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Behind the Scenes with Hamilton's GIPHY Channel

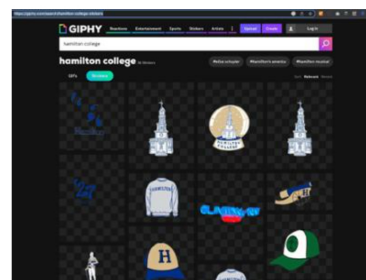
by **Eliza T. Pendergast '24** | February 14, 2023 | **Student Experience**

Three art majors and 20 GIFs (so far): Eliza Pendergast '24, one of the students involved in launching [Hamilton's GIPHY channel](#), shares what it's been like to be part of the team that brought these spirited animations to life.

Long ago, as a first-year student, I searched for the perfect Hamilton GIF to embellish an Instagram story. I tirelessly scrolled past hundreds of mini Lin-Manuel Mirandas until I was forced to acknowledge that there weren't any GIFs for Hamilton (the College, not the musical). GIFs, which are a series of images that form a soundless, continuously looping video and are sometimes referred to as "stickers" on Instagram, have become popular, fun additions to social media, text messages, and various other digital communications. I recall being dismayed at the lack of Hamilton (College) stickers, and I never would've guessed that three years later, I'd be part of the team to change that.

This is my first year as a visual communications intern in the Communications and Marketing Office, where I work with Sawyer Kron '25 and Alya MacDonald '25. Our supervisor, Executive Director of Visual Communications Mark Mullin, pitched the idea of Hamilton launching a GIPHY channel last fall, and we eagerly accepted the challenge. "I was surprised that we didn't already have a GIPHY channel," Alya said. "When we stepped up, [Mark] was excited for us to spearhead the creation of Hamilton's first ever GIFs."

That's something that also stood out to me: the three of us were entrusted to complete this project from start to finish. I was in charge of research and project management, while Sawyer and Alya worked on the animations. We began with a brainstorming meeting where we compiled the icons, symbols, and imagery that best represent the College. Our initial list included a waving Hamilton pennant, a cannon snowing buff and blue confetti, and a few variations of the iconic Chapel: one with a spinning quill and



Screenshot of Hamilton's animated GIFs on GIPHY.com. (See [how to use gif as stickers](#) to send in text messages below.)

opening our own eyes, and a few minutes of the team's time from spinning our own globe complete with flurries. Early on, we decided we didn't want to produce generic institutional GIFs. This was our chance to create something that we felt best reflects aspects of the Hamilton experience in a new, thoughtful way.

When it came time to start creating, Sawyer proposed that we take a hand-drawn approach for all of the GIFs. He envisioned "a stylistically cohesive group of work. Images that can all exist together but are also independently strong." I liked the idea, but this request would require all of the GIFs to be hand-drawn, frame-by-frame, and I was unsure if we could complete the project by the deadline. But Alya agreed with Sawyer, and felt that the hand-drawn aesthetic would emphasize "the students behind [the project] and keep [the GIFs] from looking too cookie-cutter."

Fortunately, Sawyer and Alya were well-prepared for the task; they were both enrolled in Professor of Art Ella Gant's Intro to Animation class, where they received iPads for the semester and learned how to use Procreate, the leading digital illustration software for IOS devices.

A project like this was a reasonable feat for us art majors, but it wasn't without its awkward moments, "like forgetting to erase backgrounds and realizing [it] after hours of hand-drawing slides," Alya said. She also recalled the time others passed by her as she gathered reference material:

"I probably looked a little strange taking photos of the Alexander Hamilton statue from a bunch of different angles around him."



Halfway through the project, we had the opportunity to formally present our work to Hamilton's Communications and Marketing Office. Although we were nervous to participate in a workplace presentation, we ended up receiving great, applicable feedback that we later incorporated into the designs. The three of us are fortunate to have such supportive and encouraging supervisors, and I believe this experience will translate to our post-grad lives.

With the official Hamilton GIPHY channel now live, we can't wait to see the GIFs in action during on-campus events, like graduation, Reunions, or sports games, in text messages, emails, or anywhere that needs a little Hamilton school spirit. We even included a few animations to celebrate Hamilton's Class of 2027 being accepted this spring, and we hope they will be used when decisions come out.

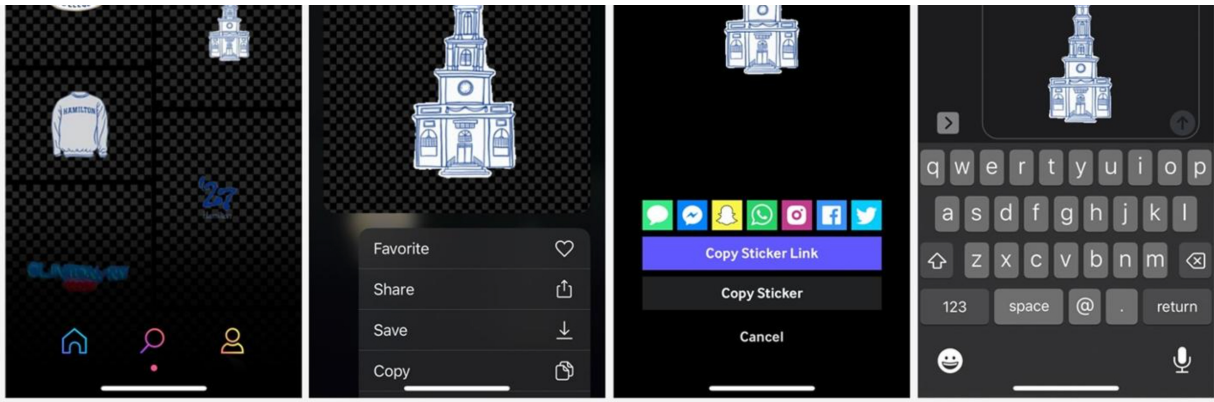
Share your GIF ideas!

As interns, we were fortunate to have so much liberty with the GIPHY project, and we are eager to continue supporting the Hamilton community in this fun, creative way. If you have ideas for what we should add next, we want to hear them! Send an email to viscomm@hamilton.edu.

How to find GIFs:

Hamilton College and Kirkland College GIFs are now available on most GIPHY-powered GIF browsers such as Instagram, Twitter, and iMessage. To find them, search "Hamilton College" in the GIF search bar. Note: Users may need to select the "Stickers" category before searching, especially in iMessage.





[See instructions on giphy.com](#)

Hamilton's GIPHY Channel →

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Field Studies Class Digs Into Desert Geology →

From Phoenix to Flagstaff, our caravan of three white vans trundled down interstates and bumpy dirt roads. Pulling off to the side, a stream of 34 people would rush out onto roadside outcrops, hand lenses strung around our necks and field notebooks in hand.



Speaking of Grabbing a Meal ... →

Amidst the bustling crowds at Commons and McEwen dining halls, language faculty and students sit around a table to enjoy a meal while conversing in their chosen studied language. Hamilton's "language tables," as they are known, provide both valuable speaking experience and community building opportunities.

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