshmen, Lowers, and Uppers how the team is supposed to be, and how we should show up to practices and matches. I have a lot of confidence that the program is only getting better from here," said Shen.

Shen continued, "We've got a couple of good recruits and possibly one of the strongest classes we've ever had at Andover. I have no doubt the coach is going to do well in raising these players, and everyone else currently on the team knows how to show up. Hopefully, we have led by demonstration."

Girls Squash Caps Historic Season with One Regular Season Loss and Third-Place National Finish

ALEX GODSEY

Girls Squash (11–1) ended its season placing third in the nation at the U.S. Squash Team Squash Championships (Nationals) after beating Westover. Andover also placed third in the NEPSAC. The team was led by Co-Captains Minnie Kim '27, Evelyn Kung '26, and Prisha Shivani '26.

Rachel Levitzky '28 commented on the events that strengthened bonds among teammates throughout the season.

"The Andover squash community was always really strong, especially in the middle of winter when nobody really wants to do anything. We all went on team dinners, and especially at Nationals, we would all do work together and hang out. Because it's such a small team, we connected easily. We can talk about things other than squash, and that's a very powerful thing," said Levitzky.



TAKUNDA BASVI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Girls Squash comes together during a match.

Competing at the number four position on the team, Kim was not only a strong performer throughout the season, but also a positive force that helped develop the team's community, according to Robin Lukens '28. She described Kim's leadership and the enthusiasm she brought to every event.

"A really strong player this year was Minnie Kim, who was one of our Captains. She was such a great leader for the team [and] super poised. She always gave incredible advice on and off the court. She was our rock this whole season. She really brought the energy at every single game, no matter how her week was going or how her day was going," said Lukens.

At High School Nationals in Philadelphia, Andover battled through a long tournament for the opportunity to make Andover history, competing against Westover for third place. Kim described the point at which Andover was tied with Westover 3–3, and Levitzky won her match to secure the team's podium finish.

"We were playing in the playoffs for third or fourth place, and there was a big snowstorm coming. We were supposed to not play the match and just go back home, but we said we had trained so hard and wanted to finish out the season. It was 8:00 a.m., and we were all super tired, but we were playing to be the third best team in the nation," said Kim.

Kim continued, "We were playing against Westover, and two hours into the match, it came down to the last spot, number seven seed Rachel Levitzky. It was a tiebreaker at 3–3, and she went to a fifth set for the chance to bring it home for us. She did and eventually won the match 4–3 for us in the fifth game. That was an incredible match to watch."

Nordic Skiing's Close-Knit Culture Drives Successful Season

WESLEY PHAM

Nordic Skiing closed out a successful season with strong team dynamics and lasting memories. Led by Co-Captains Noah Binkowski '26 and Dylan Siegel '26, the team finished the season with its boys finishing fourth and girls eighth at the NEPSAC Championships.

A new member of the team, Boson Bai '29, emphasized how the team's unique structure contributed to everyone's overall enthusiasm for the sport and helped him feel at home.

"I think the small size of the team is really important. Because it's a small, all-gender team, everyone has very close bonds with each other, and people are really passionate about the sport. We would have unofficial practices outside of normal practice time, led by our Captains without our coaches, which really helped everyone get to know each other. As a first-year student, I'm proud that I got to try something new, develop my skills, continue my fitness journey, and enjoy the experience," said Bai.

Hannah Jung '28 further emphasized the team's culture, which was notably marked by posters to celebrate the team's Seniors at the end of the year.

"Even though we race in separate female and male divisions, we all train together under the same two Captains, and I think that really helped the team spirit. This year, we also started a tradition with Senior posters, so it was really sweet," said Jung.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Matt Robinson '27 grins at the camera while getting ready to race on Siberia Field.

Reflecting on the season, Claire Bancroft '28 pointed to a moment that captured the team's ability to stay positive even when things did not go as planned. Rather than letting a travel delay at Holderness School overshadow the day, the team turned the situation into a shared memory that reflected its close bond and lighthearted spirit.

"I remember when our bus broke down at Holderness. We were forced to stay there for a bit, and it was a really cold day, so none of us were planning for it. A few of our team members ended up going toward this fire pit, and there was a hockey game right behind us. We were all surrounding the fire pit, trying to warm up, talking about our races," said Bancroft.

Bancroft continued, "It was also a really hard course. We were watching the hockey game, listening to the music from the game, and overall, it was just a really fun experience. Even though our bus broke down and we got back to school later, I think we were able to make the most of it."

To close the season, Jung emphasized the resilience required to compete in Nordic Skiing, a sport defined as much by harsh conditions as by race results. For her, the season represented the team's dedication through difficult moments.

"I'm really proud of the perseverance and grit that went into the sport, especially because Nordic [Skiing] is one of the only outdoor sports during the winter term, and we often face horrible weather," said Jung.

Boys and Girls Indoor Track & Field Conclude a Record-Breaking Season

SARAH WANG & AVIAD AWA

Boys and Girls Indoor Track & Field both had strong and memorable seasons throughout the winter. The team had various record-breaking performances and grew as a team overall. Boys Track & Field was led by Co-Captains Kishan Clarke '26 and Ethan Ly '27; Girls Track & Field was led by Co-Captains Sarah Bae '26 and Murathime Daisley '26.

Notably, newcomer Eden Dunleavy '29 broke the school record in the 300-Meter Race in 41.51 seconds. The boys 4x200-Meter Relay with Sean Kim '26, Quentin Cynn '28, Matt Ulicny '26, and Tyler Baty '27 broke the Andover/Exeter (A/E) meet record and school record in 1:33.63. Amelia Alvazzi '26 broke the Snyder Center and school record in the 1000-Meter Race in 2:57.30, broke the Snyder record in the 1-Mile in 5:01.28, and set the school record in the 2-Mile in 10:43.13. Bennett Rodgers '26 also set a new school record in the Pole Vault at 14'8". Boys and Girls Track & Field also sent seven athletes to New Balance Nationals.

Dunleavy commented on record-breaking athletes Alvazzi and Cynn, who set a Lower class record in the 300-Meter Race in 36.85 seconds.

"Amelia Alvazzi kept breaking her record over and over again. It's so amazing. Distance track and sprint track are two completely different aspects of the sport, and she just comes out every day ready to work. It's just insane how good she is. Quentin Cynn is a great teammate and a great person. He set his class record, and he's a person who does really great things and is super humble," said Dunleavy.

Beyond individual achievements, the team as a whole improved significantly over the course of the season. After almost every meet, dozens of athletes set new personal records, which were rewarded with lollipops from new Head Coach Shalise Manza Young.

"We do this thing at the end of the day after a meet where people who got a personal record [(PR)]get PR pops, and I remember, every time after meet, there were probably over 30 kids that [set PRs], which is huge, especially for people who are new to track, because it shows that you're improving and that you're gradually getting better," said Dunleavy.

The team's numerous traditions have nurtured the team culture, creating a close-knit community. Cynn highlighted how Coach Young fostered strong bonds throughout the season.

"As the season progressed, the team culture became closer. This was because people put in the effort to get to know each other. This was especially exponentiated by Coach Shalise. [She] really encouraged getting to know other people and [doing] activities. For example, we did kickball at some point, [and] this season we did lots of musical cones," said Cynn.



ANDREW PIZZI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Co-Captain Kishan Clarke '26 races in the 55-Meter Race.

Through its practices, whether hard workouts or fun activities, the team got closer. Caitlin Ly '27 shared how such moments created a positive team culture.



ANDREW PIZZI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

"This season, we had some hard workouts, but that's what made us closer. Being able to do it with my teammates allowed us to get super close over the season, [and] doing it with my friends who are super supportive created a really good environment for improvement," said Caitlin Ly.

Caitlin Ly described how the Co-Captains were essential in building team culture and motivating runners to do their best at meets.

"Every meet, one of the Captains will give a pep talk. It's very motivational. I like them a lot, and they helped bond the team. That was one of my favorite parts of the meet because everyone gathered together, and everyone was just so inspired to give it their all. [The Co-Captains] also guide the new people through warm-ups and workouts and are great role models for younger runners. Sarah Bae '26 is a great person to warm up with, and she brings great energy to the team, as well as our [Outdoor Track & Field] Captain, Gracie Aziabor '26," said Caitlin Ly.

Baty described the best part about the team: the chemistry. From little things like stretching together to eating together, there was a strong sense of connectedness throughout the program that elevated everyone.

"The track team is probably one of the bigger teams on campus, with a lot of different people with a lot of different interests. But at the end of the day, we come together for one specific interest, which is track. So you kind of see it all come together, so everyone's just socializing with each other. Even in pre-meet, when we're just socializing before we have to do a block start," said Baty.

Baty continued, "I think team chemistry is just one of those things that makes this team special. You see it during warmups, you see it after practice. We have a couple groups go to eat dinner with each other, do homework with each other. It doesn't necessarily stop as soon as track practice ends. It continues all throughout."

Editor's Note: Ethan Ly is a Managing Editor for The Phillipian, *vol. CXLIX*.

Boys Basketball Rides Resilience to NEPSAC Class A Finals

JULIEN REQUA

Finishing with an 18-7 record, Boys Basketball's season was defined by resilience, energy, persistence, and growth. After securing a spot in the postseason with 16 wins and 6 losses, Boys Basketball defeated Suffield and Deerfield to reach the NEPSAC Class A Championship, where they finished as runners-up after falling to Hotchkiss.

Kingston Johnson '28 recalled the team's game against Canterbury as a highlight, describing the close victory as a testament to the team's resilience.

"The game against Canterbury was definitely very memorable because we went 6–0 in that stretch at the beginning of the season before winter break. We were down going into halftime by double digits, and we ended up coming back. There was a lot of adrenaline in that game, and Zion Williams ['26] got a bucket to put us up two, and we ended up getting a crucial defensive stop to win," said Johnson.

The season was also characterized by strong leadership from the team's captains. Kosi Udeh '27 explained how Co-Captains Ollie Velez '26 and Jaylen Edmonds '27 pushed players to stay disciplined while keeping the team's energy high.

"Ollie Velez was a really good captain because he led the team and was consistent when we needed him to be. Our other captain, Jaylen Edmonds, was very vocal. He set the tone emotionally, and he was a really great overall defender. He practiced what he preached by doing the little things and fixing mistakes, and created good energy before every game in huddles," said Udeh.

Nearing the playoffs, the team had already secured several victories, nearly guaranteeing a postseason appearance. However, they would face a string of highly skilled opponents. Edmonds described one of those matchups, against St. Paul's, and the team's consistent resolve.

"In the St. Paul's game, we started off slow, and it was a big game because playoffs were coming up and we wanted a good seed. We were down by around 10 at halftime, but then we picked up our energy and played with more fight. We ended up winning by 15. I really liked the way we faced adversity, took that punch, and then punched right back," said Edmonds.



ANDREW PIZZI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Miles Clanton '26, Co-Captain Jaylen Edmonds '27, and Zion Williams PG '26 listen during a team huddle.

Following a convincing victory in the quarterfinals against Suffield, the team faced Deerfield for the second time, in what would be the most important match of the season thus far. Udeh explained the significance of the match.

"We were undefeated before we faced Deerfield earlier in the season. We had a lead for most of that game, but we let them get back into it by not doing the little things. I think we got a little too complacent with the lead. The semifinal game against Deerfield felt really satisfying because we got to beat them like we should have, especially in a game when it really mattered. Things got a little dicey with players at the end, but we let the game do the talking, and we won," said Udeh.

Edmonds also emphasized that the team's success was a collective effort, crediting every player for contributing.

"I want to thank the starting guys for their consistent work. But I also want to shout out the players who had our backs. Whether in practice or on the bench, they always had great positive energy. They were one of the main reasons we made it so far. I really think we would not have had as much success without [them]. They are who we battle with. They made us game-ready, and I want to give them a lot of credit," said Edmonds.

Girls Basketball: A Season Marked by Progress and Milestones

OLIVIA WANG

Girls Basketball finished its season strong with a record of 18–9. Despite tough competition, the team showcased resilience, steady improvement, and fostered close connections.

Vera Pape '29 praised Co-Captains Alani Rodriguez '27, Laney Cafua '27, and Ruby Kokinos '26 for consistently bringing positive energy to the team.

"On the court, we have Alani and Laney, who were constantly trying to lift everyone up. Ruby, as a Senior, brought a lot of good energy the whole time. [The Co-Captains] were always trying to tap people on the back. Off the court, they'd always be hyping us up, especially Ruby," said Pape.

Pape also recounted one of the season's most significant games, against Loomis Chaffee (Loomis). Although Andover lost, it was a turning point for the team's motivation heading into subsequent games.

"That [game against Loomis] was a big loss for us, but it was also a moment of realization of how much potential our team has. Last year, our team lost to Loomis by 40, and in the second half of that Loomis game, we were up by 10, which showed how much better we had gotten and what we had to offer. Even though we lost that game, we also learned a lot about what we had to improve, but it gave us some confidence going into the season, and that we have a lot to put up against the other teams," said Pape.



ANGELINA LE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Jules Stevenson '28 takes a free throw in narrow 54-51 win against Thayer.

Sara Damon '29 highlighted both Girls Basketball's offense and defense for their strong performance and spirit during the game against Loomis.

"[Loomis] was the most intense for us, especially just because both teams wanted to win really badly, and the effort and heart that both teams played with was incredible, specifically us. [We had] great defense, and offensively, we executed really well. Even when we were down, we knew we could win it, and we really wanted to win," said Damon.

Audrey Gotha '29 reflected on the team's improvement throughout the season, highlighting growth in their defense.

"The team improved a lot on our zone defense. It was new for everyone on the team, but by the end of the season, we mastered it, and it was very effective," said Gotha.

Damon highlighted her teammates for key contributions and growth throughout the season.

"Everybody had a great season. Jules Stevenson ['28] scored her 1000th point this year, and she had some big games for us specifically in the playoffs. Our other guard, Alani Rodriguez, had a great year. She's a great leader for me specifically because I play the same position. Everybody plays with a lot of heart and I think that's what's important and everybody can be a leader. Our center, Emma Moore ['28], had some great growth over the year," said Damon.

Pape described the overall team atmosphere as one of optimism and mutual support.

"During practices, we were all ready to work. It was never very nerve wracking because the coaches made it feel good, but also made sure to work hard so that we could be ready. Everyone just wanted to prepare for the upcoming games. We were always cheering for each other," said Pape.

COACH OF THE TERM

John Roberts: The Coach Behind Boys Squash's Historic Success

HAOYU ZHANG

Head Coach John Roberts led Boys Squash to a 13–3 regular season record. He grew up playing squash in Northern Ireland, later competing in Division I squash at Yale University. There, he won the match that ended Trinity College's winning streak of almost four years. This season, despite numerous injuries to key members of the squad, Roberts helped the team ultimately reach the quarterfinals at the U.S. High School Team Championships (Nationals).

Roberts reflected on his philosophy as a coach. He emphasized both the individuality of the sport and the significance of having teammates.

"We play an individual sport, but we play it as a team, which is quite unique for squash, so I try to place a lot of emphasis on both aspects. I place a lot of emphasis on being there for your teammates, training hard together, respect for yourselves and for your teammates. And hopefully as a team, [that] makes it easier to improve if they can focus on those aspects," said Roberts.

Having played collegiate squash, Roberts shared that he tries to pass on his expertise to team members. Addressing the similarities between college and high school squash, he explained how he pushes his athletes to succeed.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

"Because you're playing in a team environment and you're playing for your teammates, you can, at times, feel a lot more pressure on yourself than if you were playing an individual tournament. You feel like if you don't win, you're letting your teammates and your friends down. The style of play can become quite defensive and more of a grind, so I want these young student-athletes to play a little bit more defensive, a little smarter, and a little more risk adverse," said Roberts.

According to Aaron Bai '27, Roberts also helped team members individually prepare for their opponents.

"He gives very good advice. When we're playing our opponents, he knows what each of our strengths and our weaknesses are. And he knows if we're going to play [a certain] opponent what we should do. When I think about what he tells us, it's basically just to play your best no matter who the opponent is," said Bai.

JJ Luo '28 recalled the advice he received from Roberts. Alongside technical suggestions, Luo noted the importance of the mental tips he received.

"He tells me a lot of stuff that's specific to my game. It's a lot of technical stuff that I've been working with him on. But, mentally, he tells me to just have fun. At the end of the day, you play and you're having fun. That's something he told me to do and it ended up translating well into my game," said Luo.

Roberts commented on the challenges Andover students face, and how he helps them maintain a balance between school and sports.

"The games are what you train for. That's the fun part of playing a sport, playing with your teammates and getting ready for the big matches. But then, of course, comes nerves. Students here are very good at balancing their work and sports. They almost use squash as an escape, where they can get out and don't have to worry for that hour and a half. They're maybe a bit nervous, but they look forward to those days, which is a nice complement to their time at Andover," said Roberts.

Roberts values his job working with dedicated students. He expressed his pride in helping students through transitions of high school socials, academics, and athletics.

"It's just fun being a part of their four-year journey here, and who happens to really enjoy the squash aspect of their time here as well. They're fun to be around, and I also hope to improve them at the same time," said Roberts.



Undefeated Boys Volleyball Repeats as NEPSAC Champions, Graduates 10 Seniors

AVIAD AWA

Defending NEPSAC Champions Boys Volleyball (10–0) capped off its season with a repeat of the title win, besting Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter) 3–1 to extend its legacy.

Alex Godsey ’28 spoke on the season as a whole. Going into the season with a lot of confidence, the team improved on the previous season, conceding only one scrimmage to North Andover High (North Andover).

“We won NEPSAC last year, and despite dropping a few games along the road, we were still able to get the trophy, and that was really big. This year, we wanted to take it a step further and go undefeated. That was always our goal. We knew Exeter was going to be our competition, and we did a good job of staying strong against them, but we ended up losing a game to North Andover, which was very disappointing. We felt like we could have won it, but they are a good team, and we weren’t able to do that,” said Godsey.

Will Oh ’26 described Boys Volleyball’s unique Senior presence that held the team strong throughout the season.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Kai Szanton ’26 hits the ball.

“I’d say we were all a lot more experienced. We had ten Seniors on our team, so that experience really carried us, and that leadership pushed us through to get the championship in the end,” said Oh ’26.

Ren Oh ’28 elaborated on the Senior-heavy roster, describing their impact on the team from his perspective as an underclassman.

“The most prominent thing is definitely the fact that this team is about 80% seniors. We have five non-seniors. The buildup of experience, and all of them being part of the team last year, really helped. They all provided a mentor role on the team for us non-seniors, who were in the minority, and that experience really helped us during the season,” said Oh ’28.

As the season drew to an end, Oh ’26 touched upon the most memorable game of the season for him: Senior night.

“Even though we beat the team pretty easily, having the last home regular season game with all my friends and the whole team, which I’d bonded with over the past three years, was pretty emotional,” said Oh ’26.

As a newcomer to Boys Volleyball this year, Godsey spoke on the team’s welcoming environment.

“They included me in everything. Even something as small as a Captain hyping me up after a good play, cheering from the sideline, or chanting for me when I got into the game really helped me find my home early in the season. Off the court, I really developed close relationships with a lot of the guys. We did a lot of stuff outside of volleyball, like team brunches and team dinners at [Head Coach Brendan] Mackinson’s house. A few of us would also go golfing together. Overall, they were very welcoming, and it was a great experience. I didn’t feel out of place at all,” said Godsey.

As his time on the team concludes, Oh ’26 spoke on the impact the team has had on his Andover journey.

“It’s been my consistent family over the past three years. I got changed to JV teams, and I quit soccer, so having that one solid foundation throughout my time at Andover really made it special,” said Oh ’26.

Softball Maintains Undefeated Streak, Defends Big East Championship

TIGER WANG

Softball (19–0) capped off its undefeated regular season by defending its Big East Championship for the second year in a row. Grounded in attention to detail and a tight-knit team culture that extends beyond the field, the team remained focused and adaptable in the face of a wide range of opponents.

Maddie Marshall ’29 described the team’s focus on making quick decisions at the plate and adapting their pitching speeds.

“One of our struggles is when we face slower pitchers or people who throw a good changeup. We used to have a hard time adjusting our swing to an off-speed pitch. We have worked on that, adjusting to each pitcher and then adjusting within your at-bat, so we can make each at-bat count. I think we have done a better job of being able to select good pitches and find the right pitch to hit,” said Marshall.

The team’s dedication and hard work have manifested across its array of matchups. Marshall noted that Softball ended some games early because of a large enough lead to “mercy” its opponent, while its depth shone in facing tougher teams.

“Some games we mercy a team by a lot. But in our hardest games, when we faced really strong competitors like St. Paul’s, our pitching and our fielding had to all be on point because every single run mattered. I think we won the game one-nothing. In the games where we had really high success, it had been the pitchers hitting their spots, and everyone in the field was ready for a ball to come to them. Making clean plays, staying focused in the game, and ensuring everyone is at least making contact,” said Marshall.

Morgan McDonough ’29 noted that the team’s strength came from its depth, with every player bringing their expertise to the field. McDonough pointed to Co-Captain Ashley Schuman ’27 as a major contributor to the team’s success throughout the season.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Softball players gather on the field during a game this season.

“Ashley Schuman is such an incredible pitcher. She is a Boston University commit, and she is basically untouchable. I think she plays a big part in why our team is so good. But at the same time, the depth that we have is important. When Ashley is not having a good game, which is rare, we have somebody who is always behind her. They are ready for her, picking her up, pitching, and working as hard as the next one,” said McDonough.

Looking ahead, Gaby Potter ’27 emphasized that staying humble and focused will be crucial to continuing Softball’s success in future seasons.

“Remaining undefeated is something that we take a lot of pride in. We are super proud of the work we have put in. But we definitely also want to continue to remain humble, remain focused, and play as best as we can at all times. We are such a talented and young team, so we are hopeful we will continue to perform well in future seasons,” said Potter.

Girls Track and Field Sets PRs, Breaks Records, Claims Back-to-Back NEPSTA Championship

LUCY VINNAKOTA

Girls Track and Field remained undefeated in regular-season meets this season with strong performances across events. Fueled by personal records, school-record-breaking races, and a supportive team culture, the team has established itself as a dominant force, culminating in another NEPSTA Division I Championship title.

For many runners, the outdoors brought a renewed sense of energy to the season. Eden Dunleavy ’29 described the open-air environment as one of the aspects that make outdoor track special.

“It’s really nice being outside in warm weather. Even though sometimes it’s not super warm, it’s refreshing, and it’s a totally different environment from indoor track. While indoor is always nice and warm, it’s also a little stuffy, so it’s nice to be out in the open air,” said Dunleavy.

Girls Track and Field’s supportive environment has pushed athletes to improve and stay motivated throughout the season. Salali SaltPaw ’29 recounted how teammates’ encouragement, combined with a strong work ethic, has helped her consistently set new personal records (PRs).



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

Corinne Spade ’27, Murathime Daisley ’26, and Anya Budzinski ’26 run on the outdoor track.

“It’s been really fun because everybody is really uplifting and pushes me to do better. The team has done really well, and we usually win, but we are all still trying to get better. I get PRs by trying my best during hard workouts, but also by making sure I rest and take days to recover, because it doesn’t really help when you are going all out 100 percent of the time,” said SaltPaw.

The team’s progress was reflected in both its meet results and the number of personal records set throughout the season, which Dunleavy described.

“We had more than 50 PRs across the entire team, which was huge. It was really cool to see everyone take it to the next level, and that is a huge number considering we have around 150 people on the team. To have about one-third of the entire team PR is a big deal, so I’d say we’re doing pretty well. We are winning most of our competitions against other schools, and you can definitely see the growth in the team,” said Dunleavy.

SaltPaw credited Co-Captains Amelia Alvazzi ’26 and Gracie Aziabor ’26 for creating a supportive team environment.

“They are always there to greet you and sometimes do the workouts with you, so it doesn’t feel as challenging or difficult. I think none of us ever feels too discouraged because we always have each other, and that shows during meets. We are always there to cheer each other on, and when you have somebody cheering for you while you are trying to run your best, it really does help,” said SaltPaw.

Adanna Obi ’29 credited the coaching staff with pushing athletes to improve every practice, even as the team faced challenges like difficult weather conditions during meets.

“There have been a lot of school records that have been broken, which has been really awesome, and we also have been proud of the work that our coaches have done to really make sure we have gotten better. The weather has definitely been a challenge for us. Wind is really important in track, and we’ve had a lot of headwinds during races. But even with those conditions, people have finished with PRs, and a positive attitude,” said Obi.

Reflecting on the team’s back-to-back NEPSTA championship titles, Corinne Spade ’27 pointed to Girls Track and Field’s steady commitment in practice.

“Our win reflects the work our team has put in over the past two seasons. Everyone comes to practice focused and ready to do what will make us better, and our results definitely show how much that work has paid off,” said Spade.

Looking forward, Obi emphasized that continuing the program’s success entails building on this year’s accomplishments and continuing to welcome younger athletes.

“Going into next season, we are going to try and build off of what we have and also work on implementing newer students, as in [Juniors], into the track program and make it more inclusive than it is now. I’m excited to meet new people and see how our track program continues throughout the years,” said Obi.

No Losses, No Letup: Girls Lacrosse Finishes Regular Season Undefeated

OLIVIA WANG

Girls Lacrosse (15–0) went undefeated in its regular season, highlighted by a long-awaited win over Noble and Greenough (Nobles), a team that had challenged Andover in previous years. Despite setbacks in the Prep Cup Tournament, the team maintained its momentum through strong leadership, polished skill, and a roster exhibiting depth.

Piper Lasater '26 reflected on the team's rewarding win against Nobles, a long-time rival, under difficult circumstances.

"Nobles has historically been a very strong team, and they've always been the team that we've strived to beat. It was a very close game. It was very cold. We were missing some players and it was one of our first games, which was kind of unexpected. We were going back and forth, tying it up and then scoring again. They tied it up in the last second, but then we were able to just finish with a goal and it was really exciting. If you see the footage, we all stormed the field and even though it was so cold, we were all just so excited and jumping on top of each other. It was really special," said Lasater.

Regan Driscoll '28 praised teammates Sophie Stetson '29 and Aubrey Oracca-Cecil '29 for their growth and contributions this season, even as two of the youngest players on the team.

"The [Juniors] have both really stepped up. They both have looked a lot better. Obviously, when you first get out there, it's a little nerve-racking, but they've both come in and become way more confident this season in themselves and it's been a huge difference for the team," said Driscoll.

Ashley Dimnaku '28 highlighted Captain Quiana Bell '26's leadership skills, noting her ability to motivate and help the team improve both before and during games.

"Some players that have stood out are definitely Captain [Quiana], on and off the field. Her leadership has been outstanding. Before every game, we get an email from her, talking about not only logistics, but goals for the game, and they're really thorough. On the field, if we ever get scored on, she's always huddling the defense up, seeing what we could have improved on, and what we can do to prevent the goal next time. In terms of off the field, she talks to everyone and makes sure we're all ready to go for practice," said Dimnaku.



KAYLA LEONS/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Lola Aguirre '26 moves the ball past her defender.

According to Lasater, the team made significant improvements over the course of the season, particularly in their offensive flow and ball movement.

"In the beginning of the season, which is typical when we haven't spent a lot of time together, it's less about passing and most of our goals were scored off fast breaks or eight meters. Now, we're really good, especially when we're clearing the ball. We're really good at passing it around and being open for each other and helping each other out and not relying on one person to run it up, which is something you have to be mindful of because people get tired," said Lasater.

Dimnaku highlighted the team environment, emphasizing the encouragement and spirit teammates brought to practices and games.

"The atmosphere during games and practices is obviously very intense. At practices, we try to push each other to be the best we can and we're really focused. We're still nice and we support each other. Same thing in the game, if someone does something bad, everyone is supporting them to move on to the next play," said Dimnaku.

Boys Track and Field Powered by Culture and Success

ATHREYA YEGNESWARAN

Boys Track and Field competed amidst a demanding Spring schedule, marking its season with both strong performances and a sense of community and encouragement. Athletes described the team's culture as centered around positivity, resilience, and support.

As a Junior competing in his first season, Soohan Cho '29 emphasized the team's spirit and welcoming environment.

"The team spirit is really good because before every single warmup, we have a team gathering, and we do ten jumping jacks together. We have this ritual where one of the Captains or athletes throws their sweater or shoe up. It's not something you'd see on other teams. You'd be surprised by the amount of connection there is when there's people from everyone, and it's really inspiring to see how easily people can come together even though they may be so different," said Cho.

Andrew Ramirez '28 echoed this sentiment, describing the team's biggest strength as its unity and support system within a competitive atmosphere.

"The strength of the team is definitely the community. We all definitely have strong team building, and the relationship between athletes is just on point. We've definitely gotten more competitive, and the team spirit is there during every meet and it just keeps on growing. The support of everybody is always there," said Ramirez.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

Sean Pao '26 clears a hurdle during a race.

Xavier Gross '28 highlighted the positive atmosphere at meets and practices.

"At the beginning of the season, it was definitely different having to meet everyone and [getting] used to all these new faces. However, during the races, it doesn't matter who it is [because] you're still going to cheer for them. As the season progresses, you learn people's names, cheer harder, and that sense of community really strengthens," said Gross.

Several athletes also reflected on the team's growth in mentality over the course of the season. Cho explained how the team supported athletes dealing with injuries.

"The team does a really good job in maintaining that mindset even though you're injured. [When you get injured,] it doesn't mean [that] you're not part of the team anymore. It still means that you're an important part of the team, and the most important thing is getting better as fast as possible so you can be there again," said Cho.

Gross added that many athletes became more confident as the season continued, especially newer runners competing in unfamiliar events.

"At the beginning, everyone's nervous and too scared to actually perform because they don't know how they're going to do. But now [at the end of the season] everyone's more confident. Everybody knows there's going to be people cheering for them, so you don't have to be scared. Whether you do bad or good, you're still going to have people cheering for you," said Gross.

Ramirez credited the team's coaches for supporting athletes and building morale.

"Our performance has improved thanks to our coaches. Our coaches trained us really well and conditioned us really well so that we would be excelling in the meet. As well as that, the support from everybody is great," said Ramirez.

Golf: A Season Marked by Friendship and Joy

EVA JACKSON

Golf (16–2–2)'s season saw a tight-knit team culture alongside strong performances. Players broke the course record at the Andover Invitational, placing second after a fifth-round tiebreaker.

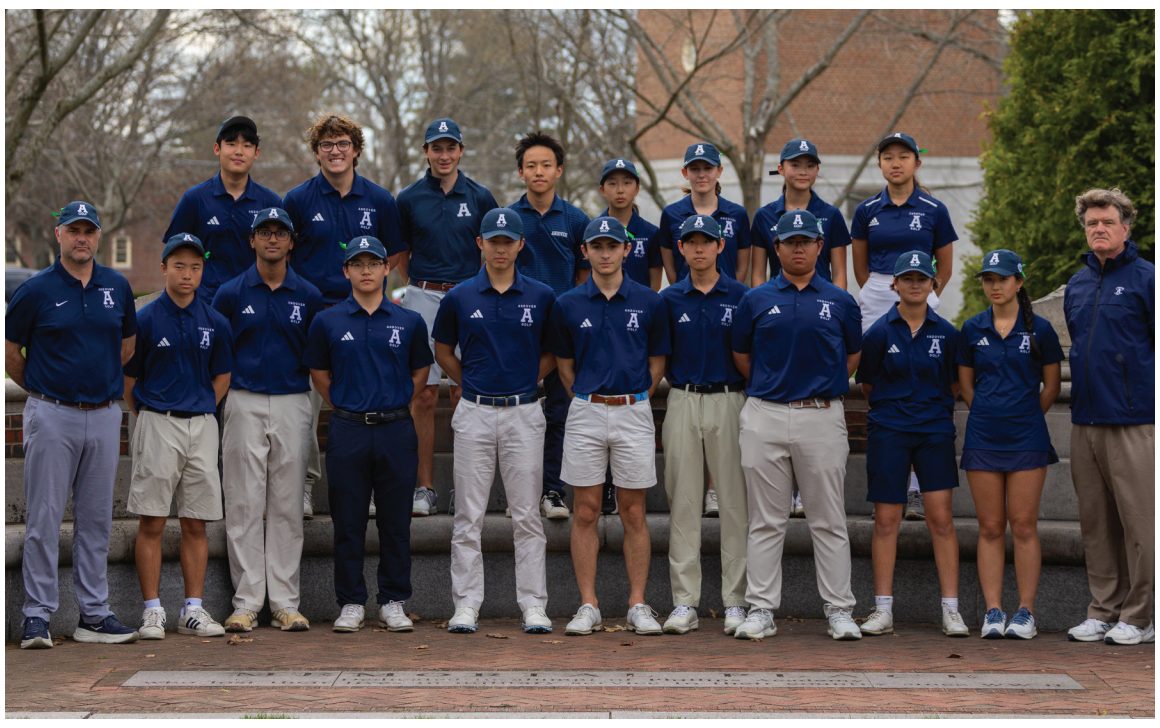
Junu Lee '29 described how the team brings joy to all practices and matches, making the most of every.

"Every practice, every match, I think we have a lot of fun. We like to play some fun formats while practicing like scramble or best ball, and those moments are fun, working with a friend," said Lee '29.

Alexis Lee '28 likewise described how going to practice every day would alleviate her stress and improve her mood.

"[Going] to golf practice after class makes a lot of my stress go away, and I am always really happy just hanging out with [everyone on] the team. The coaches kind of force everyone to play with different people, so we don't hang out with the same people all the time. So I think everyone on the team interacts pretty well with each other, and it's just really a fun experience talking and hanging out with these people," said Lee '28.

As the season progressed, Lee '29 highlighted how teammates both improved in skill and forged close bonds.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

The 2025-2026 Golf roster, alongside Head Coach Brian Faulk '00 (left) and Assistant Coach Chris Odden (right).

"We spend a lot of time on the course and the range. Golf-wise, everyone's improved a lot. In terms of community, I feel a little more like this because I'm a freshman. We really know each other a lot better now, all of us are close, and I made a lot of new friends. That's really a good part about the golf team," said Lee '29.

With golf being an individual sport, Sophie Lu '28 described the small, supportive moments that motivate and bring the team together on the course.

"Golf is very much an individual sport. The team encourages each other, but it's not as much of a centralized thing as it would be if it was another sport where the whole team was competing at the same time, the same place, and actively working together. With golf, you are a lot more on your own than you are with other sports. Congratulating each other after your good shots or hyping each other before a shot that's really important to make, small stuff like that," said Lu.

Lee '29 shouted out Golf's coaches and Captain Evan DeMayo '26 for their support throughout the season.

"All three coaches, [Head] Coach [Brian] Faulk ['00], [Assistant Coach Chris] Odden, and [Assistant Coach Tedd] Parker. They're really nice.

And Captain Evan [DeMayo '26], too, was always welcoming. He supported me through hard moments when I lost matches. Everyone on the team is really supportive," said Lee '29.

The team also has a number of traditions that mark its connectedness. Lu described an end-of-the-season party where teammates bid farewell to the graduating Seniors.

"There is an end-of-the-season party at one of the coaches' houses. We had this thing where we made posters commemorating the team's Seniors, and the Seniors also made us paper plates and wrote attributes for every team member. Every team member got a plate, and someone wrote an attribute of that team member on it and decorated it. I still have that plate in my room from last year," said Lu.

Editor's Note: Alexis Lee is a Copy Editor for The Phillipian, *vol. CXLIX.*

Boys Lacrosse Looks Back on Season Defined by Promise, Setbacks, and Growth

ALEX GODSEY



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Andover faces a Choate player.

Boys Lacrosse (6–9), led by Co-Captains Nick Norris ’26 and Jack Farrell ’26, saw contributions from across the roster in a season of early success, injuries, and increasingly difficult competition. After graduating 12 Seniors last year, Andover entered a rebuilding season with a younger roster.

Boys Lacrosse opened the season with six straight wins, outscoring its opponents 81-37. In particular, Norris had 21 goals alone over that period. Luke Honos ’28 attributed the strong start to the team’s close-knit community and early chemistry.

“A lot of that early chemistry came from our preseason trip to Florida. That was a lot of fun. We spent all day with our teammates, making friends and getting to know each other. Then also the locker room culture, before and after practices and games, playing music and hanging out, we really got to know each other well,” said Honos.

Faced with a string of tough opponents and injury setbacks, the team lost the next six games. Brayden Ko ’28 provided an example of one such disruption: the season-ending injury to Co-Captain Farrell, which forced a change in the defensive scheme.

“Jack Farrell suffered a season-ending ankle injury, which was a real blow to our team. Regardless, even though he wasn’t able to play on the field, his work off the field was tremendous. There were many times when the team wasn’t as confident and didn’t feel as strong without Jack, and he showed constant support and resilience. Even though he couldn’t play, he still showed up for the team. That shows the character he has. He really cares about the team,” said Ko.

Throughout this losing streak, Boys Lacrosse faced four nationally top-ranked teams. Despite the 12–9 loss, Norris highlighted a game against Choate as one of the best of the season, led by Alex Dimnaku’s ’27 25-of-25 perfect performance, and Honos’s two-goal, two-assist day.

“The Choate game was really important to us. They were a really good team. They beat a powerful, ranked Deerfield team. Alex Dimnaku, our faceoff guy, won 100 percent of faceoffs in that game. The defense was playing their minds out. The offense worked really hard, but we ended up falling short. But I’m still really proud of how we came out for that game. I’m really proud of the way we came out in that game, and we kept a team that, from an outsider perspective, we had no business staying close with, and we kept it a really close game. I’m really proud of us for that,” said Norris.

The team’s eight Seniors were a central part of its culture, bringing energy and commitment to the program. Norris described this dynamic, as well as the broader team environment.

“We’re losing a really passionate group of Seniors, a group of guys who love to play, who really love to compete. A group of Seniors who show out. We were giving absolutely everything, and we love the game. That’s all you can really ask for. We try to give it our all every practice, every game. Every day coming into the locker room, I’ve got a smile on my face. I’ve got a special relationship with every person on this team, defense, faceoff, offense. I love everyone on this team, and these are my ride or dies right here,” said Norris.

As the season closes, Boys Lacrosse is looking to regain its footing. Honos expressed his optimism looking ahead.

“We’re looking super hopeful towards the rest of the season. There are no teams that are out of our weight class. The rest of these teams we play, they’re all going to be great games, but we should be able to win. We should be able to win out if we play our best the rest of the season, so hopeful looking forward,” said Honos.

More Than One Boat: The Brotherhood Behind Boys Crew

NICHOLAS JUNG



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

The 2025-2026 Boys Crew roster, alongside Dale Hurley (left) and Head Coach Taylor Washburn ’03 (right).

Boys Crew’s season has been defined by development and dedication, while being encompassed by a tight-knit community. Led by Co-Captains Dean Burton ’26 and Cade Rutkoske ’26, the team fostered a supportive environment that pushed rowers to improve across boats, with its results reflecting that strength.

Two values that anchored Boys Crews this year were teamwork and grit. Sebastian Vermut ’27 reflected on the team’s morale throughout the season.

“Teamwork and just understanding everybody as a rower where they’re at. We’re going to have a lot of different ways, whether you go from the fastest crew team, [or] you got a little faster versus with some guy who moves up four boats, like it’s all the same. Everyone’s grinding together,” said Vermut.

He continued, “I think it’s the best team I’ve ever been a part of. Captains Dean Burton and Cade Rutkoske really made a point to bring everybody together, regardless of talent, regardless of boat. We have talks at the beginning of every practice. Words of inspiration, words of affirmation. This is one team of six plus that are independent.”

Burton elaborated on the team’s camaraderie.

“One of the things we like to say on the team is, ‘ Don’t forget to smile.’ It’s easy to get wrapped up in your head when you’re rowing and make too many changes and stress out about it, but we’re all there to have fun, and you shouldn’t be doing it if you don’t find that it’s fun, so just keep smiling,” said Burton.

The team’s supportive nature helped new and old rowers stay committed to improvement. Burton commented on teammates’ growth and dedication.

“I really see [the progress] when we’re doing our tests on the erg [ergonometer]. So [in] erg tests, you have the first wave and the guys that haven’t gone yet are cheering everyone on. And then as soon as the first wave gets off and the other people get on, it’s turned right back around, and you’re there to cheer on the teammates that are doing the same thing that you’re doing. That’s not really something that’s happened in the past, and there’s a pretty good culture of supporting someone even if they’re faster than you or not as fast as you,” said Burton.

The season also featured intense, memorable races that built character and community among every rower. Thiago Jollon ’27 described a close race that resulted in an Andover victory.

“We raced [Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter)] and Tabor [Academy (Tabor)], and there’s the David Perry trophy. It’s among the Exeter, Andover, and Tabor crew teams. Andover won 36 points to Exeter’s 34, and Tabor got 7. So it’s basically between Andover and Exeter. The girls won their races. The boys’ top three boats lost to Exeter, but the boys’ fourth boat beat Exeter. It gave the advantage to Andover, and that’s why we won. So a highlight was seeing the fourth boat defeat Exeter, which is always important for Andover.”

Looking ahead, Jollon discussed how the team hopes to build on this season’s depth in furthering its performance next year.

“We can be a really good and strong crew [that’s] very deep. We have a lot of good freshmen and lowers this year, and then a good, strong group of uppers. We’re obviously going to miss the seniors, but next year, we’re getting some recruits. I’m really looking forward to what next season will bring and what we can do, but most of all, I’m looking forward to two weeks from now, the NEPSAC Championships. And then whatever happens there, we’ll build from that and focus on next year, which is very promising right now,” said Jollon.

Editor’s Note: Thiago Jollon is a The Eighth Page Editor for The Phillipian, *vol. CXLIX.*

Girls Crew Builds Strength and Spirit in the Spring Season

BEN KAZLOUSKI



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

The 2025-2026 Girls Crew roster, alongside José Zorrilla Matilla, Ei Smith, Logan Jester (left), and Head Coach Kelly Evans (right).

This season, Girls Crew has found unity both on and off the water. With 54 athletes on the roster, including 18 Juniors, the team’s balance of experience and depth has allowed it to welcome newcomers while supporting their growth.

As a four-year Senior and Co-Captain, Willow Wright ’26 felt that she had firmly experienced Crew’s deeply rooted culture. Wright shared one of her core memories from before this season’s first home race.

“One of my favorite things that I’ll think about was the day before we raced Deerfield and CRI. Caroline [Romano ’26], the other [Co-Captain], and I stayed back while everybody else got ice cream, and we decorated the locker room for everybody to surprise them in the morning. Little acts like that, and the way I felt in the morning. I was so excited. I could not wait to get to the boathouse and open that door. We sat at the front of the bus just so we could get there and open it for everybody before they came in, so that we could watch their reactions,” said Wright.

With many new rowers joining each year, Girls Crew often begins its season with a wide gap in experience between its higher and lower boats. Wright shared her excitement in seeing that gap narrow as the season progressed.

“As the season progresses, people who are new to the team and to the sport start learning how to row better and how to put their power into the stroke to make the boat go faster. Something really cool this week was that we were finally able to get four boats across doing races together, which wasn’t something we could do at the beginning of the season because our first few boats would go way ahead, and the other boats wouldn’t be able to keep up,” said Wright.

Eloise Malle ’27 similarly reflected on Girls Crew’s depth.

“[We had] a lot of pretty clean sweeps where we’ve done well across the board, where our lower boats are doing well and higher boats as well. It’s really nice to have us all have that much depth in our program, and to know that every race is competitive because we make it competitive, so that’s a really nice feeling,” said Malle.

As a newcomer to Girls Crew, Jackie Dill ’27 felt that the team’s uplifting culture helped her ease into the community and intensity of the sport.

“Including myself, there’s a lot of new rowers, and even though it’s definitely a really competitive environment, it’s super welcoming. The team culture where it is not one man for himself. Everyone wants to help everyone get better,” said Dill.

Though Crew is a team sport, it is also individually competitive and mentally demanding. Malle shared an anecdote of how coaches helped ease the team’s stress before a timed test.

“We were about to do a 2K (two-kilometer) erg [ergometer] test. It is so hard mentally and physically, and you spend all weekend worrying about it. Right before it, [our coach] was like, ‘guys, get into your boat pairs in sections,’ because they’re broken up into four pairs. And we were going to do an egg race. So instead of prepping for a 2K mentally, we started running up and down the lawn carrying some egg on a spoon and seeing who could do that the fastest,” said Malle.

Undefeated Girls Tennis Ends Season with Consecutive NEPSAC Championship

JULIEN REQUA

Girls Tennis (10–0) finished its regular season undefeated and won this year's NEPSAC Class A Championship, marking a consecutive title for the team. Across 10 matches, the team earned multiple shutout victories and built consistency throughout the season. Players described the team's support, adaptability, and work ethic as key drivers of its success.

In its recent match against Deerfield, the team faced an unfamiliar style of play and adapted in real time. Michelle Oh '29 praised her teammates' resilience and adaptability.

"[The game against Deerfield] was a really fun, hype, and exciting day because it was Senior Day, which is the last home game for Seniors. Evelyn [Kung '26] and Lara [Madan '27] went into a super tight tiebreak, and their opponents were pretty tough. They weren't powerful hitters, but they were playing in a very unorthodox way that we had not practiced against before. They had to find new ways to beat them, and although unprepared for that style, they came through in the end. It was a good and memorable win for Evelyn, especially on her Senior Day," said Oh.

One of the team's early tests came against Groton, its season opener. Angelina Zhang '27 described the match as an important measure of the team's readiness, especially given Groton's strength as an opponent.

"Groton has always been a really tough match, and it always comes in the first few weeks, so it doesn't give the team a whole lot of time to get prepared, but we have to be there fully prepared and just play our best. So it's also always a tough one, and Groton is one of those games where we take a lot of pride in winning against them," said Zhang.

After finishing last season undefeated and winning the NEPSAC championship, the team entered this season with high expectations. Simultaneously, the graduation of strong players required the roster's adaptability. Mercan Draman '26 emphasized the team's continued focus.

"The most important aspect of the team is determination because last year we were undefeated, and we won [the] NEPSAC [Championship], so it is nice that we are still on that path. We lost two of our best players who graduated last year, so going into the season, we were not really sure what it would look like, but we have made it really far and have been really successful so far," said Draman.



JEREMIAH NUÑEZ/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Nitya Madduri '28 (left) and Michelle Oh '29 (right) compete in their respective singles matches.

Baseball Stays United, Driven By Community

ALEX GODSEY

Baseball (12–9) battled through wins and losses this season. It was led by Co-Captains Owen Callahan '26, Boone Fahey '26, and Michael Gilligan '26.

Andover opened its season with a loss against Dexter Southfield (Dexter), before winning three straight games and subsequently losing two more. Pitcher Matt Shampine PG'26 commented on the team's ability to lift each other up and recover from errors and losses, linking this supportiveness to the team's tight-knit culture.

"As a team, we've grown in the fact that we don't snowball from errors anymore. We focus on the next pitch and stay locked in for the whole game. Early in the season, we tended to let errors define us, and during the middle of the season, they were costing us runs and games. We would get down, and it'd spiral into a loss," said Shampine.

Shampine continued, "We've now matured to the point where we pick each other up after errors, not just teammates but friends. We've all gotten so close over these couple months, and I would partially attribute our success to building off each other's positive energy, and that is really the effect of a great team culture."

Nate Dubuc '28 corroborated the uniqueness of Baseball's connected group of athletes, crediting its Co-Captains.

"We really do have a great group of guys. Not a single guy is left out, and I feel like that really falls on the Captains. They do a great job of keeping everybody together, and everyone's just friends. It's kind of rare where you find a team where everyone is such great friends, and it really helps with the attitude. When one person is down, another is right there to pick him back up, no matter who it is, their closest friend or not," said Dubuc.

After early setbacks and a 1–4 run against a tough schedule, Andover was able to regain control with dominant wins against Brooks and Groton before playing Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter). Against Exeter, Andover gritted out a 3–2 comeback win after being down ahead of the seventh inning. Kaden McNeice '28 praised Caleb Penn '27 with a double and Callahan with a single for the game changing hits. Garrett Falahee '27 also had a double, and Shampine and Jacob Honor '27 held down the mound for Andover. McNeice shared his perspective on the Andover/Exeter matchup.



ANDREW PIZZI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Garrett Falahee '27 prepares to swing at bat.

"A game that exemplifies what our team is all about would be game one of Andover/Exeter. We went down to their place, and we had a lot of anticipation. Everyone was locked in on the bus, doing their own thing, listening to music. It's one of the oldest prep school rivalries, and everyone knows the importance of it. For the game, it didn't matter how the season was going, the focus was always to beat Exeter. Caleb Penn had a double to tie the game 2–2. Then Owen Callahan had what would be the game winning hit, and everyone went wild. It was as electric as it gets. Everyone was going crazy on the sidelines. It doesn't get much better than beating your rival by one," said McNeice.

Shampine leads the team with 12 runs and second on the team with 13 hits, and McNeice recognized him for both his skill and lighthearted attitude.

"A player who brings everyone up is Matthew Shampine. He's an excellent pitcher, everyone knows his skill on the field, but what not everyone talks about is his impact as a leader. He has one of the most welcoming personalities on the team and comes ready to work. Even when it is just a normal practice, he tells everyone that today is game day. That's what makes us better as a team. He has a big personality, likes to joke around, and keeps everything fun, but he's also here to win and get better," said McNeice.

Girls/Non-Binary Ultimate Reflects on a Year of Growth and Development

LUCY VINNAKOTA

Led by Co-Captains Niki Tavakoli '27, Selene Xu '27, and Iris Liu '26, Girls/Non-Binary Ultimate exhibited growth and development throughout its season, with nine Juniors joining the team this year.

Despite having a streak of three losses at the beginning of the season, the team won almost all of its games at the Jamboree Southern Maine Invitational. Emma Tan '29 detailed the team's performance throughout the season.

"The season was off to a rough start, but a lot better in the tournament really shows because we did really well. It was a lot of freshmen and most people didn't really know what they were doing, so people would also get a little bit frustrated. But now with all the newer players, we've gotten some skills and we know what we're supposed to be doing now, so it's a lot easier to coordinate," said Tan.

During practice, younger players bonded with the rest of the team through various activities that brought everyone together, as Ming-Yi Tang '29 detailed.

"In the beginning of practice, we had a lot of throwing with each other and mixed up experience[s] a lot, and mostly our practice was all together," said Tang.

Tan explained how such connections impacted the team's performance.

"It has really helped us because we're able to trust each other more because we talk to each other. There is more trust between everyone which feels like a stronger connection, which also helps the chemistry within the games and also just builds new connections that probably wouldn't have been made outside of ultimate," said Tan.

Dasha Gomez '28 described how, with an influx of new players, Girls/Non-Binary Ultimate navigated its chemistry.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Girls/Non-Binary Ultimate Co-Captain Selene Xu '27 tracks the disc during a game.

"We had to integrate the new players, including myself, with the returning ones.

So in our first-ever game we didn't do our best because not everyone knew all the rules and we were just going head on, straight in, and through that we still played well, but I feel like it wasn't our best plan. So integrating the new players, but we've had so much progression in the team," said Gomez.

Gomez credited the Co-Captains for their support throughout the season.

"Because they were returners, they have really been helpful to us. Our Captains are great, and they are really enthusiastic, so they are always happy during practices, and always encourage us to ask questions or to just play the game, even if we don't feel confident in that. They are very excited, and that's something that they really have been open to us," said Gomez.

Editor's Note: Niki Tavakoli is a News Editor for The Phillipian, *vol. CXLIX.*

Boys Ultimate's Mix of Veterans and Newcomers Aim for Success

NICHOLAS JUNG

Boys Ultimate has built a strong core of young prospects around a foundation of veteran players this past season. Despite graduating three Seniors last year, the team has managed to produce a successful season through close team bonding and a shared commitment to improvement.

At the beginning of the season, the team was concerned about its roster size and depth. However, the team found its footing and secured multiple wins. Co-Captain Miklosh Frusztajer '26 elaborated on the premier expectations going into the season.

"This season, we graduated some key leaders of the team. We were looking a little low on numbers. We always are plagued with injuries, ... [and] the season did not look all that promising at the start. If I'm being honest, there were a lot of things to be wary of and to address, and I didn't know if I was willing to wait to see what the season had to hold. However, the season itself has been pretty much the opposite of what I expected. I think we've had a very strong season. The team has been very positive. Everybody strives towards improving as players, and we're winning a lot of games," said Frusztajer.

Players developed stronger connections throughout the season, as Frusztajer explained.

"When the season started, there was a divide in the team between new players and returners, and that divide has started to break down on the field and off the field. We have a team consisting of half returning varsity players and half new players. The team has done a really good job breaking down that divide. A lot of the returners have stepped up to make the new people feel welcome, and we stepped into a stronger team dynamic earlier in the season than we have before. And that was made possible due to the efforts of a lot of the current uppers on the team who weren't playing as big a leadership role as they are now," said Frusztajer.

The team's growing rapport led to a strong start to the season, with wins against opponents previously known to be competitive. Zach Yuan '27 commented on the team's performance in recent tournaments.

"We had a great start to the season. We won a lot of games at the start of the season, and we beat opponents we lost to last year. We went 6-1 to start the season, which was pretty good. The most recent tournament that we went to is the Southern Maine Invitational. We went there not knowing the teams at all, and we ended up... playing really well against some of those teams. Our goal is to win NEPSUL [New England Preparatory School Ultimate League]. We played Concord Academy, which is one of our biggest competitors in NEPSUL. Even though we lost, we only lost by one point in extra time. So the fact that we were able to hold on even when they had double our players means that we have a genuine shot at winning this year, and we know that we can do it," said Yuan.



KAYLA LYONS/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Dean Yang '27 prepares to throw the disc.

Frusztajer detailed how the team's community has been shaped by core values that permeate both practices and games.

"Our coach talks about two very important values that are pretty well evidenced in how the team has been playing and communicating this season. Those would be industriousness and enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is evident: we may be a quieter team this season than in past seasons, but we're still very much supporting one another, having fun, getting to know our teammates, and cheering one another on. As for industriousness, we have hardworking team members who lead by example for the rest of the team. It's very inspiring to go out there and see your teammates really taking the sport seriously. It really makes you want to do the same," said Frusztajer.

Looking ahead, William Sueling '26 expressed hope that Boys Ultimate will recruit more players, emphasizing the enthusiasm that often accompanies new athletes trying the sport.

"Once people first try it ... they really enjoy it. It's not very well known. What we need to do better at [is] reaching out to more people and really getting into the scenes and just getting there in the first place. The recruitment process is running really well next year for the class of 2030. I won't be here, but I want to say ... reach out to people, even if they're older or just [get] them onto the field, and they'll really like the sport after that," said Sueling.

Boys Tennis Rallies Through Rebuilding Season

SARAH WANG

Boys Tennis ended its regular season with a record of 2–10, earning victories against Buckingham Browne & Nichols Upper (BB&N) and Concord Academy (Concord). This season was led by Co-Captains Jeff Shen ’26 and Ben Shin ’26.

Shen highlighted the team’s growing sense of of unity as the season progressed. He noted that the team’s first win against BB&N helped build momentum and doubles chemistry.

“BB&N was a really strong win because it was our first win of the season. Wins like that really bring the team closer together. Winning and getting pizza after the match is a super rewarding feeling, and it brings the team together in a way that practices can’t. Our ability to capitalize on doubles was also something special. At Andover, tennis is a team sport, and every player, from court six to court one, has the same impact. In a sport where you’re usually alone, working together is really conducive to the team’s success. So the standout moments this season were definitely the collaborative aspects of the sport and how we were able to take advantage of them,” said Shen.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/THE PHILLIPIAN

George Richardson ’27 serves against his opponent.

George Richardson ’27 also pointed to doubles play as one of the team’s biggest areas of growth. As players became more comfortable with one another, the team improved its communication and learned how to make better use of each partnership.

“One of the most notable things that we improved on in the season was our doubles work. Towards the beginning, we [were] all getting to know each other, so that aspect of teamwork wasn’t at its highest. But as this season progressed, we all sort of leaned into each other more, and we were able to truly benefit from having each other there,” said Richardson.

Tomas Tejapaibul ’27 described the season as a rebuilding year after the team graduated more than half of its players last year. Despite the challenges, Tejapaibul praised his teammates for remaining consistently committed, that manifested more clearly as the season progressed.

“Unfortunately, [there] have been few wins for us this season, but in the ones where we did win, we were not only playing pretty well, but putting in a lot of effort. This year’s just kind of a rebuilding year for us, and we had to get used to one another a lot more because four people graduated last year, leaving a lot of new spots on this year’s team. Earlier on, our matches would have less energy than now because we weren’t familiar with one another, but as the season has gone on, we’ve gotten to know each other better,” said Tejapaibul.

The Co-Captains also helped set the tone for the team during this season of transition. Richardson emphasized the impact of Shen and Shin’s leadership, particularly in maintaining Boys Tennis’s focus and improvement in doubles.

“Both of our captains were dealt a pretty rough deck of cards, since we lost the majority of our team from last year. For them, it was probably the most difficult because they’ve been on the team the longest. Being able to come back and still show up with the same grit they had last year has been pretty notable, and I really commend them for that. Our captains have also helped us hone in on specific aspects of our games during practice. Their efforts to emphasize teamwork and help us get to know our doubles partners have led to the success we’ve had on court in doubles,” said Richardson.

Although the team faced several close losses, Shen emphasized that those matches also reflected the team’s progress.

“Honestly, when we talk about improvement this season, beyond technical growth with our groundstrokes, volleys, and serves, I think about the chemistry of our team and how much we’ve grown as a collective. Throughout our matches, we’ve seen increasing familiarity and camaraderie, whether through cheering each other on during points, being more collaborative in doubles, or trying more advanced techniques that wouldn’t have been possible earlier in the season. Our close loss against Groton really showed the growth we had as a team because, unlike in our first few matches, we weren’t quiet. Going into next season, I’d be glad to see the team continue that tradition of being supportive and encouraging of each other,” said Shen.

Girls Water Polo Adapts, Battles Back to Third-Place NEPSAC Finish

EVA JACKSON

Led by Co-Captains Addison Deng ’26 and Sophia You ’26, Girls Water Polo (7–3) exhibited a season of resilience and adaptability. The team came back from multiple deficits throughout the season, markedly in its victory over Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter) 14–10 in its first matchup. Seeded fourth in the NEPSAC Water Polo Championships, Andover finished third.

Djenabou Bah ’28 reflected on how, over the course of the season, the team consistently improved its shortcomings and communication.

“[Our team’s] good dynamic is because we all really work well with each other. If something’s happening in a game that we see is wrong, like ‘they’re driving a lot on us,’ or ‘they’re countering a lot,’ we’ll all work together to fix it really well,” said Bah.

Mary Li ’29 further highlighted the team’s relentlessness and adaptability as key to its successes.

“We have been really aggressive throughout the season. We have a lot of spirit. We get knocked back down, we get back up. Resilience, we learn from our mistakes, and we keep going, we learn from our losses and we get better. Adaptability is a huge part of why we win our games,” said Li.

Regarding the team’s dynamic, Helen McNeely ’29 described Girls Water Polo’s commitment to collective improvement.

“If I could describe the team with an adjective I’d say supportive, because everyone is always trying to help each other, and also during practice everyone’s just always trying to help each other work on a skill. Another is fun because I feel like most of the team always looks forward to practices and games because we just make it fun for each other and a good time,” said McNeely.

Li shouted out Co-Captain Deng and Sarah Samoluk ’26 for their support throughout the season.



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Girls Water Polo Co-Captain Addison Deng ’26 contests an Exeter athlete.

“Addison and Sarah, they are the glue to the whole team. They also help out a lot on our offense,” said Li.

Bah also shouted out teammate Camden Schopler ’27 for drawing on her experience to help the entire team.

“Camden [has] been playing for ten years. She is really good at helping everyone figure it out. Camden has helped me improve so much, and she helps anyone, I’ll just be passing with her, She was like, ‘oh, move your wrist this way.’

Or ‘when you shoot, aim more for the side or, do, this specific position,’ she’s very helpful. I don’t think the team would be the same at all without her,” said Bah.

Despite besting Exeter at the beginning of the season, Girls Water Polo lost to its rival in the final game of its regular system. Bah emphasized the importance of these games and what the team learned from them.

“My favorite memories are the Exeter game, where we were down and ended up winning, 14 to 10. It was really good because you could see the difference after our halftime, where our coach talked to us and we all said what we needed to fix. So that was a really fun finish and when we were on the bus, everyone was happy and celebrating,” said Bah.

Strength in the Pack: Cycling Builds Success Through Trust and Teamwork

TIGER WANG

Cycling’s program balances individual endurance and grit with collaborative teamwork. While cycling is often viewed as an individual sport, the team has shown that success on the wheels is a collaborative effort that requires communication and trust among teammates. The tight-knit roster of nine cyclists works together to push one another and compete at the highest level.

Looking back at the season, Co-Captain David Porto ’26 described the team’s growth in endurance and experience through its collective training and racing.

“Starting off, we already had a lot of strong riders, but we had never really worked as a team. Some people had not competed before. By the end of the season, we became a much stronger team in terms of fitness and tactics. We also just became better cyclists in general,” said Porto.

Porto also emphasized that a key factor in the team’s success was a well-rounded routine that extended beyond the training sessions on the bike.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY

The 2025-2026 Cycling roster, alongside Head Coach Ben Duclos (left).

Because of the team’s small community, its deep roots, established through long rides to races and training sessions, became the spirit behind its competitive edge.

“We had a lot of rides, but we also did core workouts and stretches after practice that helped a lot. The culture of going out to a race, cheering each other on, and the long ride that it takes to get there helped build our culture naturally in a way that was not forceful or tacky. We are a very small team of around nine people, so we are very tight-knit and everybody knows each other. Cycling is a sport that already demands a lot of trust from your riders. We managed to build that trust while also keeping it fun, friendly, and light. At the same time, we make sure that we are competitive and still aiming to do well in races,” said Porto.

Despite the demanding nature of cycling, the team has found enjoyment in the speed and beauty of the outdoors during their practices. Arden Quan ’29 described his love for cycling and the different types of training the team does.

“The team has a natural ability to have good energy and have fun. When we are able to go outside and cycle, we do not have to go all out all the time. During indoor training, we do intervals, cool downs, endurance pace, and tempos. Many times during cool downs, my teammates and I just talk about our days. We have set routes around Andover and nearby towns. I enjoy cycling outside because I like getting to see the neighborhoods and the scenery,” said Quan.

The team looked to close its season on a high note. Co-Captain Matt Robinson ’27 described the team’s mentality heading into the final stretch, as well as their outlook for the future.

“[The championship] is worth double points in the league, and the standings for many of the categories are still up in the air. We hope to have a really strong final race where everyone feels they have given their best and improved over the season. Hopefully, we can see that measurably in the results. Looking into the future, I hope we can continue building a program where beginners can learn to cycle. It is quite inclusive, and they can develop good skills and speed over the years to become a stronger program,” said Robinson.

COACH OF THE TERM

Softball Head Coach Lindsay Maroney '07 Brings the Winning Culture to a New Roster

EMILY NEY

Anyone living in the West Quads knows the familiar ring of cheers coming from the softball field on Saturday mornings. Led by Head Coach Lindsay Maroney '07, Softball (19–0) has continued its dominant run this season, building on the program's success in the years since Maroney's appointment. Her athletic achievements shine beyond coaching: at Andover, Maroney was named the team's Most Outstanding Player three times, an Eagle-Tribune All-Star three times, a Boston Globe NEPSAC All-Star three times, and the Globe's NEPSAC Player of the Year twice.

Maroney began playing softball at the age of seven, when she discovered her deep passion for the sport. She went on to play collegiately at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and now serves as the Assistant Strength & Conditioning Coach of Andover's FIT program, a personal trainer, and a consultant at a market research firm. Maroney credited her former coaches with shaping her coaching philosophy.

"My Andover coach was great at developing players. He never thought that a player was required to be in one position. He really recommended people to get experience at all places and not pigeonhole themself. Going to college, that was the same, a lot of positive experience and constructive criticism going into it. Always having the ability to take extra reps and get feedback is great, and when I coach now, I try to realize that I'm putting people at positions that they might not be playing next year or on their club team. Players have all sorts of goals, whether it's to continue playing softball or to excel in a different sport or different path, so I try to be mindful of that when I'm working with them," said Maroney.

After graduating six Seniors from last year's roster, this season saw a younger team. Nonetheless, the team has found success with contributions from across the roster. Maroney recounted how collaboration has been central to building the roster's chemistry and maintaining momentum.

"I try to collaborate and bounce ideas off of both my Assistant Coaches and the [Co-Captains] as much as I can. They offer fresh perspectives or different viewpoints that I can't necessarily get. The assistant coaches, they're great at bouncing up ideas, trying to see what can be done to make practices fun or change up lineups to give us the best chance of winning. The Captains, they have a lot of softball knowledge, and I don't want to think of myself as the sole person that can determine what's best for the team, so I really appreciate what they bring to the field and ideas in terms of practice plans or lineups or game ideas," said Maroney.

Maddie Marshall '29 highlighted the confidence that Maroney instills in high-pressure match-ups, describing Maroney's composure as a quality the team strives to emulate.

"I'm hitting in between each swing, and I will look at her at the third base line, and she'll help you calm down if you're too anxious to hit or tell you an adjustment you need to make. She was a very good player herself, so she knows a lot of the mental aspect of the game and which helps us become better at it. In between at bats or games she'll give great suggestions which help us to understand how to fix our mistakes. She's someone you can talk to in between innings or games, you can talk to her about how the game went. She's not the type of coach who, after one mistake, is just gonna pull you right out of the game, and that helps build confidence. She believes in you so you can believe in yourself too," said Marshall.

With the team's depth and strong chemistry, Maroney described the challenges of managing a roster with significant flexibility.

"It's been a real struggle trying to find a starting lineup that I can be like, 'that's my go-to lineup.' We have so many great players on the team that I feel confident putting any number of people out there in very different positions and feeling that we're always gonna have a chance to win. It's not every day that you get that you're struggling to find one lineup that gives you that success, but I feel like with this team there's many lineups that can give us that success," said Maroney.



COURTESY OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY SMUGMUG

Gaby Potter '27, a three-year Upper on the team, emphasized Maroney's ability to keep practices fun while maintaining the team's competitive focus.

"Last year, she dedicated a few minutes at the end of practice for everyone to fake swing a bat and then run around the bases. When you got home, you had to do your best home run celebration. She did hers too, she ran around the bases and did her home run celebration which was really funny," said Potter.



Athlete of the Year Ollie Velez '26 Finds Dual-Sport Success Defined by Work Ethic and Leadership

MATHEW LIU

Ollie Velez '26 concludes his high school career with a variety of accolades, including All-NEPSAC honors in 2025 for his performance as a wide receiver in Football, as well as Co-Captaincies in both Boys Basketball and Football, and a run to the NEPSAC Class A finals with Boys Basketball this year.

Velez reflected on his development as a dual-sport athlete throughout his time at Andover, from basketball to football.

"I definitely started as a basketball player. I didn't play football up until about middle school. I've been playing basketball my whole life. But I think as I've gone through Andover for the past three years, I've definitely made that transition, and now I consider myself a football player," said Velez.

Reflecting on his All-NEPSAC selection last year, Velez emphasized both the title's personal significance and the collective effort behind his success, crediting his teammates and coaches.

"It means a lot. I had a very good year numbers-wise, but because our record wasn't great and I was only an Upper, it came as a little bit of a surprise to me, which made it even more meaningful. I felt like I earned it, but a lot of the credit goes to my teammates and coaches, too. The receivers and running backs score the touchdowns, but the O-line does all the dirty work and makes us look good. We all put in the work to be our best, and when things are clicking on Saturdays, that's when we stand out," said Velez.

On the football field, teammates pointed to Velez's work ethic as a quality that separates him from others. Football Co-Captain Scott Carmichael '27 described the consistency with which Velez approaches practices and how that inspires other players on the team.

"He's always been one of the hardest workers on the team. He and the other captains organize off-season workouts and captains' practices, whether that's getting the guys to the field to run routes or leading winter and summer lifting sessions. It's easy to follow his example because he just grinds. He'll work on a route a hundred times, and if he still doesn't have it right by the hundredth time, he'll do it a hundred and first time," said Carmichael.

Beyond work ethic, Velez's leadership also stands out. Elan Shetty '26 recalled how Velez continued to lead by example during preseason despite battling a leg injury.

"He's a strong leader who's able to get everybody bought into one objective, and he's fully committed to what we're trying to do here at Andover. During preseason at Williston, even though he was injured and couldn't play, he was still supporting everyone, giving advice to younger players, and trying to be the best captain he could be. That really showed his character because even when he wasn't on the field himself, he was still leading and helping the team in every way he could," said Shetty.

As he prepares to continue his football journey at the collegiate level, Velez hopes to contribute immediately while continuing to develop relationships similar to those he built at Andover.

"I want to earn a spot playing as a freshman, because I think that would be super cool. In football, freshmen are usually developed over time, so being able to contribute right away would be meaningful. Toward the team, the goal is to win. The program has won the NESCAC the past two years, and it would be great to be part of a three-peat. Off the field, I just want to keep getting better every day, have fun, and meet a lot of new people, just like I did at Andover," said Velez.

Velez is committed to playing Division III football at Wesleyan University next year.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Bennett Rodgers '26 Builds Legacy in Track Through Discipline and Drive

MATHEW LIU

Bennett Rodgers '26 has established himself as one of the most versatile athletes at Andover, backed by three-time NEPSAC champion status and Andover record-holding performances in pole vault and triple jump, all while serving as Football Co-Captain.

While he initially joined the sport with little experience in middle school, Rodgers quickly developed a passion for track, specifically pole vault, which soon became a big part of his life.

"I first got into pole vault and track back in middle school. It wasn't something super common for middle schools to have track programs in Texas, so a few of us decided to try it just for fun. I ended up really enjoying it. Over time, some of my friends moved on to other things, but I stuck with it. When I got to high school, I started taking it a lot more seriously. I also joined a club track program back home, which was a big step for me. Training there helped me reach a higher level, " said Rodgers.

Discipline and steady progression during his time at Andover ultimately led Rodgers to briefly hold the Massachusetts high school pole vault record this season. Rodgers reflected on the achievement, emphasizing his pride and constant drive to improve.

"It is a very meaningful accomplishment and reflects the effort I have put in over time. It shows the progress I have made, but at the same time, once you reach a record like that, you kind of get the feeling that it's not enough, and you want to be better, and break more records," said Rodgers.

Rodgers intensity and consistency in his training sets him apart from others. Boys Track and Field Co-Captain Kishan Clarke '26 highlighted his attitude during workouts and his willingness to go above and beyond.

"What makes Bennett stand out as an athlete is his attitude during workouts. He's super hardworking and never complains. You can tell from that alone that he's an incredible athlete, regardless of the outcome of his meets, even though he always does well. I remember after a really tough practice, I went to the ice bath and then to the trainers around 6:00 or 6:20, and Bennett was still outside practicing by himself after everyone else had left," said Clarke.

Beyond his work ethic, Rodgers is also a source of positivity and inspiration within the track program, carrying his leadership over from football into track.

"Bennett is a super uplifting friend. He is always in a good mood when I'm around him, no matter what. He really lifts the people around him and brings good energy. Bennett has also really shown the standard of excellence in the program, and a lot of people on the team look up to him. He's extremely devoted to the sport, very hardworking, and he motivates others to improve."

Looking ahead, Rodgers will continue his track and field career at the Division 1 level at Colgate University. Rodgers described his goals and aspirations as a collegiate athlete, seeking to balance performance with the broader collegiate experience.

"My main goal is to keep improving and eventually clear 18 feet for pole vault before I graduate from college. That's a big benchmark for me personally. Beyond that, I also really want to enjoy the full college experience as a Division I athlete, which is very different from the athletic experience at Andover," said Rodgers.



CINDY ZHOU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Wrestling to Success: Athlete of the Year Julian Rios '26 Balances Competitive Drive and Love of the Sport

DAVID SIAHAAN

Julian Rios '26 brings years of wrestling experience and pedigree to Andover. Introduced to the sport by his father and brother, Rios first stepped onto the mat at age three and began wrestling competitively at six. His effort, determination, and growing love for the sport propelled him to assume the titles of 4-time Class A champion, 3-time New England Champion, 3-time National Prep All-American, and National Prep Finalist. Rios also led Wrestling as Co-Captain for the 2025-2026 season.

Caleb Beroukhim '27 noted that Rios stands out in his dedication and involvement in the Wrestling team.

"He is the best wrestler Andover wrestling has had. The coaches and wrestlers agree with that. We all look to Julian for inspiration. Because of his dedication to the craft, he works harder than anyone. Even though he is so competitive, if I don't understand something, he still takes the time to show people how to do things. He is also very involved socially with the team. He always makes the team laugh, and he is a big reason the wrestling team has such strong camaraderie. At the big tournaments, he is always hyping kids up and cheering the loudest, even for varsity and JV matches. He still takes time to cheer on his fellow teammates," said Beroukhim.

Wrestling Co-Captain Ophelia Lee '26 commented on how Rios's mentality influenced herself and teammates.

"He taught me how to work hard. His dedication day in and day out. He is always on the mat, goes to double practices, and never misses weight. He definitely leads by example. He always pushed himself, and he talks to me about other wrestlers, what they are doing, people who are working hard, and it adjusts my perspective on the wrestling world and how seriously people take things. In school as well, he is very smart, works really hard, and looks nonchalant, but he is dedicated, and it translates to his sport and academics," said Lee.

Rios described his mindset in competitive environments, particularly with wrestling as a one-on-one sport.

"In these high-stakes matches, I don't have that mindset of anxiety off the mat. On the mat, it is pure nervousness. It is pride and ego, and you are going against one other person. There is no one else to blame. It takes guts to put your foot on the line. Before matches, I get nervous. It is natural. I push them down, and I can do it. I have put hours into the craft, and I am capable of doing whatever ability I can to win. I walk into every match confident that I can win. Thinking you are going to lose is very disheartening. It is a bad mindset to have. Every situation, I think I am going to win, and that is something that needs to be developed," said Rios.

Reflecting on his journey, Rios commented on the difficulty of learning how to enjoy wrestling while confronting the pressure in competing at a high level.

"My biggest obstacle as a wrestler is enjoying the sport. It is the competitive nature. That is my hardest part that I have to learn to love and accept. With any sport, once you get to a level, the sport stops being about fun and starts being serious. It is a part of you. It becomes more than just a game. That is the biggest thing that causes burnout and anxiety. It is being scared to perform because of the outcome. To give an example, winning and losing mean so much because it is the difference in where you go to college. If you are good enough, you get more opportunities by performing well, but you lose them once you stop. When the sport becomes more than a game, it causes burnout and anxiety, and that is something I had to reconcile with," said Rios.

Looking ahead, Rios hopes to continue improving as a wrestler while carrying the lessons he has learned from the sport into the rest of his life.

"Wrestling-wise, staying the same. Be the best I can be. Improve every practice. One major goal is to be an All-American at least once in the NCAA. I would love to achieve that. Life goals: be the best person I can be, make good decisions, do people right, be a good person, take the lessons I have learned through hard work and determination, and put that into action in all other aspects of my life. Whether it be work or relationships, wrestling has gifted me so much, and I can't even begin to name everything it has given me, and now I put them into the world. Those are all the goals I have for the future," said Rios.

Rios also expressed gratitude for the teammates, coaches, and mentors who have shaped his wrestling journey.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

"I am very grateful to everyone on the team, all four years. Big shout-out to the coaches: Coach Bateman, Gorham, York, Dunn, Nugent. I am so grateful. I am so grateful for everyone on the team. I have had phenomenal captains. Another shoutout to my club coaches. I wouldn't be where I am without them. They jump-started my career. All my friends at Doughboys Wrestling Club as well. Everyone who has helped me in my journey. Massive shoutout to Andover, it has taught me so much. I have learned from my classmates and the school. It has changed me as a human, and that goes beyond wrestling," said Rios.

Rios will continue his wrestling career collegiately at Stanford University at the Division I level.

From Switzerland to Andover, Athlete of the Year Amelia Alvazzi '26 Makes Her Mark on Distance Running

EMILY NEY

Amelia Alvazzi '26 has excelled in distance running across all three seasons: Cross Country, Indoor Track and Field, and Outdoor Track and Field. As a two-year Senior, Alvazzi has made a significant impact on the team with an impressive mile personal record of 4:51.55 in the Indoor season. She also holds a sub-18-minute 5-Kilometer time, three Outdoor school records, and seven Indoor school records. As Co-Captain of Indoor Track and Field and Outdoor Track and Field, Alvazzi has become a significant presence within the team's communities.

Growing up in Switzerland, Alvazzi did not have the same access to varsity sports as in American schools. She began running after finding her passion for sports at her old school, participating in "sports days," where students competed in activities for points.

"'Do you know how Hogwarts has houses?' It was like that. We had teams because it was a British school and sports days were against other teams. I did pretty well especially in the sprint events and my PE teacher would always say 'oh, you should join the local club.' In high school, I decided I was gonna join the local club in Switzerland. The training is more rigorous and it's more like varsity sports in the U.S. I trained on my own and also with a group. After that, my family moved to Boston, so I came and ran here and did cross-country for the first time," said Alvazzi.

As a new Upper, Alvazzi ran for Cross Country Co-Captain but was not selected at the end of her first season. However, the setback did not faze her, and she was named Indoor Track and Field Co-Captain the following season. Tayla Stempson '27 highlighted Alvazzi's leadership qualities.

"You could see how much work she put in to support other people, herself, and her team. She really grew into that position and showed everyone why she continues to show everyone why she deserves to be captain now in our outdoor season. She's coming to all of the meets cheering people on at their events, offering words of advice in the locker room if you're nervous before a race. She's been dealing with injury right now and even despite that, she shows up for people and shows up for practice because that's what a captain does," said Stempson.

According to Alvazzi, injuries and setbacks have challenged her but also shaped her running journey. Through those obstacles, she learned how an injury does not define her as an athlete.

"I didn't anticipate getting injured as much as I did. I would make goals at the beginning of this season of what times I'd want to run and how I wanted to do in championship races. But for example, when I did that and I got injured, it was a big obstacle because in track, it stops your progress in your fitness. After taking time off of running, I had to readjust my goals and be realistic and accept that I missed that time to build my fitness. Especially in Fall, I was quite stressed with recruiting and that affected my races. Even if I was physically fit, if mentally I wasn't there for the race, it would affect it. I really worked on the mental part of track to remember to take things a little less seriously," said Alvazzi.

Many distance runners have a pre-race routine where they listen to a specific hype song, but Alvazzi does not rely on this approach. Instead, she focuses on the mindset that has helped her grow as a runner this year.

"I worked on the mental part of this sport this year, remembering all the work that I've put in and remembering what I can and can't control. Regardless of if you might have had a bad night of sleep before the race or little things might have gone wrong leading up to race day. You know the consistency of all your training and all the hard work you put in, trusting in that. It will pay off [to trust] in yourself. I've seen that I can do what I want to do in the race. That helps me stay a little bit more calm, composed, and measured when it comes to racing," said Alvazzi.

Chloe Song '26 emphasized that Alvazzi has been not only a teammate, but a friend who she can reach out to for support.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

"Last indoor track season, we always ate dinner together and I would learn about her life in Switzerland. She would talk about it, and she's always been very sweet. Always been a friendly face on campus that I feel happy saying hi to and I feel grateful to be her friend," said Song.

Alvazzi is committed to running at the Division I level at Columbia University.

Athlete of the Year Wylie Roossien: Competitive on the Field and Compassionate Beyond It

HAOYU ZHANG

Wylie Roossien '26, Co-Captain of Girls Soccer, has been described by teammates as amiable with a contagious intensity. Roossien led the team to a 12-3-3 record, finishing seventh in New England Girls Soccer Class A. Roossien was also named All-NEPSAC this season.



AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

At a young age, Roossien joined her local youth team at her parent's encouragement. Eventually, she decided to commit to the sport, making the transition to club and high school. Roossien reflected on that decision.

"I was playing individual sports at the time, but I remember getting to the level where I wanted to transition from recreational to club. And at that moment in time, I remember really feeling like I was more suited for team sports. That's when I fully made the decision to get into soccer, and the rest is history," said Roossien.

Roossien has been a member of Girls Soccer all four years at Andover. She reflected on the connections she has made and how the team has pushed her to improve as a teammate and athlete.

"We're always there for each other, to support each other in the hard moments as well as when we're feeling on top. Day in, day out, whether I had a bad day or a great day, I could always depend on my team to be there and support me, and vice versa. That's the biggest blessing of the [Girls Soccer] community, [that] we're very much like a family. It's because we see each other at our worst and our best. The unwavering support allowed me to really bring my best and step up each day in practice, and hold me to the standard I knew I had for myself," said Roossien.

Goalkeeper Jackie Dill '27 has known Roossien for the past three years. Dill described her relationship with Roossien, who is a striker.

"She always tries to brighten everyone else's day. All the time I spend with her, I'll never regret it because I always end up happy to see her and in a better mood. Just seeing her every day and getting shot at by her is something I'm really grateful for, not only because of her skill, but also because she's a great friend," said Dill.

Maddie Shin '27, a fellow attacker, explained how Roossien evolved as a player and teammate, noting the evolution in Roossien's leadership.

"She was already in a leadership position, but she really had to put in 150% to make the team what it is. It was a lot for her. Every single game, it was 150%. The way she would play in games with all of her effort, plus some extra more. That really helped our team in so many aspects," said Shin.

Adele Russell '27 pointed to Roossien's work ethic as an athlete, in particular, her attention to detail and dedication to improving her craft.

"She's one of those players where everything she does is so exact. Really, all aspects, like shooting, passing, dribbling, every small detail. She's got it perfected. It's really amazing to see. She's such a good athlete overall. She's one of those people who I see training all the time. Whether it's soccer, running, or working out, she's constantly trying to get better, trying to improve herself, and I really look up to that kind of commitment and dedication," said Russell.

Dill echoed Russell's sentiment, and elaborated on how Roossien's mentality manifested on the field.

"She's really determined and she'll do anything to get around anyone. Whenever we pass to her, we know she can go through the middle. She can [also] go up the side. It's just so impressive to watch her play," said Dill.

Roossien is committed to play Division I women's soccer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

ATHLETEREFLECTIONS

No One Runs Alone

CHLOE SONG

The most formative parts of my Andover experience have not always happened in a classroom. A lot of them have happened on runs. Cross Country and Track have shaped my days, my friendships, my sense of discipline, and honestly, the way I understand myself. When I think about my time at Andover, I think about workouts on the Great Lawn, long runs with teammates, cold indoor track practices, race-day nerves, and the strange but special feeling of doing something difficult with people who understand exactly how difficult it is –– that special flavor of distance-running-difficult.



COURTESY OF CHLOE SONG

Cross Country taught me the power of community. Running can look like an individual sport because, at the end of the day, you are the one moving your own body forward. But Cross Country has shown me that no one really runs alone. You run for the people beside you. You run for the teammates cheering on the course. You run because the energy of the group carries you when your own motivation starts to fade.

Our two titles as champions say enough about our team culture, but what I am most proud of is not just the winning. It is the way our team handles pressure. In stressful moments, we somehow turn our nerves into encouragement. And we lean into each other. Before races, when everyone is anxious and mentally trying to prepare for the long fight ahead, there is still this shared understanding that we are doing it together. That kind of support is rare, and I feel incredibly lucky to have been part of it.

If cross country taught me community, track taught me discipline. Indoor Track, especially, is not glamorous. It means training during the shortest days of the year, when it gets dark early and the weather makes everything feel harder. It means staying consistent when motivation is not always there. It means doing the small things over and over again, even when no one is watching. You do it because you know it is good for you, despite the monotony and despite all the other schoolwork you could be doing instead of spending time in the trainers. Track is also where I have gotten injured the most, which taught me another kind of discipline: self-care. I used to think being disciplined meant never making excuses. But running has taught me that discipline also means knowing when to stop. It means taking care of your body before it forces you to pay attention.

More than anything, I have learned that self-care outside of practice is not separate from being a good athlete. It is part of being a good athlete. Especially for distance runners, sleep matters so much. SLEEP. At Andover, where everyone is always busy yet tired, that lesson has been hard to actually live by. But running had made it impossible to ignore. You cannot keep asking your body to perform if you are not giving it what it needs.

Looking back, running has given me both toughness and humility. It has taught me how to work for something beyond myself and how to push through discomfort. Cross Country and Track at Andover have been some of my greatest teachers.

Andover Golf Delivers

ZORAH WILLIAMS

I have always loved being a part of a team. I've loved going to practice with my teammates, experiencing the winning highs and losing lows together, the long bus rides, hot practices, and all the jokes and memories that are made in between. It may seem strange, then, that I chose to play golf, which is generally thought of as an individual sport. Having grown up playing golf and hearing my mom and uncle talk about their golf team experiences, I always dreamed of being part of that kind of team environment myself.

Before coming to Andover, I had never played on a real golf team. During the summer between my Upper and Senior years, I hurt my shoulder, and it was demoralizing to lose my primary college recruiting season. Turning my dream into reality suddenly looked improbable.

Even though the junior golf events I was playing no longer carried the same weight for college recruiting, I decided to keep competing. I played well, but the feeling that I might be leaving golf behind made the joy bittersweet. Then I got a call from Andover with an offer to be a PG. Kindly, Coach Brian Faulk took time out of his summer to speak with my family and me. It was the first time I had ever had a coach really talk with me, and it was clear that he cared and wanted to help me grow both as an athlete and as a person. It was an amazing moment, and I didn't need to think twice about my decision.

Ever since arriving at Andover in the fall, I had eagerly anticipated the arrival of the Spring Term and the golf season. Our Spring Break trip to Pinehurst was my first real taste of Andover Golf. It delivered. I'll never forget the inside jokes and the truly hilarious moments that we shared. Our first day of tryouts was also memorable, for both the snow and the ice cream afterwards. This combination of challenge and reward would become a theme of the season with many jokes sprinkled in between.

Our first match was close, and it looked like we would lose, but my teammate Eddy Zhang '28 delivered a win (with complete nonchalance) to tie up the team matches. The elation we felt in that moment was immense. That tie felt like a win, and it underscored how even though we all play as individuals, our scores all matter as a team.

This connection has only deepened over the season through more practices, tournaments, meals, and many muffins. Our match against Tabor was brutal, but to me, this was when our team camaraderie shone brightest. Despite us wearing enough layers for everyone to feel like the Michelin Man, we fought hard against the hurricane-force wind only to lose by three points. In all of my other playing experiences, I would have been freezing and fighting against myself to grind out scores I was only semi-proud of, but this time was different because I had my playing partner, Ian, and could occasionally laugh at the sight of Coach Faulk, bundled up but still shivering as he stepped out of the heated comfort of the van. Ian made me laugh, and we were determined to beat the twins we were playing, who could never agree on whether to give us a putt. While it was a tough loss, we made the best of it. On the way back to school, we stopped at a deli, pushed all the tables in the tiny restaurant together, and ate mozzarella sticks and pizza quasi-family style. This dinner, along with a comment from Evan DeMayo '26, our Captain, who joked that "it was a tough day to be the Tabor 6," was enough to soften the loss and make an impossibly long day seem not quite so bad.

The howling winds continued at Newport Country Club during the Andover Invitational, where we devastatingly lost by a stroke to Deerfield during a tiebreaker. Despite this, we set the record for the lowest score in tournament history, and Sebastian Montemayor '27 medaled. It was incredible to play at such an old and historic golf course, and we had more ice cream afterwards.

While I choose to reflect on a close tie and tough loss, we still had a very good season, finishing 16–2–2 in our matches and meaning very respectable results in medal play events. Playing golf at Andover has been incredible, and it has brought my dream of playing on a golf team to life. I've built friendships unlike any that I've had before and made memories that will keep me laughing for the rest of my life. I'm incredibly proud of this team and everything that we've done together this season, and I wouldn't trade this experience for anything.

An Andover Swimmer's Meditations

ETHAN ZHU



COURTESY OF ETHAN ZHU

"Icarus laughed as he fell, for he knew to fall meant to have once soared," was a quote I used in my final email to the team at the Easterns Interscholastic Championships this year (2026). When referencing the quote, I intended to use it as motivation and to encourage the team: even if they fail, we have your backs. And, unfortunately, though not up to our standards, we did not win the meet, as we had in the previous three years. However, as they say, life isn't fair, and though I will always like to argue that the teams we were up against were not fair, what can be done? Nothing. Failure is a part of life, as I had said in my email.

Nevertheless, this reflection is not to dwell on Boys Swimming and Diving's past experiences, nor is it to complain about our competition. I am here to talk about my experiences as an athlete at Andover.

My very first experience with athletics at this school was, in fact, a sport I had not originally intended to do. As a pure "I'm only going to do everything for swimming" macho man, I had thought about doing cross-country to stay in shape for the upcoming swimming season. Of course, this did not happen. I am by no means a runner. As an alternative, I tried out for the water polo team. Having never eggbeated in my life, nor thrown a hefty ball in the water, all the while swimming without goggles and your head up, I had put myself in quite an uncomfortable situation. My very first few practices were actually sitting in the diving well of the Borden Pool — the tub — practicing with now-gone Coach Smith on how to tread with my legs, so as not to stretch my groin and overextend my knees. My very first game was at Exeter, as a JV bench player. My first play was a steal from an opposing player, followed by a cross-pool throw into no man's land for someone to take up and shoot. I didn't do anything else for the rest of the game. In fact, I did not score a single goal until my Upper year. Three goals were how many I had that season. Something I'm very proud of, considering my small stature (which is something I'll likely repeat a lot).

To say that the odds were against me, in my opinion, would be an understatement. To keep it short, I'm 5'7", with a bulkier frame, but short. And being short is quite a disadvantage in swimming. I can't rely on being faster above water because my arms can't pull as much water as others. Thus, what we swimmers like to call the "5th" stroke — underwater — became my forte, and Andover was where I perfected it. Under the guidance of my peers — Marcel Liu '23, Andrew Kim '24, and Oliver Feng '25 — I was able to learn and race against them, improving myself bit by bit. This was most evident from my Junior to Lower year, when I improved by 2 seconds in the 100-Yard Fly and 4 seconds in the 100-Yard Breast. That year was the peak of my swimming career at Andover.

Still, there has to be a challenge to the story. And there was no bigger challenge than Upper year. Not only was the workload tremendous, but the pressure on my athletic performances was arguably even greater. I aimed to establish myself as a legitimate athlete across campus and on the team, and as a potential recruit. I bet many cards on myself to improve tremendously as I had in my first year, but frankly, it didn't happen. I, in fact, added time in all my respective events, and it was the lowest point of my life at this school. I felt defeated, hopeless, frustrated, and tremendously depressed. I was no longer the swimmer I thought I was.

Now it's my Senior year, and I'm writing this reflection due to the support of many, many people. As Captain of both Boys Swimming and Diving and Boys Water Polo, I hope to have left an enduring legacy, not only as a leader, but also as a friend. Having been relieved of all pressure, seeing as I wasn't recruited through swimming, I made vast improvements in events I had never expected — improving 2.5 seconds in my 100-Yard Breast. I had actually come into Andover not as a breaststroker, but as a butterflier and freestyler. That's besides the point, but the thing is that Andover does some very, very strange things to you as an athlete.

The first thing you learn is the value of family. Andover will beat you to a pulp and beat you so hard that it can be hard to get back up at times. However, in sports, and with your friends, teammates, coaches — the people you cherish most — I find that getting back up from a hole becomes much easier. There are several people I would like to thank over the course of my time at this school: Theo Randall '23, Raphael Sibuet '24, Ashton Ma '24, Andrew Kim '24, Andrew Zhou '24, Daniel Seong '25, Ben Zhou '25, Oliver Feng '25, Woori Lee '26, Oliver Stabach '26, Brandon Xu '26, Eric Nie '26, Jay Wei '27, and Haoyu Zhang '27. Of course, there are many others, but these few people have had profound impacts on my life that they may never know about. And for that, I am forever grateful.

Another thing you learn from being an athlete at this school, as I mentioned before, is failure. One of the key things I remember is that I could've gone to a much less academically inclined school, a prep school that focuses solely on sports, or perhaps stayed in Saudi Arabia, swimming for a club team. But I chose Andover, and I chose it for a reason. This school is challenging, and I think Andover knows that. Quite literally, it advertises itself as being one of the most challenging schools in the country. I would've been a much better athlete had I likely gone to other schools, but I knew that the failures that I had at Andover would prepare me and harden me like no other place. I frankly believe that my shortcomings as an athlete here have prepared me better than any other experience I have or will ever encounter.

That's all I really have to say. But some of the things that I wanna leave for others, if they do read this reflection, is this: live for yourself, do the things you want to do, the things that you enjoy, but do it by living with others. There are quotes out there that exist about not living for others, and those are, in fact, true. But the best kind of living is the kind that you do with other people. That is what being an Andover athlete is all about.



NATHAN WU / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

THE SENIORS

The Adults are Talking

MICHEAL KAWOOYA



C. ZHOU / THE PHILLIPIAN

After rehearsal for my first 901, my Senior director led me upstairs from the theatre classroom and into the Dean of Studies office. The front door donned a positive message in magnetic letters, as it always has. (As I write this article, it reads, "9-year-old you wouldn't believe how cool you are!") Julie Powers was sitting on the other side of the desk. She fanned out a deck of affirmation cards, asked me how my rehearsal had gone, and made it clear she had all the time in the world to listen.

I have been pulling cards from that deck for four years. I pulled "Perseverance" hours before my first college rejection, and "Communication" on the mornings I knew I owed a friend an apology. I have pulled cards on days I felt unstoppable, days I could barely make it to first period, and on the morning I sat down to write this article.

But the cards were never really the point. Every time I pulled one, I had to walk into the Dean of Studies office to do it. Every day, Ms. Powers was eager to hear about whatever had sent me looking for a card in the first place. While the deck told me to persevere or communicate, she was the one who actually listened to the rejections and successes, and reminded me, in her own words, that I would be okay. Mornings with Ms. Powers and the rest of the Dean of Studies office soon became an essential part of my routine.

By senior year, my close friends liked to point out that I could not walk across the lawn without being stopped by an adult, teasing me about having so many adult friends.

> I did not understand, when I first got to Andover, how much of this place is held together by adults.

I did not understand, when I first got to Andover, how much of this place is held together by adults you could go all four years without knowing by name. I realized it slowly, and then all at once, during my year on Upper Management of The Phillipian. Suddenly, I was greeting Nancy Benson and Melissa Dolan at the front desk of the HOS office on my way in, leaning on Ellen Utley, a JED Foundation expert, to help me report responsibly about suicide, and learning the names of people in offices I had walked past for three years without ever wondering what happened inside them. Tracy Ainsworth and Neil Fater became the adults I called at 11 p.m. to go over a single quote, and who lingered on the phone to talk about anything else. When I started seeing adults as part of my ecosystem at Andover, and seeking them out as consistently as I sought my peers, I started to feel like I belonged here.



CARINA PAIK / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

I have had my last passing period conversation with Commons Bill, and my last Friday night lying on the couch in my house counselors' apartment. I did not know, the first time I pulled a card, or stopped to chat in Paresky, or wandered into my house counselor's open door, that I was walking into relationships I would come to rely on and miss this much. And if I could offer any student with any number of years left at Andover one piece of advice, it would be to draw as much wisdom from the adults around you, and pull them into your orbit. The faculty and staff here are eager to get to know you. Just ask my adult friends.

Editor's Note: Micheal Kawooya was the Editor in Chief of The Phillipian*, vol. CXLVIII.*

Micheal Kawooya is a Senior from Columbia, S.C. Contact the author at mkawooya26@andover.edu.

I Tore My ACL at Bassment

ABBY ZHU



COURTESY OF ABBY ZHU

A stranger's knee collided with mine as Drake tried to find out who was calling his phone, and in the split second before gravity pulled my body to the Paresky Commons floor, I remember thinking my knee had popped out of its socket. Clearly, my thoughts were rooted in pure confusion because—besides the fact that knees do not have sockets and my doctor's quick assessment of my left knee—my MRI most definitely revealed a completely torn Anterior Cruciate Ligament. Lovely.

At the beginning, I think I carried a bit of an unnatural happiness, perhaps from the leftover adrenaline of Bassment, some twisted joy from my experience with crutches, or the expressions I received when I told people what happened. Crutches, I learned regrettably fast, were very inconvenient. Lunch was a two-person job (shoutout Sophia), ten minutes between classes suddenly felt awfully short, and elevators became my best friends. All I could think about, through every leg extension exercise at physical therapy or traversing some newly discovered ramp on campus, was why this injury and its ridiculous backstory had to happen to me. Coming off crutches the first time reminded me that I would be equipped with them again after surgery, only this time in a lot more pain, without the novelty of crutches, and amid the revered Senior Spring. Life really could be plain unfortunate sometimes.



CARINA PAIK / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

> Celebrating big events (the surgery itself) with the small wins (going down stairs with alternating legs) allowed me to embrace where I was at and appreciate how far I had come.

Around the weeks leading up to my surgery, I bought a red pocket Moleskine notebook and entertained the idea of documenting my emotions during my recovery period. Cover page with a start date and reserved space for an end date, the notebook housed my first entry titled "things that are difficult that you don't realize are difficult until you're on crutches." Looking for ways to fill the book, I decided to timeline the course of my injury.

02/18/26: walked w/o crutches!

02/19/26: one crutch!

02/24/26: no crutches full day!

03/29/26: 96º on the CPM machine

04/08/26: first full bike rotations

04/16/26: stairs!

Albeit small, I liked marking my progress in a real, tangible way; the abundance of empty pages just encouraged me to record anything and everything. Celebrating big events (the surgery itself) with the small wins (going down stairs with alternating legs) allowed me to embrace where I was at and appreciate how far I had come. Learning how to regain my quad muscles through physical therapy, discovering crutch techniques to confront any staircase ahead of me, having friends that would accompany me in elevators to each of my classes — all of these moments made me understand the patience required for success, unhurried and one defined by my own standards.

> At Andover, we should strive to acknowledge the small wins that occur quietly and sometimes unnoticeably, even if it feels almost natural to humble our own hard work and achievements in comparison to others.

At Andover, we should strive to acknowledge the small wins that occur quietly and sometimes unnoticeably, even if it feels almost natural to humble our own hard work and achievements in comparison to others. Clearing out your outlook inbox, sharing ideas in class when you often prefer listening, finally grasping a math concept from a worksheet given two weeks ago, or writing a commentary article about tearing your ACL with the goal of starting every sentence with words that begin with A, C, and L are all accomplishments that deserve to be treasured by — at the bare minimum — yourself. Like how all the big at Andover (the stellar grades, the championship wins, the leadership positions) is loved out loud, the small deserves to be too because those incremental successes often represent a newfound perspective or gratitude toward something mundane. As someone who prefers to walk fast and arrive quickly, I came to enjoy the slow, measured walks (hobbles) between classes with my friends (even they claimed to "better take in" the nature around campus). Coming up against this pretty substantial injury, I ironically learned the importance of appreciating the seemingly inconsequential.

Luckily, you don't have to tear your ACL to come to these conclusions, but if you do, know that it only accelerates the process. Appreciate the small victories, Cherish those support systems around you, and maybe Locate the person calling Drake's phone that he can't quite figure out.

Editor's Note: Abby Zhu was the Executive Digital Editor of The Phillipian*, vol. CXLVIII.*

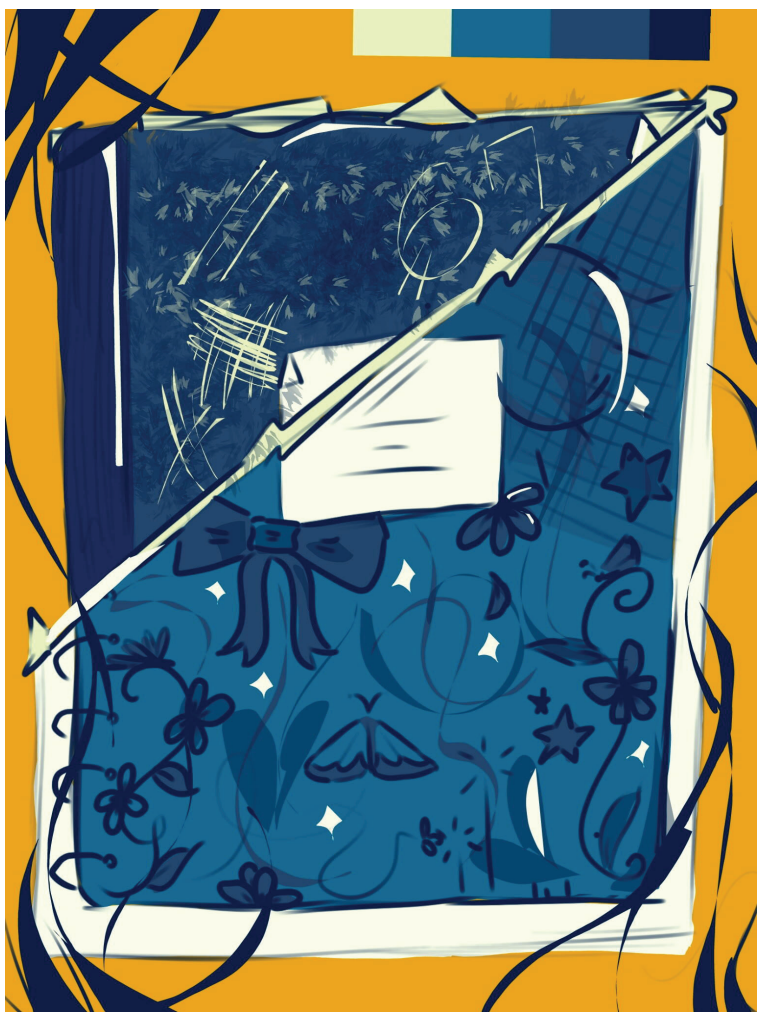
Abby Zhu is a Senior from Andover, Mass. Contact the author at azhu26@andover.edu.

Dear Diary

BAILEY XU



COURTESY OF BAILEY XU



CARINA PAIK / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

At the beginning of my last term at Andover, I flipped to an empty page in an ugly mottled blue composition notebook, the type that the school gives you for free. At the top of the page, I wrote, "Dear Diary."

I've always romanticized journaling. The act of committing one's thoughts to paper seemed like an intelligent exercise, or at the very least, the mark of a thoughtful, reflective person. Above all, I viewed it as a writerly habit, all the more admirable for the many times I tried and failed to consistently keep a diary. I imagined journaling would unlock some profound inner world; my notebooks would become a fountain of witty observations and material I could pull from for creative writing. I'd take stupid, idle thoughts and distill them into something useful. I'd become an unstoppable, productive force.

That didn't turn out so well. Looking back, whatever highly unrealistic expectations I had probably stopped me from journaling regularly. It's odd. I idealized journaling as a process both self-indulgent — to spend your precious time yapping on and on about your day or your problems instead of writing that History 300 paper — and somehow intellectual and thus productive. Andover attracts romantics, yet it smothers romanticism with its grueling workload and generally stressful environment. To me, my contradictory set of expectations for journaling exemplifies this effect; I'm attempting to justify the value of a seemingly useless act in terms of productivity. But maybe journaling is valuable because it lies precisely in the happy medium between self-indulgence and productivity, though its usefulness may not be immediately obvious.

Journaling doesn't directly correlate to tangible self-improvement. Still, writing things down is useful. Unfortunately, the labels "journal," "diary," or even "notebook" may turn people away. For one, people assume it's high commitment. In reality, you're in charge. No one cares how frequently you do or don't write; theoretically, no one would even know, because you're supposed to be the only one reading it. In the opening of this piece, I mentioned that I've never kept a journal until my last term at Andover. This is only a half-truth. I've been keeping a notebook for the past year and a half, a notebook I never thought to call a journal because I never wrote with any consistency. It's still two-thirds empty. I'd write at most three times a term. Yet here I am, encouraging you to keep a journal, because inconsistent writing still counts.

> I imagined journaling would unlock some profound inner world; my notebooks would become a fountain of witty observations and material I could pull from for creative writing.

> We can tell our productivity-obsessed brains this: journaling is not a waste of time, because you don't know what might become useful later.

People also assume journals must contain a certain type of content. But you can write about anything, truly. You can rant about your day, you can brainstorm your next English essay, you can write down a list of random facts you learned. If your journal feels uninspired and plodding, switch gears. Try something different. I've found it most rewarding when I approach entries as artifacts for my future self. As a result, I tend to write during moments of intense emotion or on important occasions. I wrote an entry the night I found out I made Upper Management. I wrote the day I submitted my early application to college. When I write things down in the heat of the moment, I surprise myself later. Hindsight is incredibly clarifying. Maybe you glean how boring your life is, or how overdramatic or circular you are, or how little you've changed. Journals give us a window into another version of ourselves and helps us see ourselves better.

In a more romantic world, productivity wouldn't even be a part of this conversation. As it stands, Andover students all have a million other things to do, and time is a limited resource. I could encourage you to reject that mindset completely, to abandon all expectations of journaling as productive, but that's easier said than done. If you can't, that's okay. We can tell our productivity-obsessed brains this: journaling is not a waste of time, because you don't know what might become useful later. This rationalization might seem excessive or sad, but if it works, it works. Hopefully, one day it no longer becomes necessary. Now that I'm basking in the joys of Senior Spring, I've made my peace with it.

Writing "Dear Diary" at the start of Senior Spring, I did feel childish, a bit silly. And over the next few weeks, I gushed about spikeball. I ranted about math class. I narrated conversations with my friends. Who knows how useful they are. Who knows if they were worth saving. I'm glad I saved them anyway.

Editor's Note: Bailey Xu was a Managing Editor of The Phillipian*, vol. CXLVIII.*

Bailey Xu is a Senior from Hong Kong. Contact the author at bxu126@andover.edu.

Practice Makes Perfect

THEO WEI



COURTESY OF THEO WEI

"Everybody at Andover is great at one thing," a peer told me in October of my Junior year in the library where all the new kids congregated. "I'm here because I'm good at running," the same person said. The girl next to me said, "I got in here because of art." When it came to my turn, I simply remained silent, trying not to draw too much attention to myself. To be honest, my older brother and sister came to Andover before me and I simply followed their steps.

That same year, I joined JV hockey, disillusioned by the belief that I would make varsity next year because for the majority of my life, I had played on a recreational team. When I stepped on the ice, the first thing I saw was a puck whizzing by my face and hitting the top post, making a loud dinging sound. Players flew by the ice. Everyone loved to hit, which was not common on my old team. Despite playing my hardest everyday on JV, it was not enough, and I was often placed on the last line during games.

After the hockey season was over, I stumbled into Snyder and saw a few kids training on the courts. Even though Andover squash was very good, there was one kid I remember thinking to myself about, "I could beat this guy." Similar to hockey, I played squash recreationally for the majority of my life. So, the next morning I went to Snyder and tried playing squash by myself to see if I could get back into my old habit. When I first started tying my sneakers, the court beside mine boomed with the sounds of a squash ball hitting the racquet. It was a rhythmic noise, almost like a gunshot, that fired rapidly in harmony with the squeaks of his sneakers and the faint swoosh of his racquet. I soon saw it was the top-seeded squash player. He moved gracefully across the court, his feet shuffling like a ballerina while his arms snapped the racquet in a mechanical fashion.

As time went on, I began showing up at the squash courts more and more. When I asked if I could play with the varsity kids, they all said no and that I would have to learn how to actually hit the ball well. Because of this, I began playing by myself in the upstairs squash courts, trying to mimic how the better kids swung their racquets. For hours on end, I would hit the ball back to myself, listening to "No One" by Alicia Keys on my AirPods. While these moments were lonely, and perhaps I could have used the time to do more productive things like homework or hanging out with friends, I was determined to make something of myself at Andover.

> The solitary sport, soon enough, became increasingly fun as I began meeting so many different kids that I would eventually become very close to.

Yet, the following winter, I failed to make the varsity squash team and was devastated. I felt a creeping sense of fear of how others perceived me and disappointment that all my time went to waste. However, at the same time, I dragged myself back to the court and continued practicing in the upstairs courts alone.

> Being able to come back to the squash courts each day with a genuine will to improve made me appreciate how far I have come along.

Over the next few months, I mustered up the courage to ask the varsity players to play with me so that I could learn new techniques and skills. The solitary sport, soon enough, became increasingly fun as I began meeting so many different kids that I would eventually become very close to. I loved asking them for advice while we played games or doing practice drills with them. I loved playing with intensity for each point, even though I never expected to win.

For the next year, I became immersed in this cycle and, slowly, the pressure of needing to define myself through a sport became nonexistent. Even though I would only make the varsity team in my Senior year, it only bothered me because I wouldn't be able to play with others better than myself every day.



HARRY ZHOU / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Looking back at my squash experience, I wouldn't have changed a thing. Being able to come back to the squash courts each day with a genuine will to improve made me appreciate how far I have come along. In the grand scheme of Andover stereotypes, the goal of making varsity as a Senior may often be looked down upon. After all, playing squash wouldn't help my extracurriculars or college applications which all Andover students struggle and stress all year about. Squash was never going to become my "reason" for being at Andover. But hitting countless backhand rails in the dark upstairs courts by myself made me realize how not everything I did needed to be quantified by a grade or a title – that I played squash because I simply liked it. And for that I am proud.

Editor's Note: Theo Wei was a Managing Editor of The Phillipian*, vol. CXLVIII.*

Theo Wei is a Senior from Norwalk, Conn. Contact the author at twei26@andover.edu.

Unabashedly

ANGELA ZHAO



COURTESY OF ANGELA ZHAO

I still remember a casual lunch I had in Upper Left of Commons during my Lower year. I must confess, I don't remember how we stumbled upon the topic of life. All I remember was mumbling, "Some people are alive not because they want to be, but because they're too scared of death."

That pretty much summed up my mentality then.

Dreadfully pessimistic. Pitifully so.

I had formed this self-believing revelation that if I set my expectations exceptionally low, I wouldn't be hurt. I couldn't.

> But I was naive, wasn't I? How could I bury away my expectations when they came alongside hope?

And I guess, for a while, it worked.

It distracted me from the awfully lonesome nights I spent staring at the cracks in the ceiling — too embarrassed and too prideful to admit I was scared to live alone on a stranger's second floor. It helped me forget the holes in the bathroom, the splintered bedroom doors, and the residue of voices sealed into the walls of 21 Albemarle Avenue.

But I was naive, wasn't I?

How could I bury away my expectations when they came alongside hope?

Foolishly, I robbed myself of the hope that gave joy any sort of meaning. I became a walking corpse holding onto no purpose and little aspiration.

For the peers, acquaintances, and friends reading this, this might come as a surprise, because I wasn't a terribly gloomy person to be around... *or so I hope*. I'd laugh, cackle, and fool around on campus. Yet even so, the dread crept in with each dawning night, frantically trying to fill the emptiness of my conscience, gnawing away at the peeling flesh of my soul.

But entering my upper year, whether intentionally or not, regretfully or not, I was forced into a gamble. I had let in, through my jagged walls and shattered shards of self-protection, something that I *had* to hope for, something I was *forced* to bet on...

Unfortunately for me, however, March was pouring rain.

And so I lost miserably.

And as expected, the emotions I desperately swallowed down came rushing out, into wrinkled napkins, during *Love in the Dark*, thousands of miles in the air, in front of strangers during dinner, spilling across days, seeping into weeks, lingering through months. Even now, in this current moment, typing in darkness.

But ironically, the disappointment and pain of losing what I'd finally allowed myself to hope for is what's healing me, albeit slowly.

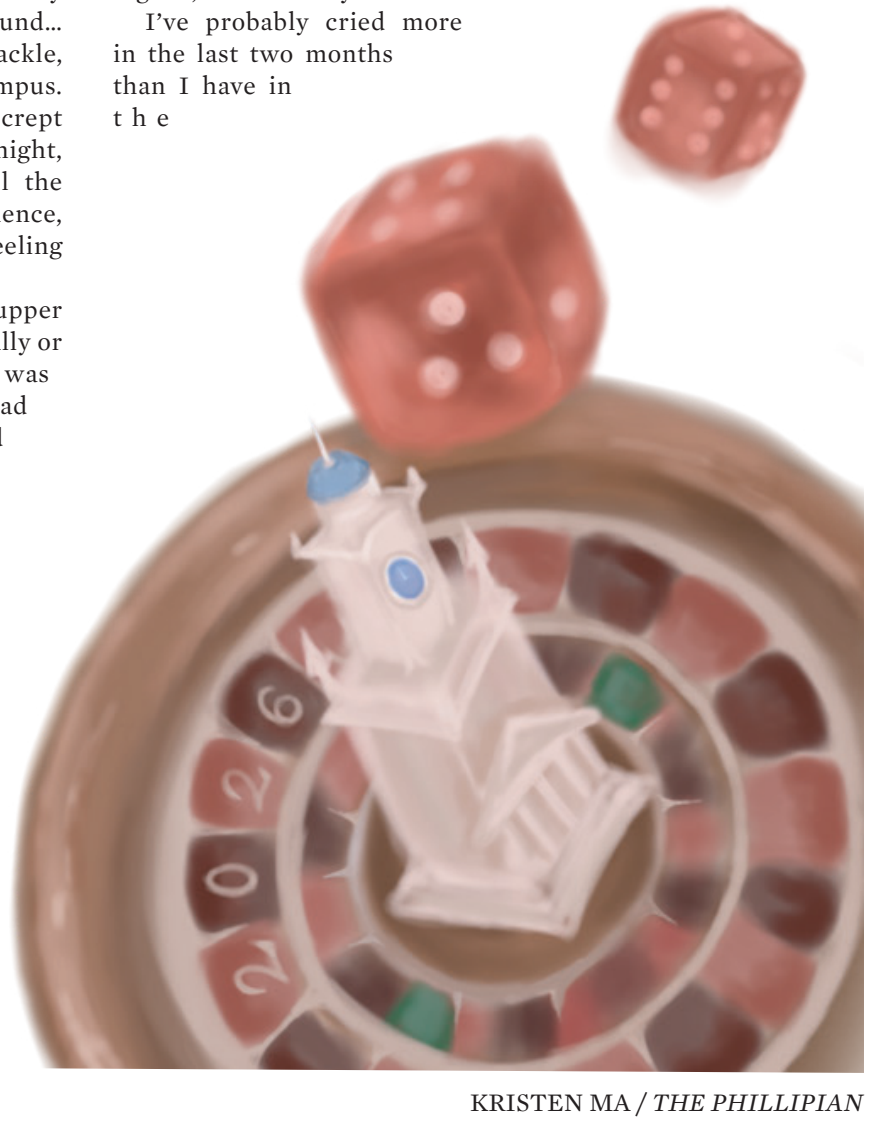
I've probably cried more in the last two months than I have in the last four years. I've also been more vulnerable in these six hundred words than in anything else that's seen the light of day. But in return, I've found lifelong friends beside my bedside, memories etched into cobblestone, late-night convos curled up on the Sam floors, and people who've stayed even after seeing what I tried the hardest to hide.

So, if you're wondering why this turned so optimistic, I guess that's kind of my point.

Because at the end of the day, loving *does* hurt. It takes an absurd amount of courage to let yourself care deeply about something when you're painfully aware of how easily it can be lost.

But each of the small, everlasting moments of companionship — the afternoon walks across the Knoll circle screaming a bit too loudly to "Blank Space;" the heartfelt conversations with Mr. Perry after he politely warned us for being too loud again; the runs to Micky D's thirty mins before sign-in for an ice cream cone; the lunch debates over man or bear or nothing of substance at all — alongside the fleeting, blazing sunsets of Andover, is what makes everything worthwhile.

And I guess that's the gamble of it all.



KRISTEN MA / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Editor's Note: Angela Zhao was the Chief Financial Officer of The Phillipian*, vol. CXLVIII.*

Angela Zhao is a Senior from Manchester, N.H. Contact the author at azhao26@andover.edu.

Andover, Remembered

FRANK HU



COURTESY OF FRANK HU

Unlike my Lower and Upper years, I had a strange feeling of dread moving back into Andover for my last year; something was off. I didn't look forward to saying goodbye to my family, and it turned out to be just as awkward as every goodbye before. My grandparents had already left for China a few weeks before me with a groggy "see you at Thanksgiving." Driving away left a lump in my throat. I don't remember what I said to my sisters — I'd gotten in the habit of calling them both freakazoids and sigmas, and I think I was trying to be nicer, so stopped myself from calling them "stinkies" and instead opted for a classy: "Farewell, sigmas!" With my mother, I gave her a half-hug, both arms this time, before I left the house.

I still hadn't arrived earlier than my roommate (the same one from Lower year), and he got first dibs on room selection again. My dad helped me unpack, and his eyes lit up when he saw that our pod had an ironing board. While I hung up posters, he pressed wrinkles out of my shirts. Friends, old and new, came to my room, and as we chatted away, I lost track of time until I had to go to my first commitment in a rush. My dad was still ironing shirts when I left. "I'm going now, I have to be there at 1:30." He responded: "When I'm done with your clothes, I'll go." When I got back to my dorm after leadership training, he was gone, and my shirts were wrinkleless and hung in my closet.

That night, I couldn't sleep. What was different? I noodled around on my phone, until I discovered some WeChat notifications I'd swept away long before. Looking at the WeChat message dated a week ago that I'd missed, I cried. You should start preparing your luggage now that school has almost started, I miss you so much, can we call for a bit tonight? I called my grandparents, and gave them a quick room tour; I said that I had moved in, and that I missed them. 我想你. I'm thinking of you. After the call ended with a ping, I thought to call my mom. It went to voicemail; she'd gone to bed already.

~

Now, entering my final weeks at Andover, as I stare at the countdown til graduation on my phone, I can't help but be reminded of my first weeks of school at Andover. I want so badly to shut my eyes and pretend that I'm a new Lower again. I want so badly to see this place as a paradise, I want so badly to have my work done by 5pm every day, I want so badly to know that this is not my last rodeo. But alas, the underclassmen are already calling me unc, and I am tired. Maybe it's time to go.

> A lot of things are different in my memory, and maybe that's why I've found myself doing less and looking more

In many ways, I've stopped treating Andover as a checklist of things that I should do for the sake of being an Andover student. Andover's just a place that I've lived, grown, loved, and will soon leave in just a few weeks. As I wrap up my time, I find myself split. Why don't I feel the same sense of loss and desperation to hold on as I did at the beginning of the year? What's changed about Andover that's made it seem like my time here is up, that it's time to move on? My roommate told me there were 21 days left this morning, and I gave a little chuckle, said something about how "we made it out," and went back to doing work.

It's beautiful outside. I've always said that mid 60s and partly sunny is the most comfortable kind of weather, and wouldn't you know it, my computer screen is telling me that it's 68 and partly sunny. I'm in GW right now, staring out the curtained window and looking at Stearns. It's a lot smaller than I remember. A lot of things are different in my memory, and maybe that's why I've found myself doing less and looking more: counting the lights on the Snyder ceiling, noticing carved faces at the top of the chapel pillars, running my fingers over the grooves of decades of desk graffiti in Pearson. Maybe if I wrote it all down, I'd remember every little detail about this place, and then that'd be enough. If I missed it enough, I could just go back to what I wrote, and knowing that it's however many steps on each Bulfinch flight of stairs could conjure up what Andover really is, instead of some idea of what it was and wasn't.

There's only so much space on the walls of Stact, and with every generation of Blue Key Heads, they'll be hard-pressed to find space to leave their mark on the walls. I wonder if the inside of the bell tower faces the same problem — if in thirty years, the graduating class of 2056 will be writing their names in some other place, or using whiteout on signatures of years past to carve out just enough space to leave their initials. Is that enough to be remembered? I have no doubt that Andover has carved itself into the ridges and folds of my brain, but I also have no doubt that years of whiteout and overwriting can cover the deepest of grooves. So, as I leave, I'm scared. Is that enough to remember Andover by?

Every time I'm tempted to really open my notes app and start counting, start documenting, something stops me. Because it's ok to just let memories be memories, inaccurate and imprecise as they are. Maybe I should've written stories down instead, but then again, maybe not. Once you've written something, you've already decided what was worth putting on the page — and whatever didn't make it there probably mattered more anyway. Either way —

I'll really miss it.

HARRY ZHOU / *THE PHILLIPIAN*



Frank Hu is a Senior from Darien, Conn. Contact the author at jhu26@andover.edu.

The Playlist for the People We Become

CATE CUMMINGS



A. BAETEN-RUFFO / THE PHILLIPIAN



SHANNON CHISHOLM / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Songs have always felt safer than sentences. This is why I make playlists for the people I love, whether they are leaving or hurting and cannot find the words to explain it. When I don't trust myself to say the right thing, I hide behind the music and hope it speaks for me.

So when I tried to figure out how to talk about Andover — about four years that have felt like both a lifetime and a single breath — I did what I always do. I made a playlist.

The first track is chaotic. It starts abruptly, like a fire alarm at four in the morning. I was fourteen years old. Fourteen and from California, and convinced that I understood who I was. I moved into Nathan Hale House with two very large suitcases and a clean plan for my life. I was going to be a surgeon. I had colleges memorized — my future outlined neatly in my head.

Three nights later, my roommate Lily and I woke up to blaring sirens. I ran outside in just my socks, standing on the freshly watered grass in the dark, surrounded by strangers who seemed calmer than I felt. I remember looking up at the large dorm windows and thinking,

"I chose this."

This is what the first track sounds like. Bravery that feels a little bit like fear. But, playlists don't stay on the first song, do they? Sometime after freshman year, the music shifts.

There's always a track you don't skip, but you don't turn up either. You let it play quietly, because if you make it too loud, it might overwhelm everything else. That year, I lost things I didn't know how to grieve properly. Friendships that dissolved without closure. Relationships that cracked under pressure. People I loved who I thought would always be there. Versions of myself that stopped fitting but refused to disappear all the same.

I remember walking across campus feeling like I was underwater. Like everyone else had figured out how to breathe here, while I was still just trying not to sink. And in the middle of all of it, I kept asking myself to answer q u e s - tions that felt too big for a fourteen-year-old, or even a sixteen-year-old, to hold.

Who am I supposed to be?

What do I deserve?

If I love someone, or something, so deeply, does that mean it will love me back?

And if not, what does that mean for me?

There are songs that capture heartbreak. There are songs that capture anger. But there are very few that capture confusion. The feeling of standing in the middle of your own unrecognizable life, an unrecognizable person.

Now, we move on to the next track. It happened in a classroom. I signed up for philosophy because we are all required to. I thought it would be interesting, maybe even impressive. For the first time, I wasn't being asked what I wanted to become. I was being asked what it meant to simply exist.

I learned that becoming is not a straight line. That meaning is not something you can inherit or wish into existence. That suffering is not a sign that you've failed — it is a sign that you are ALIVE. I learned that joy and grief can sit side by side, sharing a pair of AirPods in solidarity. That you can be heartbroken and yet still laugh in Commons an hour later. That you can lose someone and still find yourself without their presence. That you can be lost and still be propelled forward.

Now this was the track where the lyrics and melodies became clearer. More harmonious with the beat of the drum. And then there are songs that feel like sunlight. One for rushing into Boston with friends, sprinting through train stations, and still somehow making it back in time for piano jury at NEC, hands shaking but hearts full. One for showing up to freshman finals week in a cow onesie because if you're going to be terrified, you might as well do it in style. One for Graves Hall — for sitting in Music 540 and meowing "Silent Night" with complete sincerity and absolutely no dignity. One for joining The Revere and discovering that I loved writing more than I loved the idea of becoming a surgeon. For realizing that words could hold the weight of things I didn't know how to say out loud.

If you had asked fourteen-year-old me who she was going to become, she would have handed you a resume. If you ask me now, I would laugh and send you a playlist. Because the person I became here is not the one I planned for.

She is less certain. She is more outspoken. She is resilient in ways that cannot show up on transcripts. She has known joy so intense it felt like it might split her open. She has known grief that made her question everything she thought she understood about love. And fairness. And permanence.

And I would not erase a single bit of it. Not a single track from this playlist.

Not the nights I cried on the floor of my dorm room. Not the mornings I walked into a class, praying the test got moved. Not the friendships that changed me. Not the ones that broke me. Not the people I lost. Because I do not want to know the version of myself who didn't go through this. This playlist. Phillips Academy.

I don't want the edited playlist. I don't want the sanitized one with only the upbeat tracks. I want the one with the messy transitions. The songs that hurt to listen to. The ones that remind me of who I was when I didn't know who I was becoming.

And when we all leave here — when Nathan Hale becomes a distant memory, when Graves is just a building we once knew by heart, when we wake up somewhere new and unfamiliar — I hope you keep your whole playlist. Not just the impressive tracks. The honest ones. Because the hardest moments did not break us. They made us human.

And if I ever don't know what to say to you again, if the distance feels too wide or the moment too heavy, I'll do what I've always done. I'll send you a playlist. And I'll trust that you'll understand.

Cate Cummings is a Senior from Rolling Hills Estate, Calif. Contact the author at ccummings26@andover.edu.

The Weeks that Made Us

SAHANA MANIKANDAN



A. BAETEN-RUFFO / THE PHILLIPIAN

At the start of your time at Andover, life always feels like somewhere in your future, waiting for you to arrive.

We wait for the weekend. We wait for break. We wait for that one event, that one night with the people that will make it all feel worth it. And every Monday, with the sincerity of people who have said this before and will say it again, we declare that this will be the week we lock in. This will be the week we become more productive, more disciplined, more impressive, more everything we were apparently not last week.

The funny thing is that Andover is almost entirely built out of those weeks.

Not the perfect ones. Not the dramatic ones. Not even the particularly memorable ones. Just the ordinary ones: the tired ones, the rushed ones, the ones where you are late going back to your dorm and cold and carrying too much and still pretending that this is normal.

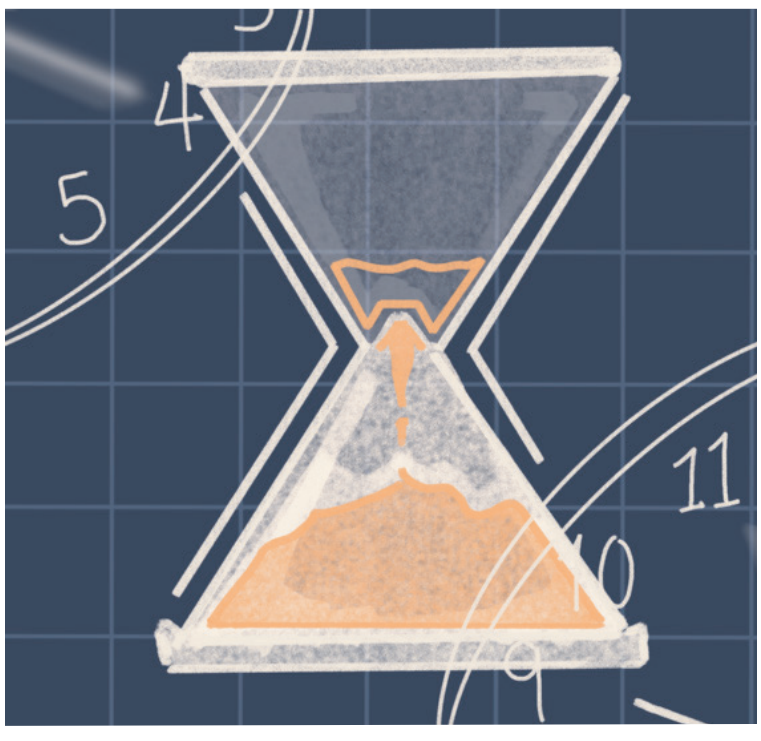
For a long time, I thought the parts of Andover I would remember most would be the obvious occurrences. Nights in Boston with my friends. Carnival weekends. Hotel sleepovers during championship meets. The kind of moments that feel important because they look important. As my time at Andover comes to an end, I realized that those memories were only the punctuation, giving shape to the story, but they were not the story itself.

The story was built quietly, inside repetition.

It was built during the walks back to Eaton after long winter days, when the sky turned dark embarrassingly early, and the lights on Eaton's garden somehow made campus feel softer than it really was. It was built in conversations that started as nothing important and stretched all the way from Commons to the dorm door. The kind where you say goodbye three separate times because each time, one of you remembers "one more thing." At the time, those walks felt fleeting. Now, they feel permanent.

It was built in swim practice, in the strange closeness that comes from doing the same grueling sets every day with the same people in the same lanes. Four years of chlorinated air, tangled headphones, and frozen hair on the walks back from Pan. Four years of sharing lanes with people who slowly stopped feeling like just teammates and started feeling like a part of my life. I used to think friendships grew from dramatic moments or deep conversations that changed everything all at once. But most of the time, friendships came from accumulation. From swimming beside the same people over and over again until one day they became inseparable from my memories of this place.

CAMILA CHEN / *THE PHILLIPIAN*



That seems to be how life works at Andover: the important things arrive gradually. By the time I became a Copy Associate Editor, and later an editor, for The Phillipian, Thursdays in the newsroom had become one of the steadier rhythms of my week. Every issue followed nearly the same pattern: reading stories line by line, fixing awkward phrasing, debating headlines, catching mistakes most readers would never notice. At first glance, it was meticulous, almost invisible work, but that was what made it meaningful. Copy editing taught me that the things people value most are constructed from patience, revision, and attention. Nothing becomes strong in the blink of an eye. Things become stronger through iteration—through care and willingness to keep refining something long after the excitement of beginning has faded. Looking back, I think that was true of my experience at Andover as a whole.

As graduation gets closer, I keep thinking about how much of my life I spent waiting for the next best thing. The next event would feel more meaningful than an ordinary day. But I've realized that life was never waiting beyond the routine. It was in the routine itself. It was in the same faces, the same walks, the same rooms, the same weeks that seemed forgettable while I was living them, and now that they are ending, they are unforgettable.

So before we leave this place behind, I think there is something worth committing to: enjoying every day. So much of what shapes us arrives inaudibly, hidden inside rituals we barely notice. The days that seem repetitive or uneventful are often the ones that change us most. They teach us how to care for people, how to belong somewhere, how to grow into ourselves without even realizing it is happening. And one day, long after those moments have passed, we will look back and understand that they were never insignificant at all. They were our lives unfolding in real time, asking only that we pay attention while they were still ours.

Editor's Note: Sahana Manikandan was a Copy Editor for The Phillipian*, vol. CXLVIII.*

Sahana Manikandan is a Senior from Princeton, N.J. Contact the author at smanikandan26@andover.edu.

Andover Has Taught Me —

KEREN SONG



COURTESY OF KEREN SONG

1. Grief.

2. Calculus, thanks to Mr. DoBa.

3. The joy of corn flakes and whole milk. We love you, Dean Washburn!

4. The art of power naps, especially in the Falls Music Library.

5. How to own up to not knowing:

When I was younger, even through parts of middle school, a habit of mine was responding with "I forgot" in the place of "I don't know." If someone found out about my ignorance or if I made an error that exposed me, I felt flayed open, a dizzying heat rising to my face as I would sputter out some pathetic and entirely unnecessary excuse. During Winter break of my Lower year, I told my parents, "if I've learned anything so far, it's how to admit that I don't know."

Upon hearing such a declaration, I'm sure my parents assumed that I had finally learned how to ask questions to my teachers without wanting to melt down into a puddle. They're not wrong, although I may have gone a little overboard with it when I asked Mr. Rogers, "Sorry, what's a battery?" halfway through our unit on circuits in Physics 553.

But what I really meant was that for every "I know" I've said at Andover, there have been hundreds of "I don't know"s to be confessed both inside and outside the classroom. I learned how to overcome the pain of having to respond with an "I don't know," when begged for any advice by a crying friend over the phone. I learned the technicolor thrill of throwing out an "I don't know" before jumping into something new with the people I love. I learned the concerned "I don't know," the one I pull out when prompted about a dripping faucet in the shared kitchen or when interrogated on the whereabouts of a dormmate, five minutes late to sign-in. I learned the various shades of "I don't know" and the way it paints my days with strips and stains of confusion, glee, and sorrow.



FELISHA LI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

6. Laundry hacks, like hanging my sweaters outside my scalding shower to steam them.

7. The varied topics of ten distinctly amazing English electives. Shoutout to Mr. Bird, Ms. McQuade, Dr. Gardner, Mr. Grimm, Ms. Albert, Dr. Yang, Mr. Tortorella, Ms. Fulton, and Ms. Chase!

8. Paresky Commons waffle topping combinations.

9. Protocol when facing a rabid raccoon hissing in front of the dumpster.

10. The company of my friends:

There are snapshots of my time at Andover that would come across as surreal to my past self both for the sheer fact that I have such spectacular friends and for how silly they can be.

The first time I met Wooba was when I was talking about whale sex in the library. Or maybe it was whale defecation. He walked up, introduced himself, and told me I would fit right in at Andover Quizbowl. He was right.

Through Wooba, I met Cindy. Cindy told me the Linguistics Club had Oreos. I had no idea what linguistics was, but I followed them. Linguistics has since become one of my biggest passions — so much so that it was my intended field of study for most colleges I applied to.

So on and so forth, so much of myself, to a nonsensical degree, is formed by the friends I have met here. To rattle off a few more, the reason why I complete a New York Times crossword puzzle every day is because of Patrick. The reason I know the rules of spikeball is because of Bill. The reason why I know so much about "The Truman Show" (1998) is because of Cyrus. The reason why I live in a dorm whose lamp is dressed in a suit of cardboard armor, whose common room whiteboard reads jokes ranging from mildly appropriate to highly inappropriate, and whose fridge is covered in gibberish haikus of surprising literary merit is because of my dormmates, Alex, Linda, River, Allison, and Aurelia. And I thank all of my friends, mentioned and unmentioned, for making me who I am and would like to remind them that I still have a long way to go.

11. How to smell out mold in the dish sponge and the importance of showerhead pressure. Sorry, Ms. Silva.

12. An appreciation for crispy cod.

13. Roman coin sorting with Queen playing in the background. Thank you, Mr. Bergman-McCool and Dr. Dugan, for the opportunity.

14. More about myself:

I used to be terrified of dogs. More importantly, I used to think I'd be afraid of dogs for life. Andover proved me wrong. I met Rocket, Sunny, and Linus.

My eighth-grade math teacher once told me I was "not built for STEM," whatever that means. I took that to heart. Andover changed my mind, though. My awesome math and physics teachers — Mr. DoBa, Mr. Schneider, Dr. Odden, Dr. Zorrilla, Mr. Rogers, Dr. Mika, and Ms. Yao — inspired me to believe otherwise.

I used to have the typical angsty thoughts about my family and how they regarded me. Life at Andover proved me wrong. Now, I can't go a week without a nice long FaceTime call with my sisters. My mom is the first one to hear about when I've gotten an abysmal grade on a test. My dad definitely loves hearing about some random linguistics concept for the thousandth time.

15. List-making.

16. Poetry. Thank you, Mrs. McQuade, for encouraging me to keep writing on.

17. The taste of the best cheesecake I've ever had — kudos to Dr. Aureden.

18. Trust:

For all my life, I've been a worrier. When I was younger, my mom would suggest that I get a thumb-sized doll to tell my worries to so that it can hold onto my worries. I think I refused. I didn't trust any doll enough to keep my worries safe until my return. They'd probably spill all the beans to my Barbie or my Batman Lego figurine while my back was turned. Or lose them. Or forget them. Or, the worst of them all, not care about them.

It's safe to say there are people on this campus who care so much about me and what I have to share about my life. I adore all of them for listening and remembering. Above all, I cannot thank Aimee Qi enough for keeping me somewhat sane throughout all the breakdowns, all-nighters, panicked strolls, and the delirious days of sleep-deprived bliss.

18. Horrible microwave recipes.

19. How to say goodbye, hopefully.

Keren Song is a Senior from Seoul, South Korea. Contact the author at hsong26@andover.edu.

The Places We May or May Not Go

SHLOAK SHAH



A. TSAO / THE PHILLIPIAN

Some days ago, I was being wildly productive on social media when I ran into an unattributed quote. It went something like this: "Stop taking directions from people who have never been to the places you want to go."

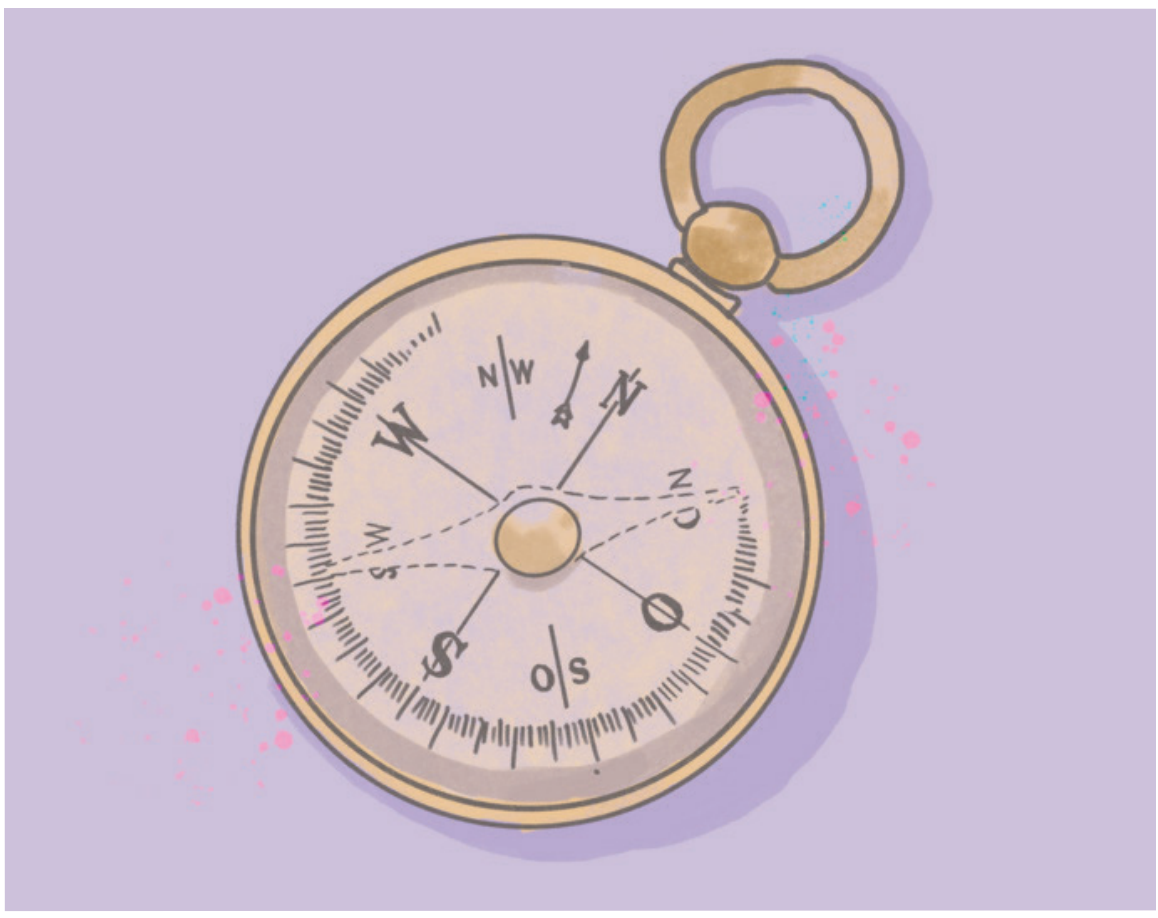
It's not a particularly insightful adage, but there's something about its directness that gives me a disproportionally grand appreciation for its meaning. I am very partial to the use of quotes, which I think is because I've always gravitated towards history and literature, and there's a poignant sense of historical rhyme in repurposing the words of someone you admire.

Everybody takes principles about themselves for granted. In some sense, this is really the only way we can observe our own character. For as long as I can remember, I have taken for granted that quotes are sacred. Indeed, I have felt a profound sense of tragedy that most of the words spoken in history have been lost, and I don't know what to make of the fact that I don't so much care about the phrase or attribution of this, the only quote with any mileage in my mind today. I would hate to render myself another clichéd high-school senior who doesn't know who they are, per se, so let's think about it this way: perhaps the people we need to stop taking directions from are living in our own heads.

When I arrived at Andover as a new lower, I had a fairly good sense of what I wanted to study in college. By the end of that year, though, my decision was set. I knew, as surely as I knew any self-referential principle, that I wanted to enter public service and that this would naturally lead me to study politics or international relations in college. I had the sense that a graduate degree was a fun idea to daydream about, but one that I would never actually end up pursuing, and felt pretty much the same about teaching or the remote prospect of a career outside politics (although the intermediary steps I naturally left for later), or the careers I had imagined in my youth, which ranged from architect to paleontologist.

So I wrote my college applications with a confidence that in retrospect feels a little absurd. I reacted with confusion when friends' applications listed an undecided major, or one that didn't heavily underwrite other aspects of their profile. I introduced myself and my academic fields of interest with confidence to my interviewer and anyone else who asked. In lieu of the bandwidth or motivation to reflect on why I wanted to go where I was heading, I deferred to the direction provided by my past self. To the question of why I wanted to study politics, I had built such a habit of scripted responses that I neglected to consider the only force I can credit with fulfilment: curiosity.

This strikes me as the sort of epiphany people reach after retirement (or, I suppose, after matriculating at a college). Which is odd, because committing to a college decidedly did not alter my workflow to that extent. Despite my best wishes, I don't find that my habits around stress look much different from those they did a year ago, either. All the same, the nearer college gets, the more curious I become about interests other than the ones that got me here: earth history and science.



CAMILA CHEN / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

When I was younger (after but not long after the aforementioned architecture and paleontology eras), I used to have a real obsession with the book series Wings of Fire. For a couple of years, I would count down the months, weeks, and days until the next title released (back then, they had semi-consistent release schedules). I would peruse Scholastic event summaries, discussion threads on other fans' theories, and ramble to frankly anyone who would listen to satisfy my excitement.

But in the three or four days immediately before a release, this all would stop. I noticed this every six months for perchance three years without fail. More perplexingly, I would revert back to my previous state of hyperactive excitement the moment I started reading — in a sense, the period of least anticipation was the one right before the event in question occurred. This made very little sense to me at the time, nor does it today, but it all the same strikes me as the nearest point of comparison for my immediately pre-college questions.

Perhaps the same will happen this September. It's possible that the result of this soul-searching will not manifest tangibly. Perhaps the difficulty I have imagining a return to the directions I had previously set is no different from the difficulty I once felt departing from those directions. The point of all this is, there is no way of knowing from here where I will or won't go. A few weeks ago, I visited the Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, and was struck by how seamless it was to slip back into a version of myself who cared more for diplomacy than earth history. In any case, I do know that curiosity — learning simply for the love of it — is the only guide to fulfillment that's worked for me.

Nobody lives in the place you want your life to lead. But just as you can't take directions from others, be wary of taking too many directions from your past self. Let your curiosity lead you wherever you may or may not go!

Shloak Shah is a Senior from London, UK. Contact the author at sshah26@andover.edu.

The Next Big Thing

LILY LIU



COURTESY OF LILY LIU



NATHAN WU / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

We all know the feeling of having a math test, studying hard for it, then feeling relief (or not) after taking it. Then, boom — a literal minute later (or so it seems), there's another one. A regular occurrence of my Senior year has been walking into Mr. McHugh's first-period class, a mere day after a test, and seeing a collection of unfortunate letters written on the whiteboard: q u i z n e x t t u e s d a y.

Like for many Andover students, math is a subject in which I excelled as a middle-schooler. It all used to be so easy. Now that my world of lines and apples and slopes expands, more factors — flux integrals, vector fields, God-knows-what-theorems — enter the equation. More and more often, I find myself fighting to understand what's going on in class only to eventually give up and "save it for later" (a.k.a. one day before the test). With all the things we must do to attend Andover, it is easy to keep saving stuff for later. Unsurprisingly, these commitments add up, and we are left constantly catching up, chasing the illusion of a fresh start — then finding ourselves caught in the chase of the next big thing, yet again.

Andover, as a four year-experience, seems to have a clear beginning and ending. In the difficult moments throughout my time here, I have patiently waited for the infinite chase to end, for a fresh start. Getting into college felt like that fresh start for which I was willing to sacrifice. I thought that once I got into college, it wouldn't matter if I was unhappy. It wouldn't matter if I felt like an outsider with my friends. It wouldn't matter if I was working so hard yet still, my grades fluctuated.

I was exhausted. I saved things for later. I didn't confront my emotional precariousness but instead stuffed the questions in my back pocket, waiting for something — college, or another force — to come and solve everything.

Come senior year, and time flies. College applications are over. At the time that I write this, there are 20 days left until Commencement. By the time that you read this, the Class of 2026 will have officially graduated from Andover. Having experienced all of these benchmarks, which I thought were the prerequisites to a "fresh start," I do not feel radically altered. There wasn't one singular "click" moment that fixed everything. My problems did not disappear at once, but have rather reshaped itself, like river water after rain, to inhabit new bodies.

Andover, like life, is but a gradual, continuous process. As one of my good friends once said, beginnings don't need to be fresh, nor do they need to be grand or definitive. My new beginning came not from big moments. It is rather — as cliché as it sounds — in the bloody red sunsets with Matthew, Philip, and Sophie on the Great Lawn, white shoes muddy from grass and mouths widening from Spikeball, that I find beginning; in dancing our hearts out to Bruno Mars' "Locked Out of Heaven" then crying uncontrollably to Adele's "Love in The Dark" with Angela in the Sam House common room, windows wide open as the warm spring breeze seeps through. I find beginning in the way Bailey shares her Nan's flank steak with me on Sunday brunch, in the way Claire's and my bows touch tips during orchestra rehearsals. I find beginning in the way I pick myself up to go to math class every day. I find beginning on paper, every time I hold a pen and write about the myriad that is our community, the miracle that is my life.

Unknowingly, through pockets of laughter, tears, and conversation, scars faded, and I found a version of success that changed as I did, that I am proud to pursue.

At Andover, we create goals and chase them, excusing the past as an unchangeable weight of regret and the present as merely a passage to the future. Amid the chaos of stacked responsibilities and commitments, we often forget that we are constantly beginning. Every math test, I tenaciously begin the mastery of a new trick. Every conversation, I reach a new depth within myself and the other. Every day, I become a braver self. We are constantly beginning and ending. We are constantly living a process.

I invite you to embrace the process. Exist in the middle, in the midst — of becoming the person we want to be, for our loved ones, the world, and ourselves.

Don't wait to be happy. Don't save confrontation for later. Let yourself live without feeling like you're being chased down. Remember the value of every moment as a potential new beginning.

That's what Andover is — a process: bittersweet, illuminating, and vivaciously thrilling.

Lily Liu is a Senior from Wellesley, Mass. Contact the author at lliu26@andover.edu.

Finis Origine Pendet

WILLY PARK



COURTESY OF WILLY PARK

In mathematics, all it takes to disprove a claim is a single counterexample. So when I first walked into Snyder Center and saw the phrase finis origine pendet (the end depends upon the beginning), I immediately started looking for one. Because if that statement were true, I couldn't imagine an ending worth staying for.

During my first year as a lower, I often ate lunch alone in the Mural Room, or "upper middle" as I called it, so that I didn't have to be spotted friendless by others. I pretended I preferred eating in peace while brainstorming business ideas that could make me rich enough to never need school at all, not because I was particularly ambitious or entrepreneurial, but because escaping felt easier than belonging.

Everyone around me seemed perfectly built for this place, effortlessly articulate, talented in six different ways, strangely foreign to failure. Well, the last bit I also agreed on. Failure had been alien to me, too, before Andover introduced us properly. So while everyone else seemed busy building futures here, I was mentally calculating exit strategies from where nothing seemed to go my way. All the while I thought: If finis origine pendet, and if this is my beginning, then what exactly is my ending supposed to look like?

So, I decided I hated that phrase. And if I hated it, I had to disprove it. After all, a single counterexample was enough. I needed to become one.

With that motivation in the backdrop, time flew by. And whoever coined the phrase "time flies" should have been more specific. Time flew at the speed of KE092, the Korean Air flight from Incheon to Boston, which I took so often that I'd fall asleep before the safety demonstration even began. But in the times that I was awake, it always felt the same at the beginning of each flight: the heavy rumbling on the runway, the strange feeling that nothing is happening, and then suddenly, impossibly, you realize you have crossed an ocean. That is what Andover feels like in retrospect. Day by day, progress seemed invisible. Then one morning, you look around senior spring and realize you have traveled an unimaginable distance from the person you used to be.

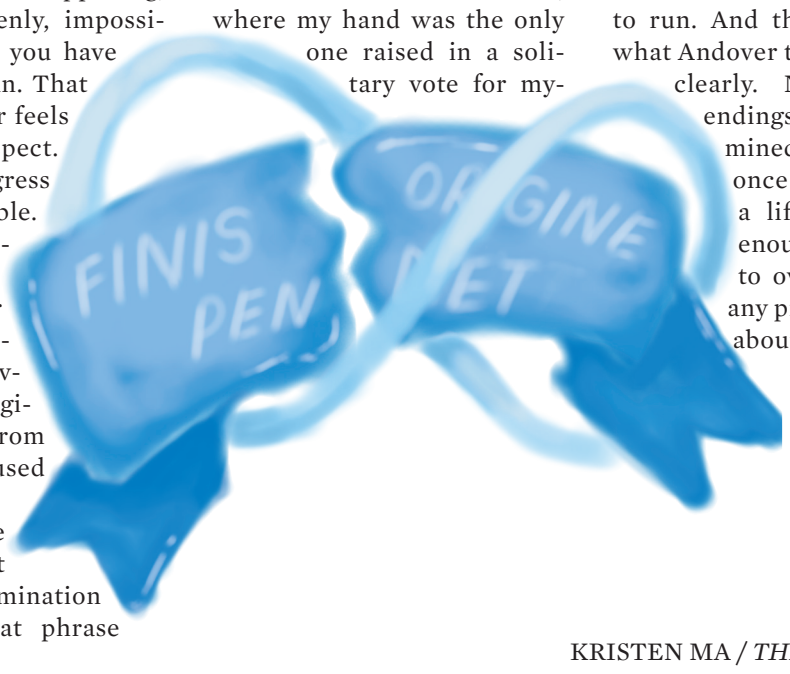
Somewhere along that flight, my determination to disprove that phrase dissolved. Partly through the kindness I received, partly through the unsettling discovery that I had begun to care about things I once dismissed. I followed friends into activities I never imagined myself joining, only to discover later that I loved them enough to stay. I joined a stack where I initially felt like the odd one out, then found myself sitting on dorm floors after midnight, sharing tangerines and secrets with people I'd learned to trust. The ending I reached did not belong to the insecure sixteen-year-old who first arrived here, convinced he was already behind. Ironically, that dissolution of my determination may have become the very proof I had been searching for all along.

So was the phrase wrong after all? Not exactly. The flaw in my three-year-long proof was assuming a beginning could happen only once.

I had believed my beginning was frozen in time: in the common room of Rockwell, where my hand was the only one raised in a solitary vote for myself as dorm rep. But there was also a beginning, trembling before my entire cluster after my election speech while the crowd cheered. I thought my beginning was fixed in those "mandatory fun" class meetings, when I stood paralyzed, unsure which friend group to sit beside. But there was also a beginning, a year later, in a sanctuary expedition after sunset with those friends I chose to sit with, where we ran and screamed like little children at the slightest rustle from the woods. There was even a beginning in the moment when I finally pressed upload on a song I would have kept hidden in my downloads folder.

Beginnings are far more generous than we imagine. They are not rare, fragile moments that happen once and harden permanently into fate. They recur. Constantly. Sometimes disguised as failure, sometimes as embarrassment, sometimes as the very situations that make us want to run. And that, I think, is what Andover taught me most clearly. Not that our endings are predetermined by who we once were, but that a life can contain enough beginnings to overturn almost any prediction made about it.

Even now, I still do not entirely trust the phrase inscribed in the Snyder Center. But perhaps that is because I misunderstood it from the start. The end may depend upon the beginning, but fortunately, we are allowed more than one.



KRISTEN MA / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Willy Park is a Senior from Incheon, South Korea. Contact the author at spark126@andover.edu.

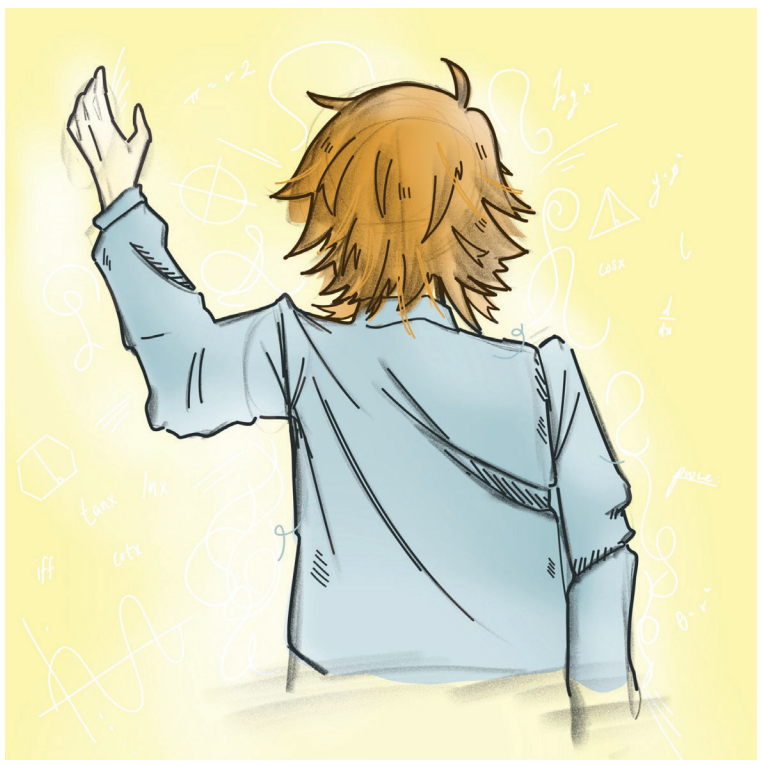
The faculty

Farewell, Andover! 13 Things I Will Miss Dearly

SANTIAGO MORGAN



A. BAETEN-RUFFO / THE PHILLIPIAN



CARINA PAIK / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Dear Andover friends,

After many months of thoughtful reflection, my family and I have decided to leave the school for personal reasons. I want to share some of the things I will miss most after four meaningful years here:

1. The Math Department. What a remarkable place to work. What an honor it has been to be part of this team. People often ask how I managed to transition into this environment, coming from a different language, system, and curriculum. The answer is simple: the teachers in the Math Department.

I recently found my notes from 2022, when I came for my final interview. Dianne Fields (the G.O.A.T.) had scheduled me to observe Mr. Turick's class. My notes read: "Super funny guy. Super funny class. I would love to work in a place like this."

Four years later, I can confirm that it is not only a fun place to work, but one that makes you a better teacher. Generosity, collaboration, humor, and a constant willingness to share ideas and materials define this department. It made not only me, but my whole family feel at home. A truly special place. Thank you!

2. My students. Ben Forman, Nick Letendre, Andrew Tollman, Ryan Nasserzadeh, Simi Gandhi, Will Lucas, Michael Mechegia, Pragun Seth, Alexis Lee, George Ryckman, Paul Wehner, Rakhi Jain, Kevin Zheng, Adele Ciocola, Zainab Alaradi, Chris Savino, Spencer Madge, Felix Frisch, John and Luke Fernandez Suarez, Everett Woo, Albert Tsao, and so many (SO MANY!) others I have had the privilege to teach. I wish I could name you all!

You are curious, driven, joyful, and full of character. A combination of academic excellence and genuine humanity. Teaching you has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Thank you. Fly high, dear friends.

3. The victors. In a time that often invites us to feel like victims, some students choose otherwise. Kai Wang, Natalie Rodriguez-Vasquez, and many others have been given opportunities their parents never had and are making the absolute most out of them. You understand something essential that our culture seems to have forgotten: opportunity is only half the story. The other half is grit, perseverance, sacrifice, discipline, and the relentless pursuit of excellence. And excellence you have achieved. What an immense privilege it has been to witness your journey! The future belongs to you.

4. The musicians. Ani Bayramyan, Dylan Wan, Maggie Fulop, Katie Odden and every student who shares their musical talent with this community. Your music is beautiful and deeply moving. Your discipline, resilience, and commitment to mastery are truly inspiring. You have my deepest respect and admiration.

5. The Rosary group. Gabriele De Carlo, Felix Bret, Jaewon Choi, Ronal Dominguez Hernandez, Clem Lewis, Dr. Mary Kantor and the rest of the group. In a culture obsessed with money, status and material success, it has been a joy to find students seeking something deeper. I will miss our weekly prayer gatherings and the long, funny, and meaningful conversations over delicious home-cooked Italian dinners (Thank you chef Gabe!). Your diversity of backgrounds and languages helped me truly understand what "Catholic" means: universality. Stay in touch, and please pray for my family and me.

6. Sophia Tatar. A student who embodies the ideal: joy in learning and joy in collaboration. I once spent a Sunday afternoon at MIT listening to her present a research project she had worked on for months with students from other schools. At a place as demanding as Andover, she still found time to pursue deep intellectual challenges. She represents the best of what learning can be: not for grades or transcripts, but for the joy and fulfillment of understanding. Truly inspiring. I wish my kids would grow up to be like you, Sophia.

7. Donny Slater and Outdoor Pursuits. Many think the coolest thing about Dr. Slater is his course on coins or the rock band posters in his classroom. Those are great, but the real gem is his Outdoor Pursuits program. It is a school within the school with its own ethos built on collaboration, nature, and friendship. Being part of it has been a privilege. Thank you for this incredible opportunity, my friend! I will miss you and OP deeply. Enjoy your "mate," and see you in Patagonia!

8. The Nepal team. Howie Kalter, Nina, Will, Aksel, Dylan (again), Penelope, Shannon, Kristian, Nathan, Dareus, and Toni. The transformative experience we shared in the Himalayas will remain with me forever. I may have designed the program, but you brought it to life. For that, I am deeply grateful. What a remarkable group. Namaste, dear team.

9. Paresky Commons. Milady, Zule, Junior, Billy, Rosita, Maxi, Paulita, and the entire team. You represent a beautiful blend of Latin American joy and warmth and American professionalism. Thank you for the amazing food, the delicious coffee, and your constant kindness. Listening to many of your stories has often reminded me how extraordinary this country is, a true land of opportunity (at times, I cannot help but feel that this is something many Americans take for granted). ¡Adios, amigos! ¡Gracias por tanto! And, inspired by Milady, ¡Vayan con Dios!

10. The campus. Speaking of taking things for granted, I sometimes wonder how much students truly appreciate this place, as if such beauty were the default. It is not. Living and working here lifts the spirit. It is a privilege to experience one of the most beautiful campuses in the world through all four seasons. What a blessing!

11. The OPP team. Celso, Shannon, Glenn, Thomas, Adam, Heather, and everyone else in the team. This pristine campus does not maintain itself. It's the result of the outstanding job behind the scenes that the fantastic OPP team does to keep our houses well maintained, our buildings beautiful and our campus shining all year long. I'm glad my kids spent time around your work, machines and tools either at home or around campus. They learned a lot and had a lot of fun. Thank you for that!

12. The Community List. Sometimes I wish this mailing list were a person so I could give it a big hug and say "THANK YOU!". It is a daily reminder of how generous and kind this community is. For example when our son Ignacio was born, we were overwhelmed with gifts, clothes, and support. (At one point, I even considered opening my own Babies "R" Us). We will never forget that kindness.

13. T-House and Kate Dolan. Hector, Chase, Axel, Jack, Teddy, Jensen, Lilly, Carly, Maddie, Zoe, Maya, and especially Kate. Many faculty may have the same role on paper, but their experience can be radically different depending on the people they work with. In my case I was incredibly lucky! Kate made my first residential experience ever meaningful, joyful, and smooth. Thank you for your guidance, flexibility, and kindness, dear Kate. You are the best.

And finally, after four years at Andover, I know that many of you do not believe in God. But I also know that God believes in each and every one of you. So God bless you all. From the bottom of my heart: THANK YOU Andover!

Farewell. See you around.

Santi out.

Santiago Morgan is an Instructor in Mathematics at Phillips Academy Andover.

Reflections on Belonging and Its Immense Significance

KAREN DOUYON



A. BAETEN-RUFFO / THE PHILLIPIAN

What does it mean to belong to a place? Belonging by definition is the emotional sense of fitting in, being accepted, and feeling secure as a valued member of a group, organization, or place. Many would argue that belonging is a fundamental human need. To be in community — to belong, is vital for one's life to have meaning.

When I arrived here two (very short) years ago, I had no idea what to expect. I had no idea what 'Phillips Academy Andover' was or what it meant to people; the world, even. All I knew was that this was the next stop on my journey and I would make it mine, come what may. Coupled with my naïveté was also a deep yearning to belong, to be accepted by a place that seemed foreign to me. I was coming from New York City and before that, Atlanta, Georgia — two places steeping with diversity in a way Andover was sorely lacking. There I didn't have to search for community, it was built into every ecosystem I entered. To be young, gifted, and Black was the norm if not the expectation and navigating this new environment forced me to contemplate modulating myself to 'fit in.' Thank goodness for the teaching fellows in my cohort.

From the very first moment we met, it was almost as if we knew each other our whole lives. We bonded in a way I think allowed us all to be ourselves in the fullest of ways. Together we built a shield around us, every high was celebrated and every low was nurtured. There was never any judgement either. Even though we are all so different, we belonged to each other and that emboldened us to know that we also belonged here.

In my experience, to belong at Phillips Academy means you belong to a plethora of different people in different places. Formally, I have belonged to Stimson and Isham as a house counselor, SLAM and Softball as a coach, AMP and Curly Hair Club as an advisor, and the Theatre department as a teacher and director. Within these spaces, I have had the privilege of helping other students feel like they belong. My first year in Stimson House was full of heated debates over loose leaf tea and long talks about whatever the 'tea' was at the time. I was always cooking and they were always eating. And now in Isham House, Wednesday nights are for post-munch rants about this and that with tea and a snack close by. Everyone felt secure — they were a valued member of this 'group', of this dorm — they belonged to each other.

My first time as a coach was with the beloved Andover Softball team. A group of fearlessly talented young women who know the meaning of integrity and teamwork. Truthfully, I did not feel like I belonged to this team. I was out of my depth; or so I thought. My high school softball career was long behind me and I found myself asking 'what is that' every 5 minutes during my first practice. Having our captain at the time, Madison Hugo, coach me through my first coaching gig was definitely not a confidence boost. As we all do, I found my role and leaned deeply into it. I was not only a coach, but a built-in cheer leader. Yelling from first base or the dugout at every strikeout, grand slam, or RBI, and especially if we were down or it was clear someone needed a pick-me-up. My belonging came from reminding everyone that they too belonged, no matter what. Everywhere else at PA I was 'Ms. D' or 'Ms. Douyon' but on the softball field, I was Coach K and that came with the reminder that no part is small in the grand design. If it wasn't for that confidence boost, I may not have been so galvanized to ask Mrs. Joel to be the coach for SLAM.

As a faculty member at PA, there are things you have to do, obligations that we all must fulfill to keep the ship afloat. SLAM, however, was something I chose. Fall and Winter term of this year were dedicated to the dynamic Spirit Leaders of Andover Madness. Funny enough, I felt similarly here as I did with softball. Something I love about my PA students and athletes is that you're so amazing at... well, everything! You put your all into everything you do and it shows so evidently in every space. So when I walked in on my first day, Maya Clark, Rosie Tabuke, and Yumi Lai let me know that they got this and that they were happy to have me on board. Once again, I found myself being the biggest cheerleader, the loudest person in the gym, the biggest listening ear at team dinners when things were going every way but right and always reminding them that we belong to a legacy of excellence that we must always carry with us. SLAM, like softball, is one of those groups on campus that you just feel so lucky to be a part of. Win or lose, good or bad, we belonged to each other and the light those girls shined is and always will be indelible.

Coming to Phillips Academy as the only arts teaching fellow, I felt early on that I had to prove myself. Everyone knows why English, Math, History, and STEM matter. No one ever questions the undeniable necessity of conventional academic subjects. I felt like I did not belong in conversations about being tired because of late grading or lesson planning when in fact, I was tired from nights of late grading and lesson planning. My department has been a sounding board for me these (very short) two years and there was a constant reminder to never be ashamed, and to remember how important our work is. This constant affirmation fortified me enough to teach my classes in unorthodox ways and to produce the gem that was Saturday Night Sunday Morning, the winter play I directed this year. It was undoubtedly one of my favorite moments from my time at Andover. Through my classes, teaching every grade level, we built trust, confidence, communication skills, and maybe even a few acting skills along the way (Just kidding Mr. Lazar!). With Saturday Night Sunday Morning, everything I knew about theatre, leadership, teaching, and directing was tested. I was putting on a play with a cast of Black students at a predominantly white institution. However, my goal, which was accomplished, was to ensure every student who took two hours out of their weekend to witness our story felt like they could belong to it too, like they could belong to the theatre.

So in conclusion, one could say I belong to PA. You could also say PA belongs to me as well. There are so many moments that can't fit in one write-up, so many teary-eyed belly laughs, secret handshakes, early morning gym sessions that led into breakfast in lower right (which still overstimulates me), every single "can I have some tea" or "I HAVE to tell you something later". As we all move on to our next chapters, this will be one I reflect fondly upon and it is because of all of you. So to everyone who's path crossed mine in these two (short) years, even if all we did was exchange a smile on the paths, thank you for reminding me that I too, belong.

Karen Douyon is a Teaching Fellow in Theatre and Dance at Phillips Academy Andover.

Beyond the Edges

MUAZ REZA



COURTESY OF MUAZ REZA



HARRY ZHOU / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Entering Andover as a new Upper, I vividly remember standing on the Great Lawn, surrounded by students who looked composed and somehow aware of something that must have escaped me. The freshmen twiddled with their thumbs, teetered on their shoes, sneaked doubtful glances, thinking that I probably looked the same. As I look back on those early days, the first few weeks blur together in my memory. I can only grasp at raw, often embarrassing fragments: getting lost in the labyrinth of Samuel Phillips Hall, stumbling around Paresky Commons, meeting people in my dorm and classes, and feeling, with each conversation, a little more behind.

I came from a small high school in Southern California, where the class size was roughly 70, and where I'd known most of my friends since middle school. I was grateful for that and continue to cherish the lifelong bonds I made in that environment. But a part of me had grown restless, a jolt in my chest that didn't have a proper destination. I wanted to see the world beyond the edges I was provided. Andover felt like the right first step in that direction.

As I weaved through the falling leaves of Fall term and braved through the chill of Winter term, I felt bits of my own identity melding with the Andover spirit. Surrounded by peers from nearly every corner of the globe, exchanging friendship and culture alike, all following a rigorous and challenging academic path; it was a whirlwind of novelty, and yet I felt a strange peace at the center of it. That version of me that belongs to California—a little naive, sun-soaked, and familiar—still exists. Yet simultaneously, like the budding flowers of spring, a new version of me has begun to sprout.

Truthfully, I'm still figuring out how these two versions of myself intersect. I thought finding myself would be neat and methodical, like learning origami—follow the instructions, fold precisely, and you'll get a perfect crane. But identity, I've learned, doesn't fold that cleanly.

A few weeks ago, my friends and I went to Boston for a friend's birthday. I'd been to Boston before with friends, but that day had a different sweetness to it; the decadence of biting into something that tasted just right. The four of us walked fast, ate delicious (seasoned!) food, and snapped pictures to memorialize the moment. Sounds pretty normal, right? At some point, we stumbled upon a playground by the Charles River.

> I thought finding myself would be neat and methodical, like learning origami—follow the instructions, fold precisely, and you'll get a perfect crane. But identity, I've learned, doesn't fold that cleanly.

The four of us, on swings and oddly shaped climbing structures, cheeks flushed from exertion and a light breeze in the air—it was a snapshot of our youth. For a few moments, it was the nostalgia of childhood that overtook us. And then, the way it happens with good friends, the laughter quieted, and conversation deepened. We talked about the world, our beliefs, and the lived experience that shaped our identities. I don't remember every part, but instead feeling completely unguarded.

That experience has given me deeper insight into the value of my friends. Abigail Wang, we may bicker like kids, but it's your level-headed rationality and continued presence that's anchored me through the year. Raymond Chiang, you're a true guy's guy: those late-night conversations in your room were the focal point of my year, and I'm stoked we're heading into Senior year as roommates. Sofiia, Soleil, Mak, Nina, Ellah—All of you are my closest friends, and I cherish the bonds we've made in this short time.

As Upper year comes to a close, I keep returning to that first afternoon on the Great Lawn, except I see myself standing there a bit taller this time. There are parts of my Andover experience that I cherish deeply. When I think of my people and the tangible ways that I've grown, I feel lighter. There are parts that still remain beautifully unresolved, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I came to Andover as a first step to see the world. It'd be a shame if the journey ended so soon.

Muaz Reza is an Upper from Santa Monica, Calif. Contact the author at mreza27@andover.edu.

What Clarity Can't Capture

WOOJIN OH



J. NUÑEZ / THE PHILLIPIAN



SHIJUN LI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

My dad once told me a story about his college friend's blind date. The friend and his date had continued their conversation late into the night, and out of the blue, while looking up at the moon, my dad's friend asked her a question: "Isn't it fascinating that a giant ball of rock is floating around the Earth because of gravity?" I probably would've gotten along with him well, because while my parents and sister were laughing on the floor, I stood there thinking, "That's actually a great point!"

Ever since I was young, instead of watching La La Land with my family, I enjoyed watching YouTube videos on deep-sea creatures and astrophysics. When I read, I chose non-fictional historical graphic novels rather than pure fantasy books like Percy Jackson. I liked how the message of my preferred media was clear: YouTube videos often signaled their message with "Today we're going to be talking about..." or "This is a scientific mystery unsolved to this day..." The same was the case with non-fiction books. They listed facts and numerical data that only took a good look at to understand.

Naturally, literature was not at all my thing. Novels and poems where authors never really told you what they wanted to say felt frustrating. I heard people enjoying literature saying that the ambiguity was the best part about it. I couldn't disagree less. If a message could be interpreted in five different ways, the author must have failed to communicate it properly. After all, why use metaphors and symbolism when you can just say exactly what you mean?

My perspective changed this year, especially during the Spring term. My English teacher, Ms. Tousignant, emphasized in every class the theme of ENG100: expanding your view and noticing more.

At first, I treated that idea the same way I had treated literature itself: something vague, maybe unnecessary. But I decided to try it anyway, partly because it was expected in class, but also because I wanted to open myself up to the enjoyment of literature that many people talked about. So instead of reading quickly to extract a conclusion, I slowed down. I paid attention to the smaller choices: why a sentence paused where it did, why one word appeared instead of another, why certain images kept returning.

As tedious as it was, it was also relaxing, like picking flowers in a field or looking for a pretty-looking shell at the beach. It reminded me of tape art from ART225 that I took in the Fall—requiring exhaustingly close attention, but also somewhat therapeutic at the same time. Despite this "improvement" and a change of mindset, I still couldn't understand what it was all supposed to accumulate to. My skepticism towards ambiguity didn't disappear.

One Saturday afternoon, I walked downtown to a Starbucks to prepare for a bombardment of majors the following week. It was a method of study I had somewhat recently started enjoying, especially for its unexpected productivity. As per usual, I was walking down Main Street, but something was different that day. I listened to birds chirping, squirrels scavenging for food below a tree, and the rustling of leaves against the wind. Something about it was indescribably beautiful. Once I tried to put them into logical sentences, the beauty disappeared, just like how describing a roller coaster couldn't convey the thrill.

I realized that writing was the same way. When you focus purely on clarity, such as by saying "a squirrel under a tree," you lose out on the beautiful details that add to the experience: the nuts that were under the tree, a rival squirrel that was competing for the nuts, the cloudless blue sky, and so on. In that sense, conveying a message was actually more effective when communicated in an abstract and seemingly "verbose" way.

This isn't to say that I forgot the merit of the logical, compact, and straightforward nature of the absolute. There was undoubtedly its own beauty when all equations and facts obeyed the same laws. What had changed was not my preference, but my ability to recognize both ways of communication. Neither was objectively superior to the other.

Even now, I wouldn't call myself an artistic reader. I often miss the literary details that seem obvious in hindsight, and I don't always know what questions to ask. Sometimes, I find myself stuck on a passage, trying to process what the author is trying to say. But for the first time, that struggle with uncertainty doesn't frustrate me. It makes me want to keep reading.

Woojin Oh is a Junior from Frisco, Tex. Contact the author at woh29@andover.edu.

The Myth of the Studious Lower

NATHAN CHUN



A. LEE / THE PHILLIPIAN



HARRY ZHOU / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Pop quiz: What does it mean to be a Senior? That's easy, I'm sure you're thinking: College applications, exclusive events, senioritis, and absolute cool social confidence spring to mind. What about Juniors? Bubbly chatter in the lunch line, endless second chances, membership to ten different clubs, and of course that one guy who placed into Math 3000 (you're not jealous, are you?). Uppers? The notorious History 300 paper, social connections to every corner of campus, perfect work organization, and (let's be honest) an eye-wateringly impressive list of leadership roles and initiatives. But what does it mean to be a Lower?

Lowers at Andover enter their second year of high school, building upon their previous year of experience to enroll in more rigorous classes. Lowers begin their evolution from watching and imitating older students to giving back as mentors and as well-established community members. Above all, being a Lower is about steady growth.

At least, that's what they tell you. You hear it all throughout your Junior year and somehow don't realize until you arrive on campus as a Lower that it doesn't mean jack squat. Pinned between the stumbling masses of Junior prodigies and accomplished Uppers who've transformed themselves into machines of productivity, I guess our lives weren't glamorous enough for people to talk about what Lowers are actually supposed to do. But bear with me, and I'll do my best to explain.

Being a Lower starts with feeling old. You watch the incoming Juniors struggle to understand the Reach sign-in system, and marvel (or shudder) at how much time has passed. You dare to sit outside the designated Junior tables in Commons for the first time, and nobody even bats an eye at your migration. You walk into that high-level STEM or language class where you were once the young outlier and, from the whispers of upperclassmen, realize a new star has taken your place.

There's been some kind of seismic shift, some sort of planetary realignment. You see it in the way your teachers' eyes no longer linger on you during class, now that your "Junior charm," which used to give you easy entrance to people's hearts, has faded. In ASM, you've been dethroned from your place in the balcony and lumped into the ground-floor crowd. You feel as if you've become facelessly integrated into the background, the spotlight of Andover having moved elsewhere.

Within the first few weeks, your uncertainty changes to true confusion. All your grades seem to come back a few marks lower, and you can't seem to find any particular reason why. The material hasn't gotten much harder since last year, and your exam performance hasn't tanked, so the standards must have gone up. But if that's the case, why didn't anyone warn you? And is that all they meant by "more rigorous classes," just a stricter teacher with a heavier stick?

On top of that, your social environment has become a delicate balancing act that's a far cry from the stability you were expecting. The upperclassmen no longer loom as unreachable titans, but you still struggle to find an adequate gradient of respect with them. On the other hand, you discover that interacting with Juniors comes with more strings attached than you were expecting. Hang out with them over dinner too often and they end up taking pity on you, figuring you must be a social outcast. Your fellow Lowers at least appreciate empathy and loyalty, yet being too genuine can make them uneasy and push them away.

At some point, you come to a critical realization: your marginalization and your entanglement with unspoken academic and social norms stem from the same root: Nobody has any concrete idea of what a Lower actually should do. Instead, teachers, advisors, and your Senior idols alike have simply accepted Lower year as a mysterious cocoon where a Junior enters and an Upper emerges. As a result, you spend your days striving to live up to the ambiguous image of a studious Lower, a work-in-progress who isn't quite successful yet but is working diligently to get there. You may not be a genius now, but you'd better have your study habits down to a tee. Keep your head down and trust the process, they assure you, and you'll be glad when you get to the other side. You try to heed their advice, but you can't shake the sense you're missing the point. The urge to look up, to see, and to breathe outside of mold, is too strong. At some point, you stop listening.

Because the truth is that steady growth isn't real. Real growth is an infinitely jagged curve, marked with little moments of setback and emotional detail that give it its sharp edge. Lower year is about savoring the feeling of submitting a paper you know you put your heart into, not the grade you get back. It's about sitting flat-out dumbfounded in class for the first time, more than the time things went exactly to plan. It's about finally opening up to someone you've been longing to trust and feeling your anxiety rush out of you.

Who wants to settle for a studious Lower when you've got all that?

Nathan Chun is a Lower from Boston, Mass. Contact the author at nchun28@andover.edu.

Stargazing, Skinwalkers and Other Sidequests

MEDHA KONDA



A. LEE / THE PHILLIPIAN



SHIJUN LI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Deep in the snowy woods of Massachusetts is where an unsuspecting Floridian found herself on a Friday night of freshman winter. A version of myself from a year before likely wouldn't be doing the same, and would instead be spending the night in my room. New students are told that Andover will completely change you, but how? I built my freshman year at Andover experience around things I had expected to do: writing, participating in various clubs, and befriending everyone in my dorm. I had a predisposed idea of the perfect high school experience– but it was impossible to predict exactly everything that would be at my fingertips. When we realize Andover is a little different from what we've imagined, we need to reconsider what we want to do here. The possibilities have widened, and what you could pursue has too, so where will that take you?

An idealized vision of Andover I held was a place where everyone is in harmony: to each other, we're all human and the same, and social barriers wouldn't necessarily exist. A juvenile perspective, yes, but Andover appealed as a place where anyone can find their people. On paper, Andover's community is a place where anyone can jump into a lawn game, join a conversation, or go from newbie to varsity with the help of friendly upperclassmen. Naivety leads us into believing people here always have noses in books and are never petty or mean. In truth, when you arrive, there isn't a moment that suddenly clicks. It's incredibly rare to simply "stumble" into your type of people, get along well with your roommate, and come off as a charming, friendly character.

When we realize Andover is a little different from what we've imagined, we need to reconsider what we want to do here. The possibilities have widened, and what you could pursue has too, so where will that take you?

Demoralizing, certainly. Nobody tells you that you'll have to lower the bar and let things take time to develop. At first, I felt most aimless when left to my own devices in my room, with the minimal fall term workload. What drew me out of that slump was the unlikely community I found on the trails or even in the mailroom. The friends I'd been waiting for, the teachers who listened, were in fact in places I didn't know existed before coming here. On my first day of Outdoor Pursuits, I was in a circle of mostly upperclassmen introducing ourselves, and I felt a sense of regret in joining the sport. Thankfully, I stuck with it and found two other Freshmen who would become cabinmates and trail buddies, as well as Seniors I don't want to say goodbye to. Some people had been hiking for years, others were just looking for an easy fall term sport, but the "why" didn't matter all that much in the end, only the fact that we all came together to enjoy the outdoors. Slowly, the Andover I wanted would appear around me and become the place I wouldn't ever trade away.

The first few weeks of school felt like endless novelty, summer camp ice-breakers, being awkward at the meal table, and testing the waters with the friendly kid who sits beside you. Yet beyond that, it's on us to lift off and roam Andover, searching for what will help you change and evolve. It comes in the form of publishing your first article, the first meeting with someone you now can't imagine life without, or perfecting that time in track. Sometimes it's difficult to resist falling back into things that feel easy– going back to the dorm early, or sticking to your rules of finishing weekend work fast. How do we keep ourselves motivated to try new things and take steps outside of what is known? It is people along the journey of freshman year that have inspired me to go out and sometimes live like kids in coming-of-age movies, or take initiatives in clubs. We enter Andover wide-eyed, looking to seniors on stages, creating ideas of what we want to become. We also sometimes come to this place with naive hope of reinventing who we are, when instead it's the development of character that happens.

Through various Andover experiences, I've found a way to connect the parts of my hometown I miss to this brewing story. When I stood in the woods in New Hampshire, looking at the stars, I was reminded of the copious amounts of luck that came together to create this moment. I didn't worry about the unfolded laundry creasing on my bed or the impending test, but the gravity that I've been able to work to share this with friends. Even so, can hiking be written as the "main goal" of my Andover experience? What can we label these moments as? These "side quests," as we like to call them, are, in fact, the pinnacle of Andover, I've found. Random electives we take, the off-season sport, the niche club– they define our experience at Andover. As I indulged in these playful endeavours, I cared less about what other people thought and more about the joy I experienced. If the innumerable "side quests" I've partaken in don't define how much I've changed, what else could?

I've sometimes been tempted to return to the blueprints written before arriving on campus some seven months ago. But it is important to remember that it is what we don't know yet that will teach us how to better ourselves. Therefore, instead of spending time spiralling on how things should be, jump into what could be. Join that JV3 team and hike out into the snowy sanctuary alone. Take night walks and go to guest speaker events. A life of these "side quests" might just teach us more along the way than the "main goal" ever has.

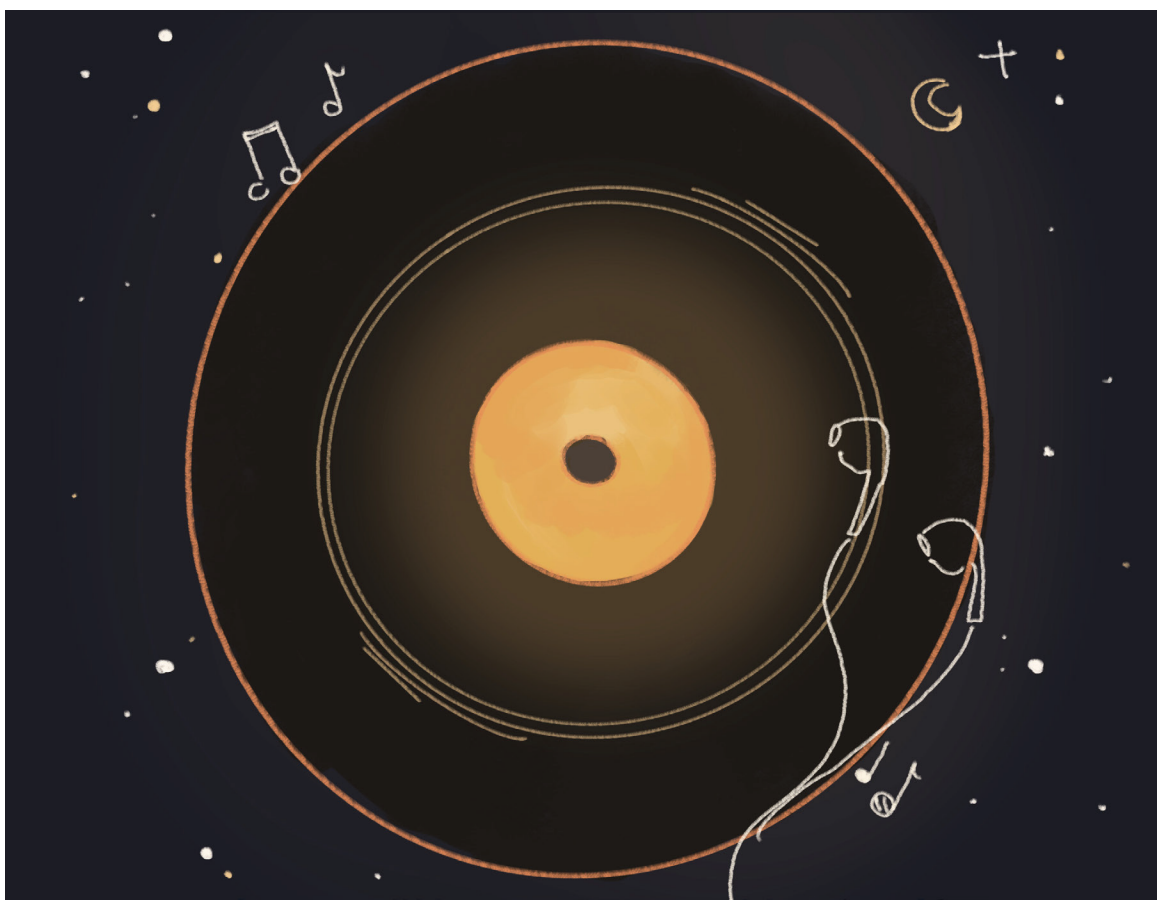
Medha Konda is a Junior from Tallahassee, Fla. Contact the author at mkonda29@andover.edu.

When the Light Was Like That

IAN M. KIM



N. AMIN / THE PHILLIPIAN



CAMILA CHEN / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

The smallest moments remain on my playlist. I remember them in a specific voice crack, trombone solo, and electric drum beat. I carry them with me. The lyrics somehow explained a feeling, a sensation, that I couldn't put into words. They were something more than singular; plural and specific at the same time.

When I couldn't put something into words, I stored it in my playlist. Now, at the end of the year, I write to share a couple of songs that were dear to my heart. Every aspect of these tunes touched me, filled me with a sense of wonder, and carried with me a sense of nostalgia. So, through the songs that I share, I hope to also share the ones I carried and those that carried me in these last couple of months. Now that the end is near, the details are more evident. When I woke up, forgetting to roll down my windows, and cold air stroked my bedhead, greeting me with a sunrise. When walking from lunch, the campus was quiet as I ran away from the blazing sun to find shade. When, after practice, the lawn filled with all of us, playing music and simply living, laughing under a pink and purple sky. When indescribably, the light was "like that."

Au Pays du Cocaine - Geese

This was one of the first new songs I loved at the beginning of the school year. Coming out just weeks after the start of school, it explained something I couldn't quite grapple with: the sadness, the excitement, and the loneliness of leaving home. These contrast- ing emotions somehow formed themselves in this song from Geese that stumbled onto my playlist while I was taking a late-night walk with my friends. The title, a playful take on "au pays de cocagne," meaning land of the plenty, was a ballad about longing, a lonely freedom at sea, and a cynical and delusional paradise. The song repeats itself, almost as if the narrator is forgetting his own words. And in that repetition, the phrase "just come home" becomes an increasingly desperate cry to an unspecified someone. In leaving home, finding home, and defining home for myself, "Au Pays du Cocaine" put into words what this community began to mean for me. When the sky was dark and empty, walking with my friends whom I hadn't seen since last year. When the light was dark.

Vueltas - Not For Radio

The conversational tone was exactly what Not For Radio's mission was: to be played in the privacy of one's personal room rather than on public radio. This song came to me on a Saturday morning, and I had woken up to it, forgetting to turn off the music. It is, in essence, a romantic song about letting go of a perfect lover, but it was also a lot more than that. In a state of constant uncertainty about who I am, who I want to be, and who I was becoming, something about the privacy and vulnerability of longing for not just someone but something was very important to me. It was the longing for clarity that resonated with me. If I had clarity about my next step, my next goal, and my next ambition, my effort would be more concentrated and easier. But there was also a beauty in the process of finding. I decided to embrace the lack of an answer.

Blue Ridge Mountains - Fleet Foxes

A couple of months later, some friends who were dear to my heart decided to take another path outside of Andover. They had been a great mentor, friend, collaborator, and person that I could emotionally rely on; the thought of them leaving made everything unbearable. The abnormally quick lifestyle of school demanded that I reflect, think through my thoughts, and process them. They were always there for me when I needed to do so. The first couple of lines stuck with me in remembrance of them: "My brother, where do you intend to go tonight? / I heard that you missed your connecting flight / To the Blue Ridge Mountains, over near Tennessee." And the late nights that I spent talking to them, laughing with them, and crying to them, would eventually come to a close. I had to learn how to move on when the light was hopeless.

Strawberry Champagne - Dept (feat Deondre)

I'd had this song in my playlist for a while now, but the bittersweetness of the lyrics resonated with me just recently. The last three lines of the song go "don't want to let the taste fade away / Memories all in my brain / They'll fade away like the bubbles in the champagne." Approaching the end of the year, I grew not just to appreciate the hard times but to make intentional meaning out of small moments, and I was scared that the memories would fade into an insignificant oblivion. If there was anything I had learned this year, it was to hold the things you love the closest and work to build a life filled with the things that bring you joy. And while I am embarrassingly bad at it, I am learning. In the hopelessness, desperation, loneliness, and pain, I saw hope and a vision to move forward.

So, when the light was like that, I stored the memories in songs. I stored not just the happiest but also the most vulnerable, personal, and sad events that occurred throughout the year. I stored small moments that seemed insignificant in passing but gifted me a great sense of pleasure. I learned how to make out of a grand abyss a sense of purpose, and how to identify from a sea of worldly pursuits activities that truly bring me joy. So now, I listen, again and again, searching, remembering, and hoping for answers that I am slowly uncovering. This year was special. When the light was like that. A light of hope.

Ian M. Kim is a Lower from McLean, Va. Contact the author at imkim28@andover.edu.

Dear My Female Family,

JEANNIE KANG



K. MA / THE PHILLIPIAN



SHIJUN LI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

I used to hate being too "girly." In primary school, I did everything in my power to deviate from the feminine norms of wearing dresses and drawing animals during recess. Instead, I asked boys to teach me how to fold an origami dinosaur and kick soccer balls into a net. In Korea, a country with some sexist norms rooted in culture, it seemed uncool to appear too "girly," and I felt a pressure to prove that I could hang out with boys and fit into their world as well. Although transferring to an international middle school with more exposure to diverse values removed some of the pressure, I still had a lingering doubt about belonging to a feminine community. I thought that finding myself in a friend group of exclusively girls would require a nuanced understanding of the newest makeup, K-pop idols, and beauty trends. Looking back, I had an immense fear that maintaining close female bonds would make me realize that I don't belong to the traditional definition of girlhood.

Coming to Andover, I did expect to experience new dynamics of friendship, interacting with friends nearly every moment of the day. I vaguely imagined that friends would be like family and that I would have more opportunities to connect with my peers at a deeply personal level. However, a shift in friendship that affected me the most was not becoming much closer to everyone, nor learning to respect people's barriers (although these were valuable lessons), but the family I found in the female community at Andover.

When life feels overwhelming with these struggles, I turn to the women in my life, those with lived experiences of these challenges, who often have greater empathy and understanding towards other women who go through similar struggles.

Living as a female entails a sea of challenges. Biologically, the menstrual cycle haunts us every month, with cramps and hormones dictating our daily lives. Socially, we compare ourselves against the stricter beauty standards in the media, often objectifying our bodies and faces to fit the ideal version of a woman. Besides this, various double standards in manners, personality, education, and household are unfairly held against women, forcing us to continue striving for perfection. When life feels overwhelming with these struggles, I turn to the women in my life, those with lived experiences of these challenges, who often have greater empathy and understanding towards other women who go through similar struggles. Despite Andover's efforts to provide more opportunities for female students, it can often feel overwhelming and confusing to navigate life as a girl.

In my first year at Andover, I

I discover more about myself and my version of girlhood as I meet many brilliant female figures who teach me every day. Likewise, there is something special in the female relationships that girls establish in our lives, which stems from a fundamental sense of empathy and encouragement.

went through similar struggles, from being uncertain about my place in this community to being struck with loneliness so far away from home. For a while, I did not know which communities I could rely on for support and advice, so I struck up conversations with people who share similar identities and backgrounds with me in an attempt to find a strong support system. Eventually, I found home in my dorm, with all the girls whom I lived with—from my neighbor who listened to my concerns at midnight to a prefect who shared her advice about "surviving" freshman year. Throughout Lower year, my bonds with the female community grew even stronger. I felt safe opening up my emotions and struggles, because many of them have gone through similar phases in their lives. Joking about being on a period to sharing tips on dressing during the winter, I developed a sense of unity with the female community. They felt much more than mere friends to me; they were my sisters who supported me in all aspects of life.

Sometimes, I still wonder whether my distinct, newfound relationship with girls in my life is simply a coincidence of staying in a lowerclassmen girls' dorm, or tells something about the female community in general. Living with other girls definitely influenced my deeper connections with them, but I would like to believe that there was a deeper connection. The self-in-relation theory "proposes that women's self-concept is largely relational; that is, women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to maintain affiliations and relationships, particularly with other women." This rings true in my life at Andover, as I discover more about myself and my version of girlhood as I meet many brilliant female figures who teach me every day. Likewise, there is something special in the female relationships that girls establish in our lives, which stems from a fundamental sense of empathy and encouragement.

I talk about beauty standards, friendships, existential crises, studies, future plans, relationships, concerns, dissatisfactions, books, anxiety, identity, hair, makeup, dresses, parties, and more with my female friends. Although I appreciate friends of all genders, there is undoubtedly a beautiful relationship that girls can develop with each other, especially in a community like Andover, where everything seems to be fast-paced and hypercompetitive. So, dear all girls in my life: thank you for reminding me that I'm worthy of your life. You all matter so much in my life.

Jeannie Kang is a Lower from Seoul, South Korea. Contact the author at nkang28@andover.edu.

Missed Pictures

COLIN LEE



A. BAETEN-RUFFO / THE PHIL-



SOPHIA KIM / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

People often criticize those who take pictures instead of being present in the moment. It was a sentiment I shared, until I realized this Fall that I could no longer remember my Junior year in the detail I wish I could. Having forgotten so much in one year sparked a somewhat existential dread, a fear that the events that had once consumed the whole of my attention would all eventually fade into a blur. But then I thought of something my mom would tell me: "People won't remember what you did, but how you made them feel." Though it's probably a slight misconstruction of a popular quote, the message still holds true; even if I eventually forget most of my Andover experience, I will always have the friends I've made here.

I have never been much for pictures. My camera roll is largely empty, composed of at most a couple of photos a week, and large clusters from things like sightseeing trips or concerts. Perhaps it's an overcorrection from my mom, who always wanted to interrupt moments to take pictures when I was younger. At the time that irritated me greatly; I thought I ought to just enjoy the moment and the pictures would spoil it, but I think that my presence was only disrupted because I cared far more about the pictures than I had to.

Since that realization, I've begun to take more pictures, especially this Spring, after I tried to reflect on the pictures and memories from arguably the most intensely different year of my life and found only about 100 photos. It could maybe sound like a decent amount, but feels like nothing compared to the countless moments that could have been recorded. My memories feel like the winter snow that buries the campus, whose presence seems unshakable and unchanging, until it disappears suddenly. I wonder if constant sleep deprivation that cuts and splices the day made the memories fade faster, like the wind that smooths the lawns.

Fittingly, of the many moments I cannot remember for one reason or another, most are the late night conversations that defined my closest friendships. I only distinctly remember a few, the first being the talk I had with my hallmates at 2 a.m. during the first week of school. My main light was out and the room was filled with a soft yellow glow from a brand new lamp. Still nervous being new to the school and not making a bad first impression on our house councilors, we spoke in hushed whispers. We talked about where we were from, our interests, our shared identity as Korean-American, and our fears entering Andover. Most of the conversation consisted of sharing transient beliefs that no longer cross my mind as thoughts or memories. I have no pictures of that night nor any of the other late night conversations, but I do remember the sense of kinship and connection I felt.

There were also the countless dinners downtown whose images have blended into a homogenous impression, whose details feel like corners rounded by erosion. Since the start of my time at Andover I have gone out to dinner downtown once a week with friends. Still, I have no pictures or even recollections of most of them; it is simply a blur. The same goes for most of the time I spend here: mornings, nights, classes, meals, sports and clubs. 99% of this time will go undocumented and the details will likely be largely forgotten.

If you will lose most of your memories, what is important to retain from the Andover experience? The most common answer is the people or the skills you learn. It is normal to hear people praise Andover and institutions like it for the networking opportunity it provides and the benefits you can leverage from them later on. Or, they say it is the skills of self management and critical thinking the institution instills. But I would disagree. I think it's those moments you won't remember that shape your relationships and identity on a deeper level—not developing skills, but values. So while I would love to have 1000 more pictures, I am plenty happy with forgotten memories.

Colin Lee is a Lower from Potomac, Md. Contact the author at clee28@andover.edu.

How Time Became Mine

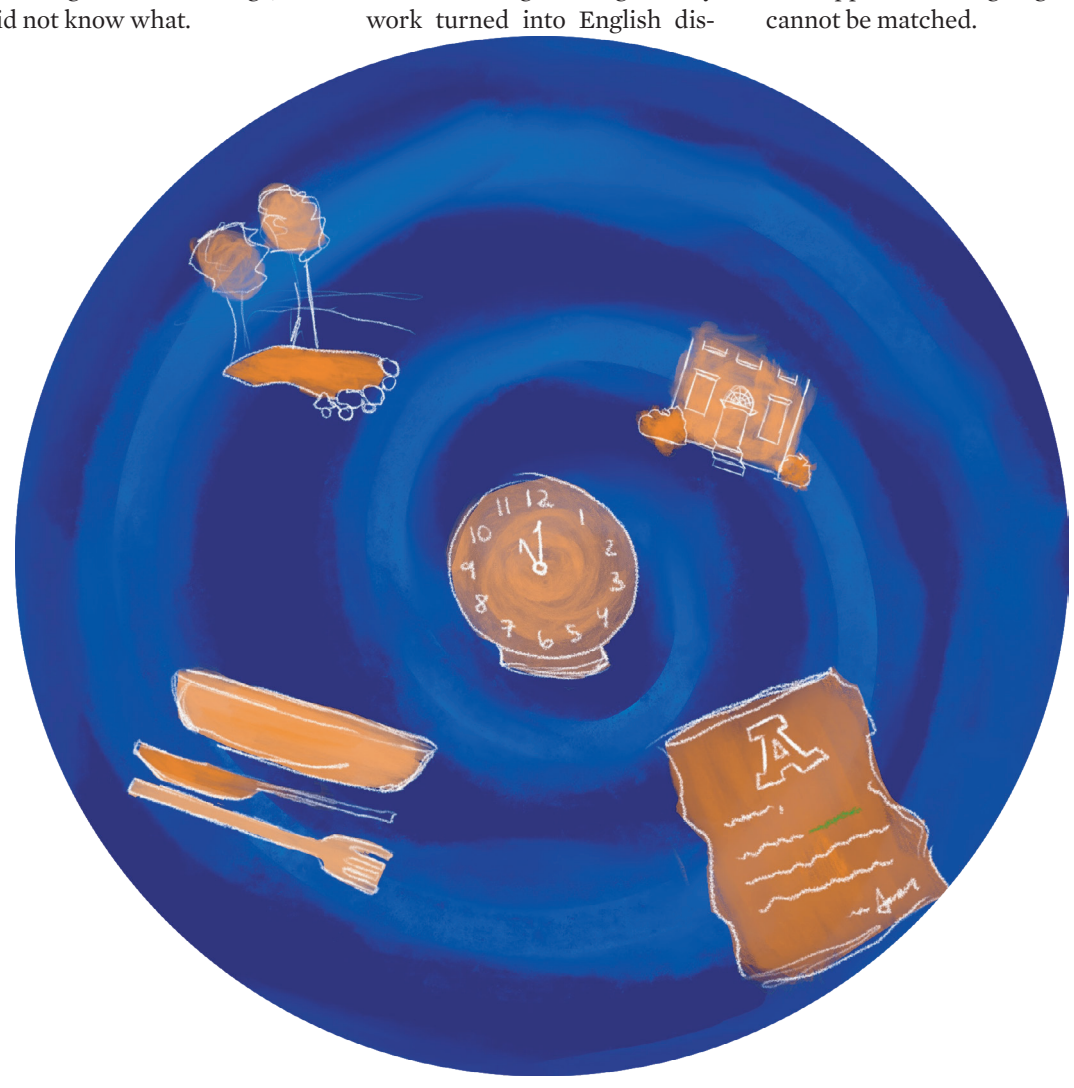
SAMIHA TASNIM



A. BAETEN-RUFFO / THE

Sitting. Pacing. Bouncing my leg up and down. Drops of sweat skipped down my forehead as I chewed on my nails. My finger could not help but keep refreshing my inbox even though I knew that would not make it come faster. And at last, in the middle of advisory last March, the email came. I opened the application portal, blue confetti splattered across my screen, and I erupted with an "I got in!" surrounded by some of my greatest friends. A blessing, a wish came true, yet it was oh so bittersweet. I had already built a life for myself at home, and it was a huge sacrifice to leave. It was scary, it felt like a risk, and it did not feel quite right at the moment. But this moment of trading familiarity and comfort for uncertainty was the beginning of learning how to live differently.

Throughout my years in elementary and middle school, the days were long but not to the point where they pushed me to do more. In some of my classes, I would grind through the work, be given more busy work, and proceed to grind through that as well. I would go home, sleep for hours, or play games for hours, get up, and study some more. I lived in a way that was comfortable, but was not in any way, shape, or form challenging me. The problem was the way I indulged in this comfort. I was stuck in a cycle of this comfort that made me lose my spark and ambitions. Especially in 8th grade, when filling out applications, I had a moment of wondering why I was doing this. I realized most of my ambition had died out, and I had abandoned it long ago. I was good at many things, but only did them when I had the motivation to. I realized something needed to change, but I did not know what.



GEMMA PARK / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

When I first came to Andover, I was immediately exposed to so many talented, driven, ambitious minds that it cultivated that spark that my younger self once had. The shiny, dazzling spark to explore everything, to learn everything, to pick up as much as I possibly could. Looking back now, it is crazy how I almost slept through a life that has so much to offer. My commute to school among the bustling streets of New York City, squished on the bus like a miserable sardine, shoving and pushing past people in the overcrowded streets at eight in the morning, turned into a peaceful walk down Pine Knoll, peering over at Rabbit Pond, and often chatting alongside a friend or two. Grinding through busy work turned into English discussions where I was really engaged and started learning so much from my peers and caring teacher. I learned how to learn intentionally even when I did not feel like it, and became actually interested in the hunger to know more. Sitting at the empty dining table at home meant for six and eating dinner while scrolling on my phone was shadowed by the constant chatter and laughter of Paresky Commons while sitting at a huge, long table with so many friends. Whenever a term ended, finally seeing my family felt so rewarding. My relationships with my family grew more fond and stable with physical distance, and the happiness I feel going home cannot be matched.

During my time at Andover thus far, time and the spontaneous course of life move differently. Time hasn't exactly slowed down or started to pick up and move faster. But instead, my time on Earth feels more fulfilling. I feel like for the first time in my life, I can remember the little moments of a day, a week, a month, and a few months. For the first time, I have been living intentionally, living to engage with the world around me, living and being conscious of my presence, living not to have total control of my life and success, but instead to embrace and cherish the unpredictability of human life, and living to allow myself to create my own meaning through life. But to do so, I had to learn how to navigate imposter syndrome, burnout, and grinding through the motions of the day to get to the next bus ride back home. The hustling, transparent environment of Andover forced me to approach life in a different way and navigate how to overcome such miserable challenges to actually feel happy.

I slow down whenever I walk to my next class and see the pretty green trees, or the gross grey sludge, and wave to a couple of friends. I take in the great point my classmate made in class, and my mouth still hurts from laughing at the joke my friend made during lunch. I move forward not just for what the future has to hold but because of my own personal educational goals and journey for fulfillment. It is amazing how a place that was once so unfamiliar, so unpredictable, so nerve-wracking, and so hard to get around has become a place plastered with familiar, friendly places, a place that makes me feel comfortable while pushing me, and a place where I am starting to discover what my purpose really is.

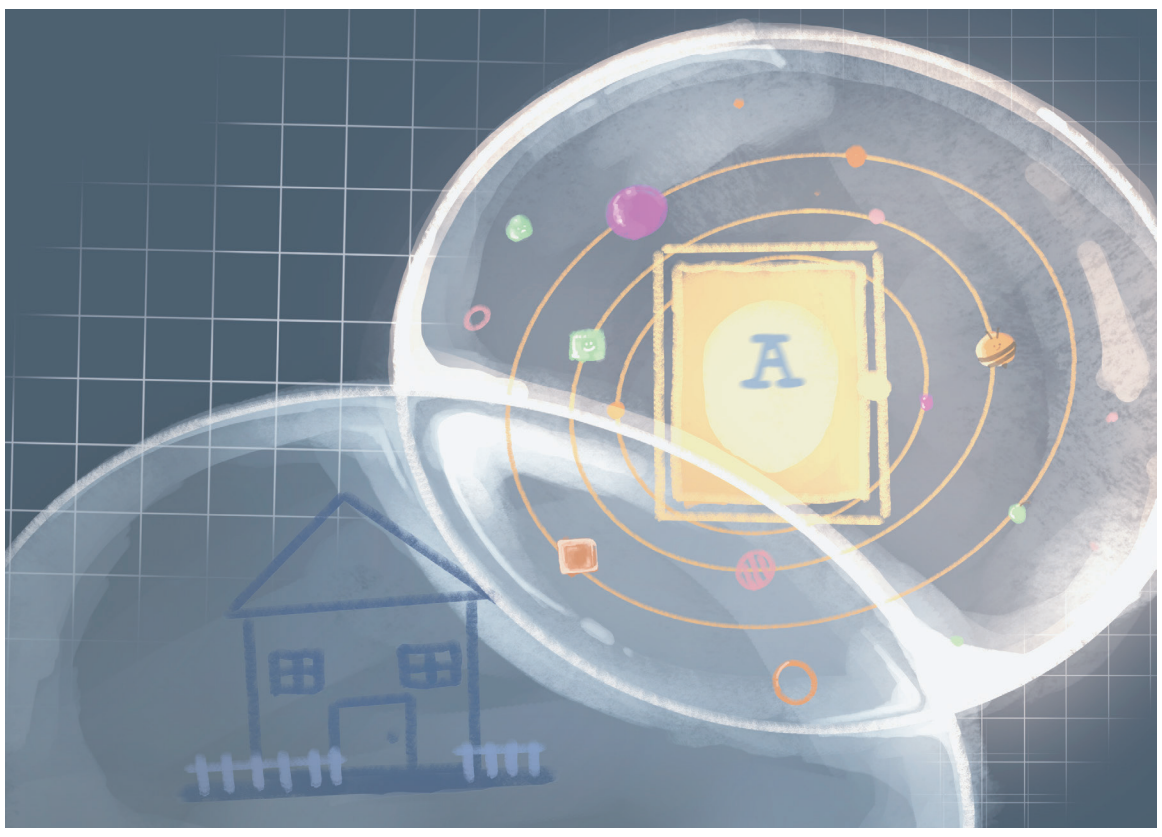
Samiha Tasnim is a Junior from Queens, New York. Contact the author at stasnim29@andover.edu.

"Where Do You Come From?"

ANDREW PARK



E. CHAI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*



CAMILA CHEN / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

"Hi, my name is Andrew, and I come from Dallas, Texas."

Since coming to Andover, this has been one of my mantras when introducing myself. However, if you know me personally, this isn't actually true. While it's true I come from the greater Dallas metroplex, my home is around 30 miles away from Dallas proper. That home, for 15 years of my life, has been in a suburb, Frisco. Of course, simplifying where you live for others isn't uncommon, especially if that home is in a suburb, because most strangers probably don't know smaller cities. Nevertheless, labeling myself with somewhere that isn't my home led me to attempt to fully comprehend my life in Frisco in comparison to my life now at Andover.

Frisco is incredibly diverse for a landlocked city below the Mason-Dixon line. Around 250,000 people live in Frisco, with racial demographics being 45% White, 34% Asian, 10% Black/African American, 10% Hispanic (any race), and 9% mixed race population. Frisco's racial ratio is actually somewhat comparable to Andover's demographics, but in my reality, the experience feels very different. In fact, while both places have their own hardships and things I enjoy, the encouraged interaction of Andover has taught me to understand what makes diversity so valuable, which just isn't something I have experienced in Frisco.

When you look at Frisco from a map or just drive around, it's almost eerie how straight the street lines and neighborhoods are set up. And set up is the correct phrase. Frisco and similar suburbs were created as bedroom communities for Dallas, quiet enough for families, but also close enough to the city center for work. This led to much of the city being allocated for single family homes, which are great for families, as noise complaints, lack of property control, and unwanted strangers aren't a problem. Thus, everything is spread out in Frisco, and cars are necessary to get anywhere. To an extent, a car gives independence, as you can choose where to go in the comfort of what is solely yours. However, this effectively makes one's home in Frisco a bubble, where one doesn't have to interact with others if they don't need to. For example, when school ended, I wouldn't need to see friends until school started again. This lifestyle brought me a lack of connection. I fell into a hole of not wanting to do things if they weren't necessary, including socializing outside of school. I would occasionally consider going to social spaces, but I had to ask my parents to drive me somewhere, and that felt like a burden for my parents I didn't want to put on them.

Within this comfortable structure, I felt an increasing sense of disconnect from my city. The diversity felt more like a backdrop, where I could see Indian and Mexican restaurants, but I stayed in my corner, because that was what's comfortable. There's no friction with diversity. When people live in these isolated spaces where they don't need to interact with different bubbles, they tend to keep to their own bubble, creating a greater divide that could interfere with one's understanding of the "other."

Before I came to Andover, I never expected the structure of how a boarding school changes the interactions with others. Obviously, the boarders live in dorms, and this leads to a lot of interaction with the other students. Greetings in the morning, opening doors for others, and collectively complaining about the dorm chores make us more comfortable with each other. In these spaces, even if I didn't know or want to interact with others, I still saw them nearly every week and made my presence feel "normal." It becomes easier to understand one another as unique yet similar to you when those people live with you. This may seem incredibly simple, but it influenced me to view the community as a whole as a bit more connected, with rituals like putting phones in the charger on school nights.

Beyond the dorm, the structure of our academic and extracurricular life at Andover acts as a catalyst for connection. As all academics, clubs, and sports are offered within the school, the person you see in a history class may be in an orchestra ensemble, sports team, or club with you. This leads to a closer understanding of each person, as their effort, ideas, and personality is shown across the spectrum. Additionally, this structure allows for more "shared struggles," which forces us to bridge cultural and ideological differences to help each other. For instance, while preparing for an English 200 in-class, composing for a music class, or studying for the math final, there is a potential for growth with the help of friends, and through that, we understand them more, and get closer.

As I finish my Lower year, I know this is not my Commencement; nonetheless, it feels like a commencement of its own, a graduation from my old understanding of the world. In the Fall, the loss of the planned comfort of my home and suburb made me homesick for the first time, and I really missed cooking. However, as I started to interact with the unique characteristics of each person here, I found some of my uniqueness. Andover started to feel more interesting, more complete than 15 years living in Frisco. The missing ingredient was living with, not just near, diverse people.

Andrew Park is a Lower from Frisco, Tex. Contact the author at apark28@andover.edu.

The Accidental Navigator

RAYMOND CHIANG



COURTESY OF RAYMOND CHIANG



FELISHA LI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Transferring to a new school and making friends is not exactly smooth sailing. Imagine attending seven schools in three countries and arriving in the United States as a young student with no knowledge of English? Call me the "Accidental Navigator," if you will, the captain of my own ship sailing the high seas with hopes, dreams, and a determination, charting my own future and mastering these seven schools. Now, after this most recent move to a new region of our country, I have finally found my safe harbor here, at Phillips Andover.

However, I remembered a quote that a teacher who loved Ralph Waldo Emerson mentioned in the beginning of the school year, "The only way to have a friend is to be one."

Before Andover, I used to live a sun-soaked dream in the hazy South Florida sunshine. I spent my days out on the boat lobster fishing, golfing year-round, and working like crazy at my previous school. My routines were in place: school, studies, crew, golf, piano, and friends, and I was on autopilot with a balance that was comfortable, familiar, and predictable. However, life soon became anything but predictable.

Another change for the family business forced me to move, and within weeks, toward the end of my sophomore year, we were on a plane heading to New England. I left in the jetstream what I had known and entered this new world of Andover. Little did I know at the time that this would be the best school year of my life.

Some people have asked me how I made friends here at Andover so quickly. Well, to answer your question, it wasn't really a piece of cake as many of you think. Upon arrival, it was quite difficult for me to make new friends, especially because I was a new Upper, and most of the students here had already established peers and social circles. I was hesitant to even ask to join groups, especially in Commons. I felt like a fish out of water and didn't want to intrude on what seemed like an impenetrable fortress. After a few days, I summoned the courage to ask to join various groups, and I was pleasantly surprised by the response. My classmates were friendly, curious, and welcoming, and I was able to finally relax a bit and quiet the butterflies lurking around in my stomach. When I met Muaz, we clicked immediately, becoming fast friends. By the end of September, we were grinding Spanish homework, challenging each other with our new language skills, and ending the study sessions with late-night philosophical discussions about life, our dreams, and our futures.

Dorm life was a whole new challenge. Moving into Bishop with forty strangers and living away from my family for the first time felt like my first solo fight. However, I remembered a quote that a teacher who loved Ralph Waldo Emerson mentioned in the beginning of the school year, "The only way to have a friend is to be one." Her words echoed in my mind, and as I reached out to others and they returned the friendship, I felt the homesickness disappearing into the sunset and new horizons emerging. At last, the landing was sound, and I have found acceptance and a shared bond with my peers.

As I reached out to others and they returned the friendship, I felt the homesickness disappearing into the sunset and new horizons emerging. At last, the landing was sound, and I have found acceptance and a shared bond with my peers.

Answering that acceptance call one summer morning was one of the most exciting and the most terrifying experiences of my life. Those challenges and fear flushed my mind, but thinking back, if I were to say one thing to myself and to this year's Andover newcomers, it would be this: prepare well for take-off, expect a bit of turbulence along the way, steady yourself, and readjust to reach your cruising altitude. Do this, and you will land firmly with confidence and pride among an incredible community of Andover students and faculty.

Raymond Chiang is an Upper from Brookline, Mass. Contact the author at rchiang27@andover.edu.

3 Steps Forward, 2 Steps Back

JUNWOO (JACOB) SHIN



J. NUÑEZ / THE PHILLIPIAN

Andover is a series of ladders. Every choice we make constitutes another rung, another opportunity to climb higher in some aspect of our lives. Whether that be our academics, our athletic capabilities, or in our social lives, every Andover student shares the common goal of reaching the top of their own ladder. Some of us sprint upward, driven by our ambition or pressure, while others climb with more caution. But regardless of our pace, each and every one of us improves in some form, every time we take another step towards the top of our ladders. One step, one achievement at a time, we will eventually find happiness and success on the other side.

This is the version of Andover that we tell each other. It is the story we tell our friends in conversations about grades, leadership positions, and awards. As Andover students, we tend to measure our progress by visible achievements, and so we withhold the parts of ourselves we consider shameful or subpar. In doing so, we convince ourselves that every mistake, every failed initiative, and every lousy score is an exception to our story rather than a crucial component to it, and we choose to ignore it. For this reason, Andover students fail to recognize that the moments where we feel set back actually forge our growth.

At a place where everyone seemed to be climbing constantly and finding their own paths to success, it was easy for me to measure my own progress against the speed and certainty of others. There was always someone more composed, more accomplished, and far more certain of their career choices than I was. The ambition I once clung to for motivation was a poison to me, clouding my perception and making me believe that someone else's progress reflected a lack of my own. My goals no longer propelled me forward, and my climb became less about my own growth and more about catching up.

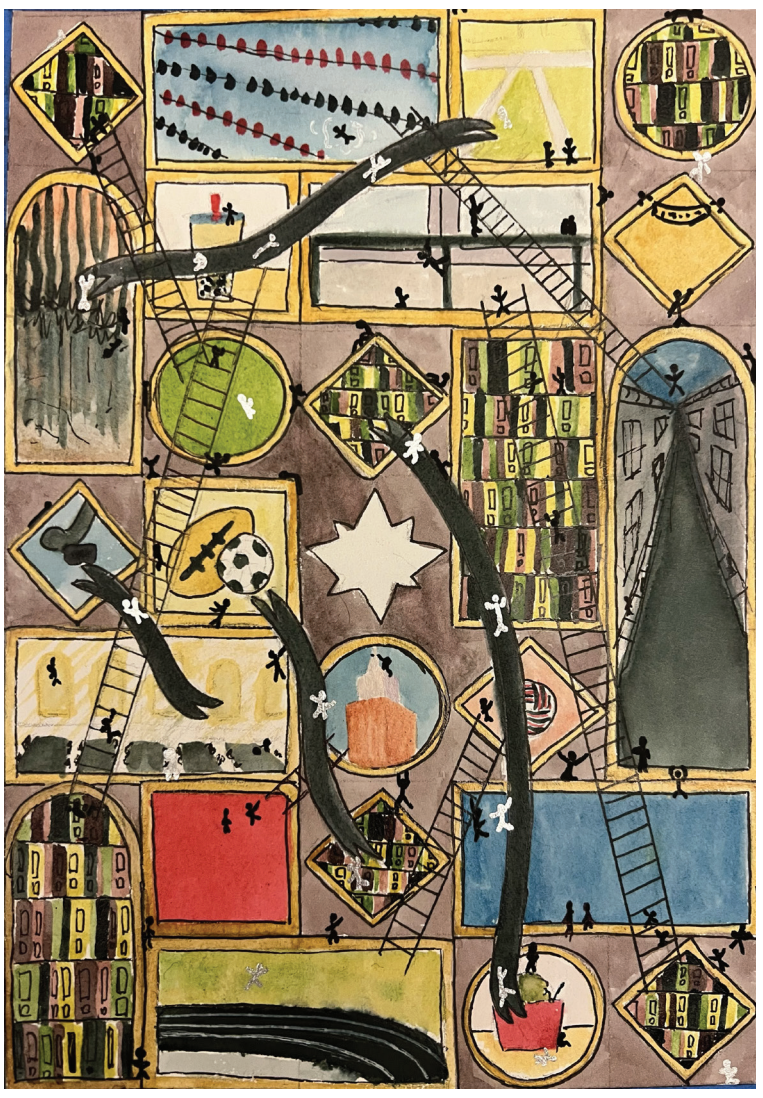
We don't know whether the two steps we yield will result in three giant strides forward, or if they will be lost forever. But what is important is that we keep moving forward, no matter how many steps we have to trace back, or how many times we trip over ourselves.

One of the Korean artists that I listen to the most has an album titled 3 STEPS FORWARD, 2 STEPS BACK. While the context of his lyrics is mostly irrelevant to my own life experiences, the overarching message of his music had a huge impact on how I now choose to deal with pressure. When someone takes three steps forward, but takes two steps back, they ultimately make a net progress of one step. However, most people tend to focus on the two steps they were forced to move backwards rather than the fact that they had moved forward. People are so caught up by the idea that they have lost progress that they also lose sight of the growth that they did achieve.

During my time at Andover, I have learned that sometimes taking two steps back is a prerequisite for moving forward three steps. Progress is not always visible when it happens. Oftentimes, it is disguised as failure, as a detriment to our prosperity. Looking back on my freshman year, the experiences that stood out the most were not flawless successes; they were moments of uncertainty, ones where my efforts would not necessarily lead to triumph. The cringy speech I had written in the Fall for my class representative campaign that could have ended in humiliation, the Abbot Grant I had spent 3 weeks applying for, and all the debate rounds I had lost; these moments of doubt had shaped my growth more than any of my achievements.

Andover taught me that without risk, there truly is no reward, and the same goes for sacrifice. In conversations centered around grades, our test scores are often at the core of our discussions. But the true value of our final assessments is not the percentage, but the hours we spent studying late at night. In the same way, any meaningful advancement made is always the result of a tradeoff one chooses to make. Whether that be the decision to review vocabulary in exchange for scrolling, or to give up an opportunity for someone who needs it more, in the moment, these sacrifices can feel like a gamble. We don't know whether the two steps we yield will result in three giant strides forward, or if they will be lost forever. But what is important is that we keep moving forward, no matter how many steps we have to trace back, or how many times we trip over ourselves.

JIA-YI ZHI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*



Making a sacrifice, or taking two steps back, will never guarantee success. But staying stagnant will surely result in nothing. No one is able to keep moving forward forever. At some point, everyone has to go back a few squares and pick up something they have lost, or choose a new direction to move in. When we do move backwards, it can feel like regression, confusion, and frustration. It feels like taking two steps back after finally managing to take three steps forward. But truly meaningful progress is rarely a linear sequence, and the two steps we are forced back do not only set us back. Rather, they are valuable lessons in perseverance that allow us to take our next three steps forward with more confidence. And in doing so, we ultimately find ourselves further along than where we had started.

Junwoo Shin is a Junior from Seongnam-Si, South Korea. Contact the author at jshin29@andover.edu.

The Immovable Object

SIMRAN SHAH



COURTESY OF SIMRAN SHAH

I was who any Andover student probably was before they came to Andover: ambitious, driven and meticulous. I had always heard the paradox of who would win between an immovable object and an unstop- pable force. I always liked to think of myself as an unstoppable force: nothing was going to stop me from achieving my goals. However, once I got to Andover as a new Lower, and pressure rose, I was not able to keep up. My grades didn't change, nor did my habits, but I could feel something else creeping in.

I had come to Andover to challenge and apply myself, experience new things and meet people. However, the stress of the social environment had reduced me to a shell of who I'd been in September. It didn't matter how many days went by, how many conversations I had and how many events I attended. Nothing made me happy and I felt more stoppable than ever. Come the beginning of Spring Term, I reached a point where I had to confront it. I was thrown off balance in a new living situation, and a different Andover experience than I had had the last two terms. In this time, I learned that sometimes, your priorities are forced to change, and most of the time, that hurts like hell. I learned to let go of being the u n -



FELISHA LI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

stoppable force and focus on becoming the immovable object.

When I first realized I was moving out of the dorm I loved so much, I cried. It felt like being punished for doing things right. I had asked for help, I had sought out support. I felt like my life was over. My mother, freshly flown in from Florida, reassured me that I could get through this. She simply said I needed to make some changes. So, I did. I started prioritizing myself and starting with the basics step by step. Making sure to sleep, exercise, and get the support I needed regularly to remind me to slow down. I set boundaries when I needed to and tried not feeling guilty for resting. I needed to let go of the fear of missing out or falling behind. Slowly but surely, I didn't feel the extremes anymore and found balance. I wasn't quite unstoppable anymore, but I found ways to make the stops feels less sudden.

I was forced to come to terms with this idea of failure—I was not where I would have expected or wanted to be when I first stepped on campus. However, I had to persist through inconvenience and struggle.

Although it seemed hopeless at first, I soon realized what I had to do. It wasn't about distracting myself from my issues or checking things off of a checklist. It was doing things I love with the people I love, and with the community I had been relying on for support since I first arrived in the fall. I was forced to come to terms with this idea of failure—I was not where I would have expected or wanted to be when I first stepped on campus. However, I had to persist through inconvenience and struggle. I didn't have to drive until I broke down, I had to remain.

Slow and steady won me this race. As I started to walk on my own two feet again, it felt like real living for the first time in a while and I loved it. I attended more events, showed more love to others, talked with different people, and brought back the excitement I had felt coming to orientation this Fall. I surrounded myself with so much love, I was revitalized. Connecting back to my inner self brought me happiness. The girl who has always been excited by learning, enthralled by the idea of working at a real newspaper, and obsessed with hearing about and sharing her own passions, was back.

I can admit my experience at Andover has not been linear. I've experienced the highest of highs, as well as the lowest of lows. That's what I'm so excited about as I transition to Upper year, not as an unstoppable force, but an immovable object. Being the immovable object may not supply the bursts of energy I'm used to feeling, but it has made me better able to ride the waves with poise.

Simran Shah is a Lower from Birmingham, Mich. Contact the author at sshah28@andover.edu.

Andover and My Own Prospects

SHILOH SHARMA



A. SHU / THE PHILLIPIAN



JIA-YI ZHI / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

I remember the day I got my acceptance so well. April 15, 2026. A very mild day. No rain, just sun and clouds. I had left school early and planned to return for robotics that day. I was getting my braces in when my mother suddenly barged into the room, yelling at the assistants that she had news for me. Then she told me I was going to Andover. I remember feeling a rush of adrenaline, as well as the orthodontists loosening their grip around me, allowing me to grab my phone and message a select few of my friends. Then came the fear that it could be a cruel joke, and then it finally had set into reality. The school of my dreams. So here I am, in all my glory.

The first day I came here, I expected everything, yet nothing at the same time. I wanted the whole world, I wanted to take every class, to do every club. At the same time, I wanted to just lie in my bed all day and rot. I remember crying solely from the overwhelmingness and anxiety of the whole situation. I remember feeling lost and scared out of my mind. The realization of, "Oh my god. I am actually here. At Andover," set into my mind. When that thought snapped out of my mind, I looked up, and the world was still going on ahead of me. How terrifying. Even then, it took days for me to realize the true gravity of the situation. I had always thought myself to be a quick learner, but boarding school came to me anything but quick. Even though I had been to camps before, it took me forever to realize I would live here for 4 years. The realization came to me the first time I went to advisory and filled out those planning sheets. Even more terrifying.

Classes were really weird for me. I had done high school before, being a reclass and all. However, I had known most of those people for the majority of my life, considering I had been at my old school for nine years. Seeing the same people over and over again was such a simple thing for a place like that. Here, though, you could see all different people in your classes. I mean, you could genuinely share complete days with people at my old school. This, too, scared me. The sheer number of people was overwhelming, something I wasn't truly ready to handle. I had to adapt quickly, though, and I just tried to talk to a lot of people, which seemed to work somewhat well.

Coming to that first day of classes made me remember why my parents had wanted me to come to Andover, so I could have more opportunities and have a better future. It felt as if everything was tightly packed with potential for a life beyond college, just as walking into rooms with these people who had done so much. I almost felt small in a room full of important people. They were right, honestly, though. I did have my doubts that I would be insignificant in a place like this and not be able to achieve much of anything. I have gotten so much more done here; I have had the freedom to achieve a lot more than I would've at home, and I am genuinely happy with that.

But of course, such a peace does not last long. I remember getting my first tests back and seeing my grades. I was in such an unusual stasis between absolute despair and joy. That's what it all felt like, this sort of adrenaline rush of all the feelings one could feel at once. It was crushing, but it brought me some unusual form of hope. Some sort of hope that this overpowering entity of a school would live up to the pedestal my parents had placed it on. Perhaps the reason I came here and saw it to be such a great place is due to my parents making me perceive it as such. Without their persuasion, I never would've ended up here. I wouldn't have applied at all.

When Winter term had finally arrived, Flu season had as well. My journey with sickness started when I got COVID-19. I was sick out of my mind, and I fell behind in a good few of my classes, but the hardest to catch up to was math. As the term went on, I got hit with the newest variation of the flu. Though I tried my best to keep up with my classes, the term was absolutely shredding me into bits. Additionally, I felt I had other pressures weighing down on me mentally. That was the worst month I think I had ever had, even compared to a lot of tough times in my life. Considering everything happening, the one place I could not catch up, my math class, left me in the dust. I, unfortunately, had to drop down to a lower level.

Of course, I was disappointed. I remember sitting at that booth in Susie's with my friends, still facing the effects of my ailment. We were all smiling and laughing, but when I checked my email, my smile faded in an instant. How could I say anything to my parents? What was there to say, logically? What could I do? I thought I should try to stay in the class and get my grade up, so I met with my advisor. Upon speaking with her, it became even more frightfully obvious that the best option was to drop down to a lower level. I had to swallow my pride, I had to let go of how I felt, and make myself think logically about the next steps.

To begin the petition process to lower my level, I had to fill out a long form asking me why I couldn't catch up. Filling out the form made me feel even worse about the situation. Honestly, the whole thing seemed designed to make me feel poorly about myself because of how late I was dropping a class, even after the add/drop window. I wanted to get it over with when I sat in the office and talked about why I was dropping the class. After what felt like 100 meetings, the class was gone from my schedule. I saw some light in the situation, though. I rejoiced about not having to go to 1st period anymore or having a math final. I'm pretty sure I was completely trying to cope, though.

Of course, even after that whole debacle, I can't really be done with my terribly timed situations, can I? I started feeling these unusual aches and pains in my stomach. After a long process to find answers, I got a colonoscopy and an endoscopy to rule out many possibilities. They found something unusual, leading me into a new condition. Now, I have to work to determine which foods I am newly intolerant to. One thing about these diets is how difficult they are to keep up in Commons. I find myself skipping meals due to not really wanting some of the gluten-free options. Additionally, I am not allowed to eat sharp or fried foods, though I find myself guilty of breaking this diet and facing the consequences of my own actions on occasion.

Now, I know I am a picky eater, but I had once found myself hiking the trek from Paul Revere to downtown to go to Caffe Nero with a good friend of mine to get gluten-free (GF) food. To my despair, it was all quite glutinous. I did not give up, and my friend informed me of the Autograph Tavern having GF food. With no other choices, I decided to go there with him and another friend we had encountered along the way to this place. This is where Andover brought me another new experience.

I never understood the joy of people with celiac disease upon seeing gluten-free things on a menu. However, on that fateful Sunday, an unusual feeling filled me upon seeing this gluten-free menu. It was joy and understanding all at once; it was such an atypical thing to me. I was proud and felt understood in such a way that I was truly satisfied. I didn't mind the amount of money that I may have to pay (though I didn't end up paying), and it was an amazing dinner.

Wrapping up my freshman year at Andover, I feel almost bittersweet. I find myself truly happy in a place like this, and I am genuinely glad that I had the opportunity given to me. I am excited to come back here, but I am also curious about the path that seems to lie ahead of me. If there's anything I am certain of for the rest of my journey, though, it's that I am happy to not have to be alone. I do not give my friends enough credit, but I am happy they have it in them to put up with me and actually enjoy it. Not being alone means so much to me, and I wish I could express

Shiloh Sharma is a Junior from Holmdel, N.J. Contact the author at ssharma29@andover.edu.


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