

The Diking News

Call Me By My Name: A Non-Binary Student's Fight For Their Identity

JONAS BARR

Our names are usually the first piece of information that someone asks about. Queer people have begun to challenge these societal norms by taking control of their own identities through their names. While most of us haven't considered our names or their source.

Andy Everett Dente-Ferguson, a student who identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns, is among the multitude of young people who are forging their identities for themselves. Their fight to be afforded the decency of being addressed by their proper name on campus has taken a long and arduous journey. If the notion of "coming out" wasn't already challenging for queer people, there has now been a bureaucratic element introduced that may complicate this experience further.

"I've met a lot of people who have had to explain their identity to others around them constantly. It's almost like nobody's identity is for themselves," Dente-Ferguson said. "If you want to diverge from [the gender binary], you have to announce that. I wish

things didn't seem so 'man' or 'woman.'"

Gender affects lives in overt or subliminal ways by being reinforced in many aspects of society—particularly regarding administrative requirements—which LGBTQ people are keenly aware of. In June 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul issued an order for all 64 SUNY designated colleges to implement and "update their policies regarding the use of a chosen name and pronouns to ensure that transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary students' identities are fully reflected and represented in campus systems."

"SUNY WCC has met the requirements," said Mark Stollar, Director of Strategic Marketing and Communications. However, their implementation has not gone smoothly.

By the Fall 2022 semester, Dente-Ferguson sought help from Dana Hirsch (she/they), Coordinator of LGBTQIA+ and International Student Programs, to begin the process of having their chosen name reflected in the college's system.

However, their student email address had their deadname (the former name that a transgender or non-binary person used before transitioning or coming out). This was triggering and emotionally distressing for Dente-Ferguson. The consequence of this led professors to invariably address

them using the incorrect name, "which fully outs me and is humiliating," they said.

In the subsequent year, Dente-Ferguson was told by various departments that their email could only reflect their legal name or that any changes to the email address might delete the

student's educational history and data associated with their Global ID. According to the college's own Chosen Name & Pronouns Policy, which Hirsch helped write, the student's email display name would be able to be changed.

Hirsch continued to offer Dente-Ferguson her help and guidance until it was resolved in October 2023. By that point, they had legally changed their name and, after multiple visits to the IT department, their email address was finally changed. Still, a legal name change is not a requisite for any student or employee to have their chosen name and pronouns updated.

"I wanted to make it better for all the other students when I leave. I didn't want them to do this to other people," Dente-Ferguson said.

It remains to be seen whether this ordeal will lead to a smoother implementation for others in the future. While it was a stressful experience for Dente-Ferguson to go through, they did have the courage and support from their family to continue advocating for themselves.



NYC Department of Education celebrated LGBTQ students, families, and teachers at the annual Pride Parade in June 2023. Photo by Jonas Barr

A Change of Name or Game? WCC's Inclusivity Challenge

SORELLE MARSH

WCC has changed the name of the Disability Services Office to the Accessibility Services office. Dr. Michele Campagna, Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Success, expressed their enthusiasm to share that the college's Disability Services Office has undergone a rebrand, now known as Accessibility Services.

According to an email sent by the Accessibility Services Office, "The Accessibility Services staff are excited about the name change." This linguistic evolution aims to shed the perceived negative connotations of 'disability' in efforts to embrace a more inclusive and positive outlook.

At least one student has criticized this rebranding while voicing concerns that this change could be a cosmetic facelift rather than a genuine improvement in the quality of services. Student Ren Morataya Garcia has been a part of the disability community for three years.

"Personally speaking, I thought it was a bit unnecessary, just because there was nothing wrong with calling it a 'disability office,'" Garcia said.

"There's this stigma that saying 'disability' is a bad thing, but really it's not. I don't see the point in calling it 'Accessibility office' because at the end of the day, I'm going to this office

learned there is nothing wrong with it and I'm just fighting for my disability rights because I don't get accommodations and the world is inaccessible; the world isn't built for me to begin with. With this name change, I don't feel included, I just feel like they're trying to say 'The word "disability" is wrong,' and it really isn't. Disabled is okay."

Garcia shared that he wished the college would make the experience for disabled students better and more

I'm really not a fan of the name change."

This scenario at WCC opens a window into the complexities of implementing inclusivity, demonstrating that true progress requires more than just a change in labels; it demands a commitment to real, actionable change.

As the college advances its initiatives for increased inclusivity and support, a focus on active listening to the



Students reflect on the impact of WCC renaming of Disability Services to Accessibility Services, questioning the substance behind the change. Graphic by Sorelle Marsh

According to Garcia disability is a broad term and it's fine.

to find accommodations for my disability," Garcia said. "I've

accessible to feel included.

"This [rebranding] has not influenced my perception," Garcia said. "I go in there to get services for my disability because I have a disability. I'm not looking for accessibility.

student body is emphasized. This approach is aimed at fostering engagement and understanding, which are essential in implementing changes that are effective and impactful for the diverse student population.

"Instead of changing the name, at least change some of the things that could help students with disabilities. Make that better, not the name."

Ren Morataya Garcia

Queering the Curriculum: LGBTQ Literature Course Runs for the First Time

JONAS BARR

After years of setbacks, ENG245 LGBTQ Literature became an official course available at WCC in Fall 2023. Professor Brian Centrone and Professor Christine Timm were the

co-creators of the course. They explained the course's history from its conception, through its trials and tribulations, and finally its landing upon the Athenian shores of the SUNY curriculum.

to write a successful textbook, there would need to be a course first. "People were not teaching queer literature. It would be difficult to find in textbooks,"

over the subsequent three years the course struggled to obtain enough registrations.

In creating the syllabus for the course, Centrone and Timm decided to use texts in a chronological order beginning from the ancient/classical period to the modern day to highlight the historical development of the queer literary world.

"The idea was to show that queer voices have always, always existed. The question became: how do we highlight the major works within those periods that show this," said Centrone.

Students began the semester reading poetry from figures like Sappho, to reading banned texts by queer authors. Some sections focused on homosexual-themed texts with regards to race and religion, while others focused on the family and illustrated children's stories.

Rebekah Elba, a student, enjoyed the variety of genres in the class.

"I had a great experience in the class," said Elba. There weren't that many of us and we quickly bonded; so I always felt comfortable speaking in class.

The professor and my other classmates were also always very respectful of each other's opinions and thoughts."

ENG 245 was a course designed to highlight a diverse array of literary contributions from the LGBTQ community. One doesn't necessarily have to identify with them in order to take this course.

"I consider myself more of an ally than a member of the LGBTQ community and this class helped me learn so many things that I'm not sure I would have otherwise," Elba said.



From "Giovanni's Room" by James Baldwin to "Orlando" by Virginia Woolf, there will always be options of LGBTQ literature to read. One only has to know what to look for.

Photo by Jonas Barr



John Weir, author and professor at Queen's College/CUNY, was invited by Prof. Timm and Prof. Centrone to read excerpts from his most recent short story collection titled, "Your Nostalgia is Killing Me." LGBTQ Literature students read Weir's short story "Homo in Heteroland" for their coursework earlier in the semester.

Photo by Jonas Barr

Clubs and Orgs Welcome New Assistant Director Candace White

JADA MICELI



White takes time in her new role to connect with students at WCC.

Photo by Jada Miceli

WCC welcomed a new Assistant Director of Student Involvement for Clubs and Organizations, Candace White on December 4th, 2023. Before White's role at WCC, she worked at Purchase College and Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh.

White's mission and goal was to meet the officers of every active club while also getting

familiar with the students as well. Within White's role here at WCC, she will be in charge of supporting all recognized student clubs regarding event planning, group management, and student leader skill development. This could involve organizing trip requests, gathering documentation, setting up one-on-one or training sessions, etc. White will also be co-advising members

of the Student Government Association and Westchester Events Board in addition to providing basic club support.

White shared her passion and drive to help young students in their success.

"The studying is so important [but] you need to have a balance to it," White said. "You need to have fun."

Many students easily forget

about the fun experiences and friendships they can make along the way as they trudge through coursework and textbooks.

To help, there are a vast number of clubs and organizations that are offered here at the college. That is what the Department of Student Involvement (DSI) is here for. DSI is focused on ensuring every student has the right to community, forming relationships, and finding their passion through the clubs and organizations offered, as well as leadership programs, on campus.

"When students feel connected to something they feel a part of it," White said.

The DSI team has made this possible by offering over 50 active clubs and organizations to students. These opportunities create inclusive and intentional learning environments while supporting students in acquiring leadership and transferable skills that can be utilized throughout their academic and professional careers. White reiterated the importance of getting involved here at WCC and finding your community.

"It's really important students find their place in a college setting," said White.

Many students can feel lost along the way as they try to navigate the roads of college, this is where mentors are crucial.

"I had a lot of great mentors that helped me," White said. "I was a First Gen Student. I knew absolutely nothing about the college process but getting involved helped me learn so much."

Just like White, students can learn new skills, network, and make new relationships when they get involved on campus.

It may feel discouraging, and intimidating to initiate getting involved here at WCC but White strongly encourages student involvement. Academics are a large part of why students are here but the relationships they make along the way may be the things that carry them through their next journeys. A great place to inquire about your interests may be the DSI Office in the Student Center Building, room 108 or by emailing getinvolved@sunywcc.edu.

The Christian Club Welcomes All

LUKE O'CONNELL

Even though the share of Americans who identify as Christian has declined over the past five decades, WCC's

school. Professors Steven Han and Franklin K. Asante are its advisors.

Seven years ago, Professor

of an academic advisor. He eventually agreed to the role. When he started, the club had around seven members—some of whom were students at different schools in the area.

“The Christian Club is open to everyone, not only Christians.”

Professor Han

Christian Club has enjoyed great success. With around 15 active members and weekly meetings, the club is one of the largest and most active at the

Han received repeated emails from Jessica Puerta, Associate Director of Student Involvement, stating that the “Bible Study Club” was in need

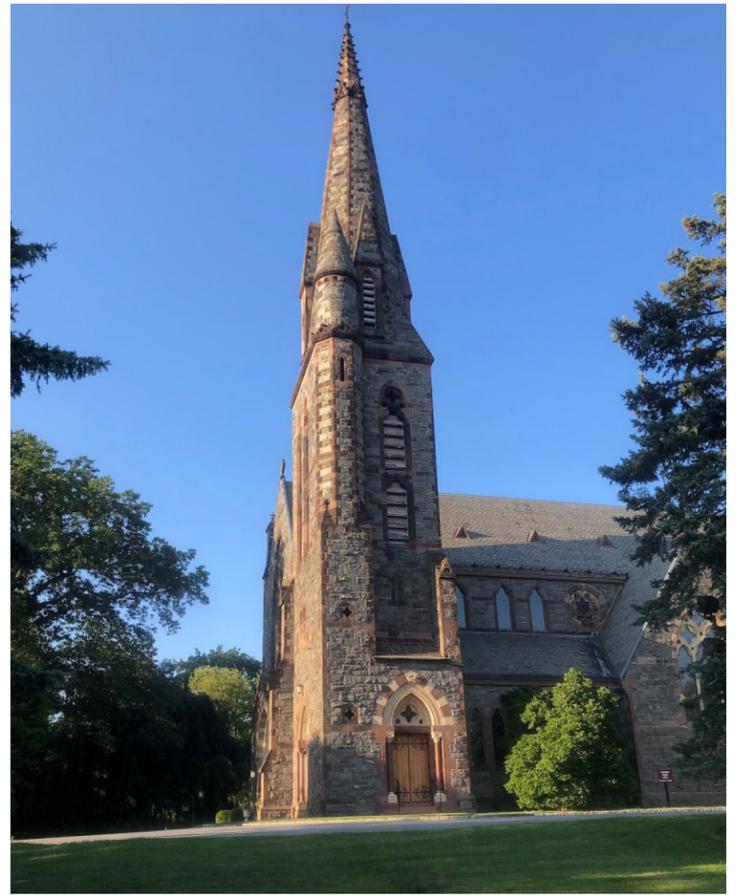
In the fall of 2019, about a year after the club had become inactive, a few students emailed Professor Han and expressed an interest in joining it. After receiving emails from multiple students about the club, Professor Han reactivated it. However, the club was unable to do much during the COVID lockdowns in 2020.

Instead, the club met online during the Fall 2021 semester. In the Spring of 2022, they began meeting in person and oversaw its name change from the “Bible Study Club” to the “Christian Club.” This is the name it has gone by ever since.

During the last semester, the club met each Wednesday from 5:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. in room 305 in the Classroom Building. Even after the meetings were scheduled to end, some of the members always stayed after to speak to one another until as late as 8:00 p.m. “I always look forward to going whenever a meeting takes place,” said Tommy Consaga, a club member.

“Each meeting we talk about a different Bible verse and its significance regarding us. This always leads us into talking about many different kinds of things while having interesting conversations about them,” added Consaga.

Not all of the members of the club are Christian. Some of the current and previous members belong to different religions,



The Rye Presbyterian Church in Rye, NY. Photo by Luke O'Connell



St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Mamaroneck, NY.

Photo by Luke O'Connell

such as Islam and Hinduism. Other members do not belong to any religion. “The Christian Club is open to everyone, not only Christians,” said Professor Han.

The attendees began every meeting last semester by voluntarily praying together. President Chumile Moyo or Vice President Jessica Sabau would then give a presentation about a certain topic and verses in the Bible pertaining to this topic. Some of the topics discussed include salvation, love, and the meaning of Christmas. They usually ended their presentations by posing a few

questions about the topic that they had discussed. They would then divide the attendees into a few groups to discuss these questions among themselves. The groups would then come together to share their thoughts with the other groups, and the meetings would officially end with a prayer.

For more information on the Christian Club, students are encouraged to email Professor Han at Steven.Han@sunywcc.edu. Students can also check out the club's Instagram account, [christianclub_wcc](https://www.instagram.com/christianclub_wcc).

International Students Find Community at WCC

ANYA DUTOVA

With the rise of digital media and globalization, people have been able to see the value in having an American education. There are more than a million international students in the U.S. today, with New York being among the most popular places to study. Some 150 students from countries all over the world study at WCC in order to have a rigorous, high quality education in hopes of having upward mobility in their future lives. While there are many students who come to this country to study, the challenges they face and work to overcome are remarkable.

One of the biggest obstacles international students can face in the U.S. is working with English on the academic level. “I was very concerned at first because I wasn't sure I'd be able to keep up with academic English,” said Carolina Martins,

an international student from Brazil.

WCC offers English as a Second Language (ESL) classes where incoming students are helped with improving their English skills. After the completion of these courses, students are ready to go hand in hand on the academic path with American students.

Another major struggle international students face is adaptation. Incoming students can have a hard time adapting themselves to the new place, culture, and lifestyle. “My main concern before coming here was adapting to the culture and the food. I was somewhat familiar with American culture. Still, nothing can quite prepare you for immersing yourself in a culture to this degree, and I was concerned I wouldn't be able to adapt at first,” says Martins.

For that, WCC organizes meetings for international students. Among the most important is the orientation for international students. Here, students come together and get to know the nuances of their status in the U.S., such as their visa status, information regarding documents, and more. While these meetings are greatly appreciated by the students, they are not consistent. This makes the international students' sense of community on campus feel less united. Luckily for the students of WCC, the campus is near one of the biggest cities in the world, New York. There are a lot of students who can find places that would remind them of the country they are from due to the variety of ethnic neighborhoods and restaurants you can find in New York City.

Success is especially important for international students—regardless of where they come from. Every educational system has different standards and rules of success. Here it is vital to have a high GPA as a sign of academic excellence while at the same time it is essential for students to be active both

valuable time if they don't have any guidance. International students need to have guidance in academic life because what may seem obvious for some incoming students may not be so for others.

For now, there is a Brazilian Club on campus which is run

“Incoming students can have a hard time adapting themselves to the new place, culture, and lifestyle.”

on campus and outside of the classroom. Here is where the tricky part steps in: Not everyone is aware that out-of-the-classroom activities have value, and understanding this can cost international students

by Carolina Martins. There, students meet, host events, and have workshops. Those who came here to study from another country have high hopes and expectations, but they need help and support to succeed.

When It Pays to Be Lazy: The Importance of Rest and Relaxation

JONATHAN CERINI

As the new year begins, many people are considering making some healthy lifestyle changes. Some people change their diet, while others may attempt to maintain specific fitness regimens. However, there is one aspect of physical health that may be overlooked: SLEEP! Over the past few decades,

sleep science has grown as a topic of public interest, keeping pace with other areas of scientific research. Many articles and books have been written by sleep experts and doctors, showing how impactful quality sleep can be on one's life. Without sleep, the body has no way to recharge and

restore itself in order to function properly. Even the smallest change in habits can alter one's productivity throughout their day. For example, taking short naps around midday has been shown to reduce stress, stabilize mood, and improve focus.

There are plenty of misguided tips that have been posted

by various websites and social media accounts. Their advice can be deceiving and unsupportive. People seem to look for quick fixes through little habits, but neglect to look deeper into understanding what sleep is and how it works. For instance, not many are aware of what a circadian rhythm is. A circadian rhythm is essentially the body's personal clock. It maintains a balance for the brain to receive the mindset of sleepiness and being awake. If one were to turn off the lights and get in bed at 10 p.m. and wake up around 6 a.m., the body would start getting used to a specific routine. This is why staring at digital screens late at night can cause insomnia since it disrupts the circadian rhythm.

Studies have shown up to 40% of adults suffer from insomnia due to a lack of routine. Improving sleep takes time. Like the placebo effect, people struggle to realize that getting better sleep starts with their mindset. The foundation of a

good mindset is to start with basic habits like choosing a set time to wake up or increasing total hours of sleep at night. There are also tricks to avoid the frustration of insomnia. If you're struggling to fall or stay asleep, don't look at the clock. Know that your sleepiness will return. Stay in your bed and focus on your breathing. If anything, you can leave your bedroom without having the mindset of doing anything productive as one should never "reward" the state of insomnia. Some people have been told that exertion can cause fatigue. However, activities such as exercising can reverse the brain's function to produce melatonin, which will keep you awake.

At the end of the day, making sleep a priority can truly change one's life. Making it a New Year's resolution would be an impeccable way to improve your life in a multitude of ways. So, start today (or tonight!) and begin to investigate ways you can improve your sleep.



The Health & Wellness center on the Valhalla campus has a room with two cots where students can get rest if needed.

Photo by Jonathan Cerini

A New Year's Weight Loss Plan: Slow and Steady Wins the Race

CHRIS CANNING

NUTRITION CLUB

If weight loss tops your New Year's resolutions, you may wonder: "What should I eat and in what amounts? How many calories is appropriate? How many calories are in an apple? What should a food diary look like?"

Before diving into weight loss, it's good to understand what constitutes a balanced diet for maintaining your current weight.

The USDA Food Pattern offers recommendations for food types and amounts to eat on a daily basis to ensure your nutritional needs are being met. Calorie needs vary based on factors such as age, height, weight, etc. To estimate your individual requirements, visit <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan>. Once you have your personalized calorie level, find the Food Pattern recommendations by selecting the corresponding calorie level (e.g., 2,200) on the same webpage. A daily 2,000 Calorie diet consists of:

Effective weight management balances caloric intake and expenditure. Consuming as many calories as you burn results in consistent weight; whereas consuming fewer calories than your body uses results in weight loss and consuming more leads to weight gain. One pound of body weight equals 3,500 calories. Reducing calorie intake by 500 calories per day equals a pound of weight loss per week; however, such a large reduction may be unsustainable. An intake reduction of greater than 500 calories per day could actually do more harm than good. Instead, opt for a gradual approach by combining calorie restriction with increased expenditure. For example, reduce intake by 200 calories and increase expenditure through activities like walking since it is a free and low-risk exercise that burns approximately 100 calories per mile.

For a weight loss Food Pattern, choose a calorie level below your initial one that reflects your reduction. For example, if your initial calorie level was 2,200, select the 2,000-calorie level. Ensure reductions stay under 500 calories per day.

Lizette Martinez, MS, RDN, CDN, recommends using a food journal to keep track of the foods you eat, which will make it easier to reduce your food intake. Apps such as MyPlate may be helpful. "Set specific and realistic goals," Martinez says. "For example, 'I'll exercise

more' isn't specific. However, 'I will walk for ten minutes three days the first week' is."

Some additional tips: Refer to food labels or www.nutritionix.com for the caloric content of various foods. Employ a digital kitchen scale and measuring cups for precise portion assessment. Keep healthful snacks like seeds or

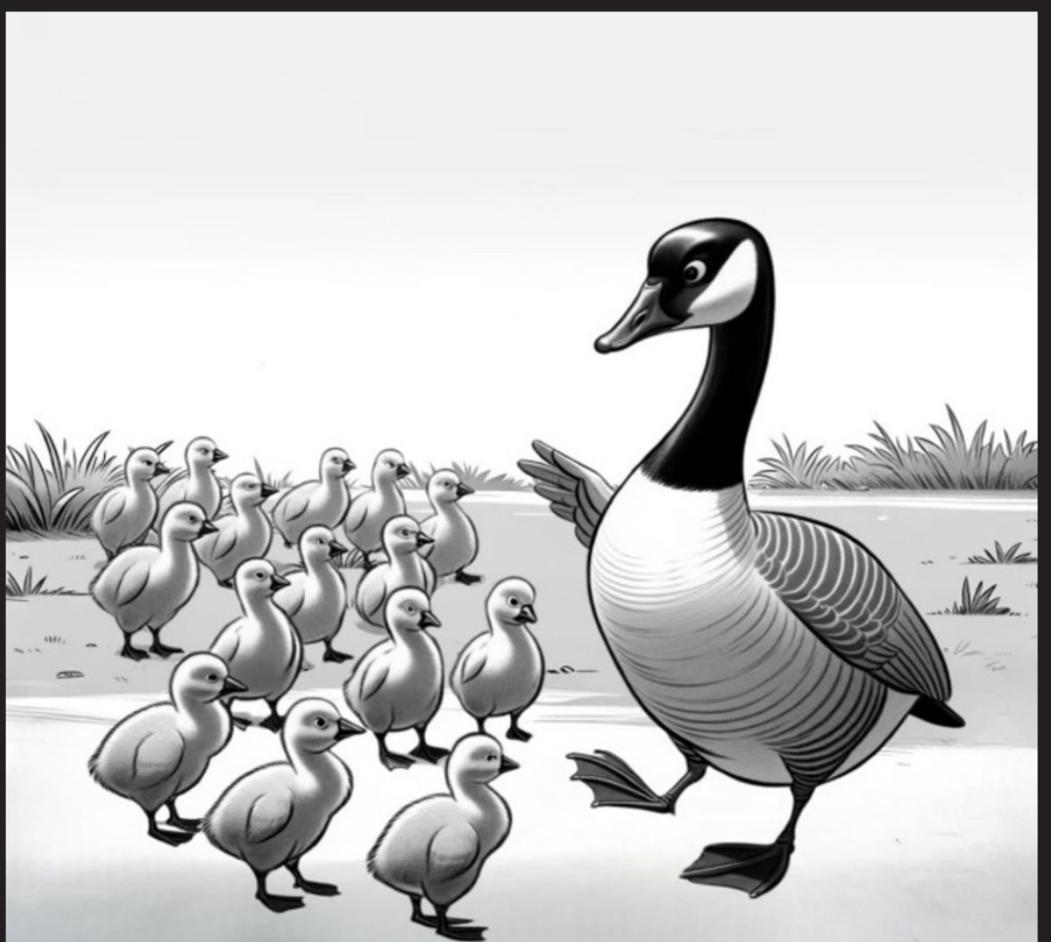
fruits nearby, and be mindful of hidden calories in dressings and beverages. Introduce changes to your diet gradually. If vegetables aren't part of your diet, begin by adding one cup of vegetables a day. Once comfortably incorporated, add another cup, and so forth.

Aim for a sustainable weight loss of 4 pounds per month by

safely reducing intake by 200 calories and exercising 40-60 minutes daily. It takes time and consistent effort, but the benefits to your health are well worth it. Approach weight loss as a gradual journey, celebrating achievements and learning from setbacks. Don't dwell on missteps; just recommit to your healthier routine.

"Alright class, today's lesson is Campus Etiquette 101: How to Hiss at Students"

Photo by Sorelle Marsh



2,000 CALORIE DIET

- Fruits: 2 cups
- Vegetables: 2.5 cups
- Grains: 6 ounces
- Protein: 5.5 ounces
- Milk: 3 cups
- Oils: 2 tablespoons
- Discretionary: 250 calories

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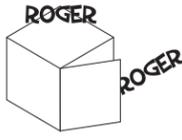
Happy New Year! Word Search



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- READING
- HIKING
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Word Plexers

Some common words and phrases are encoded in these plexers.
Can you tell what they are?

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Answers on VikingNews.org

Ageism in the U.S. Government: Stripping Youth of Representation

JONATHAN CERINI

As the next presidential election approaches, it is especially important and highly encouraged for us as young adults to be involved in our nation's politics and/or government agenda. So why does it feel like it doesn't matter? People continue to make theories to make sense of this. Have we ever considered that the answer to this state of inertia has been in front of us this whole time?

Maybe it's time to consider a problem we often overlook: ageism. The word means prejudice or discrimination based on a person's age. Many people mistakenly assume that ageism refers only to the elderly, but that is not the case. "Ageism affects everyone," according to the World Health Organization (WHO). "Children as young as 4 years old become aware of their culture's age stereotypes...[on which they draw] to perceive and understand themselves, which can result in self-directed ageism at any age." Are we prevented from thinking we have a stake in world events because the culture tells us we're too young?

The older generations currently dominate and determine the present and future states of our nation. Due to an increase in life expectancy coupled with a decrease in birth rates, the average age of an American has risen to almost 40, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. It is evident that the population of our country continues to age. Today, a presidential candidate must be 35 years of age or older. One might think that if there's an age minimum to run for president, there must be an age maximum. This is strangely not the case. Today the two major contenders for the presidency in the November election will be well into their 80s before their term is up. Is either one the best example of elderly



The United States ranks in the top 20 percent of the world's oldest leaders.

Photo by Jonathan Cerini

Perhaps an even bigger Issue Vs that term limits for the Supreme Court don't even exist. Supreme Court justices are appointed for life. This gives a younger representative little opportunity to make their mark in the justice system. We've seen how this can make a difference with the recent

this is the reason why the Constitution is hardly amended, revised, or changed due to the strong institutional politics held by the Supreme Court. Because of these "generational political ideologies," there has been a lack of change that assists the younger citizens.

It is only fair that in a country that prides itself on representation that all have their voice heard. Times have changed. Why have our leaders not? Why does the youth of America continue to suffer from what the WHO calls "self-directed ageism?" For young adults, it almost feels like a waiting game at this point. Why must we wait for our words to be heard? for our ideas to be recognized? for our wishes to be represented in our nation's constitutional decisions? We are the future, why are we not acknowledged as such? Why are we silenced?

"For young adults, it almost feels like a waiting game at this point. Why must we wait for our words to be heard?"

wisdom? Government officials as old as 90 have served until their deaths. Senator Mitch McConnell recently froze up during a press conference for the second time, leaving many wondering if the 81-year-old could remain in office.

overturning of Roe v. Wade as conservative mindsets overruled the younger, more liberal generation. Since the age of Supreme Court judges ranges from 51-75, this leaves no chance for the youth to have a true voice in their country's "democratic" politics. Perhaps

New Year, Old Movies!

MARYGRACE ORFANELLA

New Year's Eve (2011)

When Harry Met Sally (1989)

Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)

Rent (2005)

Sleepless in Seattle (1993)

Keeping Up With The Influencers JADA MICELI

Gen Z risks going bankrupt to keep pace with fast-changing TikTok trend

Since the pandemic, due to the rise of Tik Tok and Shein fashions promoted by influencers, Gen Z is finding it impossible to keep up with

bombarded with ads for new products from their favorite influencers.

How can young people keep pace with these trends when

Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. Since the peak for fast fashion in 2020, trends are changing daily. This means our society has transitioned from four seasons to 52.

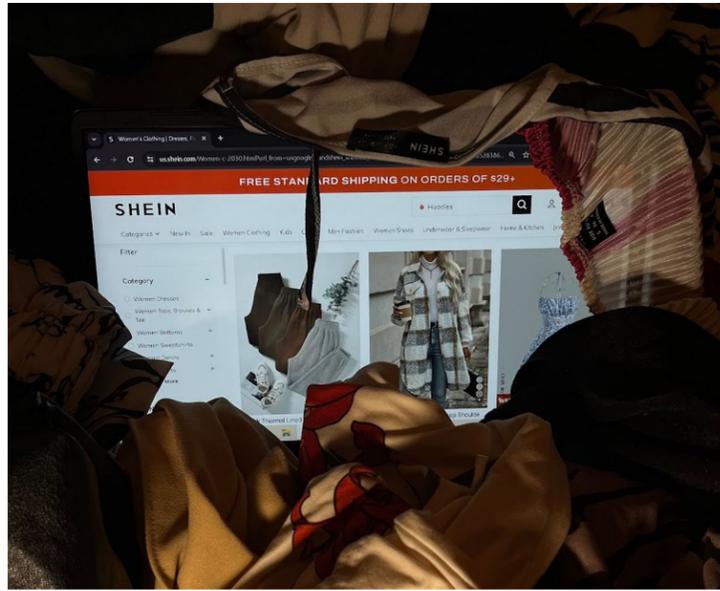
With the price of each item being so low (e.g., \$3 for a shirt), mindless shopping is easy. The savvy companies have crafted the perfect guilt-free shopping experience for young people.

between the concepts of classism and overconsumption.

Many viewers cannot afford the newest Skims, Stanley Cup, or Ugg slippers. Since these trends are changing so quickly, the same sneakers you bought in the summer are most likely out of style. This can ultimately make it impossible for a young shopper to be fashionable!

Some of the more fortunate young people are able to log onto Shein or TikTok Shop and purchase an entire new wardrobe each month. This adds the issue of pollution to overconsumption. The sheer amount of these products or clothes is just not necessary. While young girls are drowning in last season's Shein, they are shopping for today's newest Tik Tok trend.

As the thrift store bins pile high with Shein and other cheap quality clothes, we must ask ourselves a question: When will we say enough is enough?



While we drown in low quality fast fashion, many cannot help but seek more. Photo by Jada Miceli

the new fast-changing trends. When Gen Z picks up their phones, they are immediately

each day the it-product changes? In previous times the fashion world had four seasons:

Tik Tok has done something different from anything we have ever seen from social media in the past. They have curated a way in which to combine entertainment and shopping. While viewing a Tik Tok video you may have no idea the person on the other side of the screen is selling you many of their commissioned products. With just one click of a button, you can order the same products you see in these videos.

Websites like Shein work intently to keep a constant flow of new trends. Each day Shein adds 2,000 to 10,000 new styles to their site. So, you could buy a sweater today and it is out of season by tomorrow. This can prove mind-boggling for young people trying their hardest to "fit in" and wear trendy items.

Since our world has become so saturated by social media as our primary form of entertainment and communication, this fate is inescapable. Each time you log onto your Tik Tok you are greeted by a clear-skinned almost doll-perfect young adult showing you their skincare routine, workout routine, or outfit of the day. Now, you may wonder, "What is the harm?" Well, within these short 15-second videos lie hundreds of ads. "10 things from Amazon you didn't know you needed," "TikTok Shop must-haves," and even hashtags of \$400 Shein hauls.

Young, impressionable viewers will feel urged to buy these products from their favorite influencers to become more like them. As a social issue, this phenomenon lies somewhere

The Link Between Music and Autism Can Open the Way to Understanding RAY KATZ

It's no secret that the Autism community loves music. "For me, listening to music has a mind-body-spirit type effect on me, where I see music as

behavior is less stigmatized, making for a less judgemental environment. Music itself can also be used to stim. When put on "repeat" on the player, music is an excellent

clearly more experienced being at shows are never like that," says Duraes.

The environment created by the community at these gatherings is welcoming to autistic people and allistic people alike. Many of the friends I've made at shows and concerts have been autistic or neurodivergent in some way.

"There's a culture to it, and once you understand the social nuance of concert etiquette, you're fine," says Duraes. And while autism is becoming less stigmatized, society as a whole still has a lot of work to do, says Duraes, "[at] being open-minded and less judgy when people have odd interests or

are socially awkward."

Having a space where your differences aren't looked down is exactly what shows can provide for them, say autistic persons. I think it would do society good to take some notes from these events to incorporate the same attitude into daily life.

"I'd definitely consider slam dancing, screaming, even singing, to be a form of stimming."

Finn Duraes, WCC Student

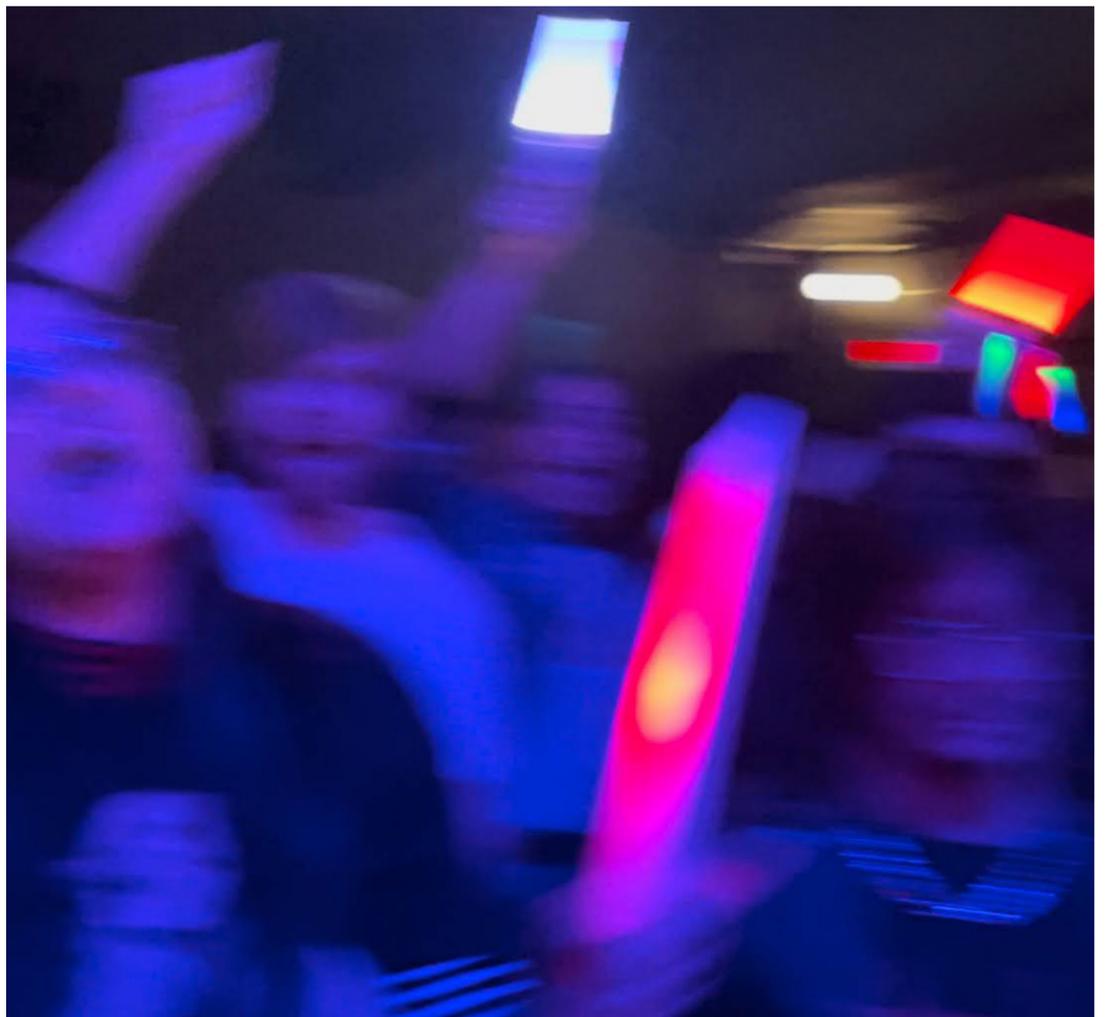
so much more than a sound to listen to. It's akin to a spiritual experience," says Finn Duraes, an autistic WCC student. Pop star Sia even made a whole movie about it (Unfortunately, a degrading representation of autism, in my opinion.)

According to experts, autistic people have different sensory needs from their allistic, or non-autistic, counterparts. Music provides an outlet for "stimming," also known as self-stimulatory behavior, such as rocking or head bobbing. Stimming is used to calm responses to outside stimuli and maintain a healthy sensory balance. "Singing is a form of oral stimming," says Duraes. "There have been so many points in my life where I'm self-soothing by stimming."

In many circumstances, stimming behavior may be seen as "weird" by the allistic population, but when there is music in the background, the

stim tool. Researchers tell us the repetitive notes within a song create the repetition the autistic brain craves without any physical movement. For some, this fully satisfies the craving and allows them to get things done. For others, this is just a piece of their stimming.

Concerts and shows are often accommodating in ways that other public spaces are not. For example, there is a set list of behavioral expectations of what will happen at the show. Rocking, head bobbing, head banging, and erratic dancing is not only accepted, it is expected. "I'd definitely consider slam dancing, screaming, even singing to be a form of stimming," says Duraes. "There have been a few times where younger people in the crowd can get weird and unfriendly, and sometimes even snotty about if you're dancing too close to them, or singing too loud. But the older people, or the people who are



People dance inside a mosh pit.

Photo by Ray Katz

How TikTok is Clocking Radio Music RAY KATZ

Since its invention in 1896, radio has been ever-changing. What started as short-range telegraphs quickly advanced into transatlantic

commercial radio being sold in 1920, and the first commercial radio license given out to KDKA that same year. From there, popularity boomed. According to the 1930 census, 12 million

entertainment, and music. But as on-demand music became increasingly more popular via cassette tape, people began to move away from radio. Especially as they began to be

Killed the Radio Star by the Buggles. And that it did. People began to favor watching music videos over listening to music. Just a few years later, CD players were being installed in cars, and in 1984, the first portable CD players were being sold.

unlistenable. I want to listen to a song and have the whole thing be great. I don't want to hear songs in which a viral fifteen overplayed seconds is the only reason it's on the air.

Additionally, it feels as though the only incentive for some artists to make music is virality. This means they're making music that others want to hear, instead of making music that speaks to a part of themselves. Many of the hits lack soul. They lack passion. They lack the storytelling that music used to

All of this is to say that the popularity of radio has been on the decline for a long time. However, with the introduction of TikTok into the mainstream, radio has taken yet another hit. The discovery of new artists and songs used to be

“I think it's terribly dangerous for an artist to fulfill other people's expectations. I think they generally produce their worst work when they do that”

David Bowie

primarily done through radio. Artists used to strive to make the perfect song so they could get it on air, improving their sound while they pushed for perfection. But having a song go viral on TikTok seems to be the goal now.

As David Bowie once said: “I think it's terribly dangerous for an artist to fulfill other people's expectations. I think they generally produce their worst work when they do that.”

The fame achieved by artists on TikTok has had an impact on the music industry, not necessarily a good one. Now artists only need fifteen seconds of their song to go viral, instead of an entire song. A majority of hit songs nowadays follow that formula. Fifteen amazing seconds of music surrounded by a mediocre song. It makes a large portion of music

While it's true that TikTok has helped many smaller artists gain exposure, it's also led to an abundance of one-hit wonders. Many “up and coming” artists coming out of TikTok have one song go viral but then aren't heard from again. I remember my mother having to tell me as a child which artists had been one-hit wonders. Now it seems like most are.



Crowd records Maneskin, a band that went viral on TikTok.

Photo by Ray Katz

transmissions, and eventually evolved into transmission into space. Radio as the average person knows it was first achieved in 1906, with the first

homes (around 40% of the population) had radios.

For years, radio was one of the main sources of news,

installed in cars, people had other options for listening to music besides the radio. In 1981, Music Television, or MTV, debuted with the song *Video*

FILM REVIEW

The Boy and the Heron STEVEN GARCIA

The Boy and the Heron (original title, *How Do You Live?*) is a 2023 Japanese animated film from filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki. Based on a 1937 novel, the story takes place during World War II. A fantasy film involving magic elements, it tells the story of

Princess Mononoke (1997). His 2001 film *Spirited Away* won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature and is the highest grossing film in the history of Japanese cinema. In 2013, Miyazaki announced that he was retiring, but later began work on *The Boy and the Heron*, which took

unclouded by hate. See the good in that which is evil, and the evil in that which is good. Pledge yourself to neither side, but vow instead to preserve the balance that exists between the two.” I've been watching the Ghibli motion pictures since I was a child, including Miyazaki's *Vivacious Absent*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Ponyo*. These are some of the childhood-enlivened motion pictures I've watched all through my life, so when I saw *The Boy and the Heron* I felt like I was re-living my childhood. I was so astounded once again that the animation and the fantasy were so mind-blowing. Overall, the movie is well thought out as well as beautiful. I highly recommend it to anyone who is into anime or who just wants to watch a relaxing animated show.

“You must see with eyes unclouded by hate.”

Hayao Miyazaki

a young boy who develops a friendship with a gray heron bird after his mother is killed in a hospital fire. The film was produced at Studio Ghibli, a famous animation studio in Japan co-founded by Miyazaki.

seven years to complete. Its producer has said that it was the most expensive film ever made in Japan. The film is autobiographical, drawing from the director's early life. It has been described as a coming of age story taking place in a setting of great hardship-wartime Japan. Miyazaki has said, “You must see with eyes

The director is famous for previous animated hits like *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), and



Studio Ghibli has produced some of the most acclaimed animated films in history.

Photo by Steven Garcia

A Message from the Section Editor

SORELLE MARSH

Dear Readers,

I'm Sorelle Marsh, the Opinion Editor of the Viking News, and I want to connect with you. Our pages are meant to be a vibrant forum for community discourse, where your contributions are not only welcome, but vital.

Today, I'm excited to introduce the newest members of our team: Jada Miceli, our News Editor, Jonas Barr, our Features Editor, and Jonathan Cerini, who will invigorate our social media interactions. Continuing in their positions are the Sports Editor, Dani Colon, and the Editor-in-Chief, Keira Ferretti.

In our continuous effort to innovate, we're introducing Cartoons to our Features Section. These illustrations are crafted to provide a humorous and creative take on our school life, adding a unique and engaging dimension to our publication. We are accepting submissions, so please email us at EditorInChiefVN@sunywcc.edu

We are constantly striving to ensure that our content resonates with your interests and perspectives. Do our articles reflect your concerns? Are there topics you're eager to read more about? Or perhaps you wish to contribute your own piece? We warmly invite you to share your thoughts and suggestions. Whether through letters, emails, social media, or a drop-by at our office in Student Center 281, your input is important. Every comment, idea, and critique is a stepping stone towards creating a publication that truly echoes the voice of our community.

Together, let's continue to build a platform where every voice is heard, and every perspective is valued. Thank you for reading The Viking News and for helping us evolve and grow.

Sorelle Marsh
Opinion Editor, The Viking News

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WCC's Basketball Season Review DANI COLON

As the 2023-2024 season is in full swing, the men's and women's basketball teams need to push through and make it to the regional 15 tournament, and hopefully to NJCAA nationals with only 10 games left in the regular season.

This season, with the men's team standing of 5-11, their

performances are and to work on improvements.

"We see the mistakes we make. Then we go to practice and work on it. I feel like everyone just needs to be on the same page and just buy in," said Paulino.

Paulino also shares his thoughts, along with the team's thoughts, about the rest of the

"I believe in my team, I believe we can turn this around and get a good run going one last time."

Yenfry Paulino, WCC Men's Basketball Player

chances of making it to the regional 15 tournament withers away. From the 2022-2023 season, their standing was 13-16. The women's team has a current standing of 5-6 and their 2022-2023 season standing was 6-20.

"We are trying to turn the season around even if we don't end with the best record," said sophomore Yenfry Paulino. "We are trying to get the ball rolling and end up on a good note going into the playoffs."

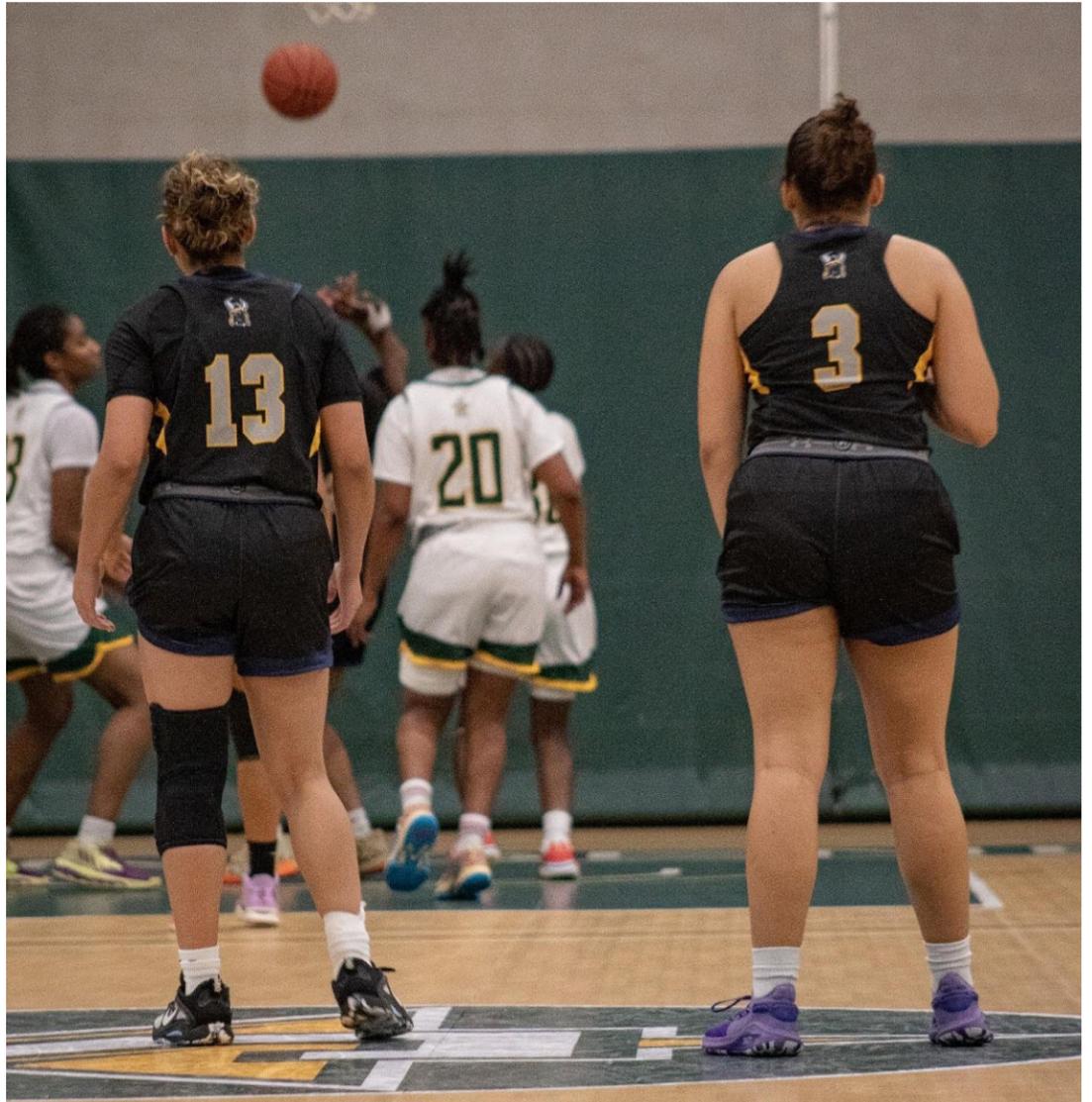
Both teams regularly look back at their recordings to see how

season.

"As a team I know we are not really satisfied with the team's current standing but like I said we still have enough time to get it together and work on things we need to get better at," said Paulino

While there aren't many games left in the season, it still isn't too late for the vikings to make it to regionals.

"We have a good squad and I believe in my team, I believe we can turn this around and



WCC's basketball teams work hard and rigorously to try and beat common rivals SUNY Sullivan.

Photo by Dani Colon



WCC's basketball players must review every play by play to endure a win.

Photo by Dani Colon

get a good run going one last time," said Paulino

When individually going through players statistics, the Vikings have it secured. One player who has shown the hard work he puts in is Josendy Nova with his shooting percentage at an amazing 70%. Nova earned himself the #1 ranked basketball player recognized by the NJCAA.

Another player who leaves his mark on the team is freshman Elijah Hernandez. Hernandez has the most assists, with an 80% free throw along with the most minutes played and plays his absolute best offensively.

There is no doubt about it that Nova and Hernandez will be considered for MVP due to their outstanding plays and contributions to the team.

The women's team, on the other hand, appears to struggle with communication as it is seen often during games.

Gianna Marziliano team manager shares

"Coach doesn't like the yelling and arguing, especially while on the court," said team manager Gianna Marziliano. "He says

it makes them not look like a team, which I agree with. He likes how they're competitive and passionate about the game, but says that there's a time and place for arguing, and a game is not where to do it."

Marziliano also shares her thoughts on what the team should work on beyond communication.

"I think the team needs to improve on playing unselfishly and work on our IQ," said Marziliano. "For example, we got to know the strengths and weaknesses of each player on the team. I think what's distracting is personal and outside issues that they have going on. I think they aren't really mentally prepared come gameday."

Marziliano also shares her thoughts about players who have shown their hard work on the team.

"Milagros Alston and Natasha White stood out scoring wise to me because they always found a way to get to the basket and sometimes draw a foul," said Marziliano. "Chynna Mincey and Baronique Russel stood out because of their rebounding. They would both have like 10+ rebounds a game. I think this shows their ability to get physical and grab hard rebounds."

Now looking at both teams' past history, the men's team in the 2018-2019 seasons overall record was 17-10, with their season ending by falling to SUNY Sullivan County Community college. Their 2022-2023 season also ended by losing to SUNY Sullivan in the regional 15 tournament; Westchester cannot seem to beat SUNY Sullivan.

According to new predictions, the men's team will succeed and make it to finals where they should definitely look out for SUNY Sullivan with their overall standing is 10-7 (press time) while even ranking high nationally. It surely seems like SUNY Sullivan will take over the regional 15 tournament.

The women's team in the 2021-2022 seasons standings were 8-7 and they also fell in the regional 15 tournament to SUNY Sullivan. With their 2022-2023 standing of 6-20, they fell to their common rival SUNY Sullivan in the regional 15 tournament. With the women's team's current standing, along with player attendance predictions, it looks like they will not make it to regionals.

WCC Esports Team Prepares for the New Semester

DANI COLON

While many people aren't aware that WCC has an Esports team, it is one of the most well known esports teams within the SUNY schools. Back in 2020, the Esports team won the national NJCAA championship playing Overwatch, winning them a ring.

While the esports team doesn't have a designated meeting space for them to practice and even compete, many players cannot meet their teammates or even have a connection with a few players; some might even believe that there is no comradery with the team.

Players had different attitudes towards not being able to

see their teammates.

"I do believe we still had a good team connection, we were all excited to play and improve," said Mary Whelan, team captain for the Overwatch team.

Despite not having a designated area to practice, teammates still find ways to build comradery with one another. The esports team meets at a gaming lounge outside of the WCC campus with the teammates only being able to meet in person late Sunday nights. Now with a new season starting, they will continue to meet at a gaming lounge at a different schedule. Although this wasn't good timing, they still managed to all work together and play their best.

"I think we had great teamwork, we'd always discuss plans if something wasn't working out between us and tried to always find an answer," said player Phoenix DiNoia.

During the fall semester, the team came together and worked hard to make their standing 6-3. This means they made it to the playoffs, but were eliminated in the 3rd round. The team came in 4th place in the SUNY Esports league.

"I did not play my best at all in that game. I believe that there is always room for improvement, positioning, aiming, and understanding the game sense can all use work even if we think we are already

perfect with how we play," said DiNoia. "There's always better."

While the spring season doesn't start until Feb. 5th, there is still time to sign up for the esports teams as tryouts are still being held.

that the team is considered to be nationally ranked overall 4th, they share that there is no pressure and they both will continue to play their best. Having fun and enjoying their time playing along with their

"Understanding the game sense can all use work even if we think we are already perfect with how we play. There's always better."

Phoenix DiNoia, WCC Esports Player

Both DiNoia and Whelan are fully aware that the esports team won a national championship, and knowing

teammates continues to be very important to both players.



WCC's esports team is one of the first teams recently to win a national championship for WCC.

Photo by Dani Colon

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