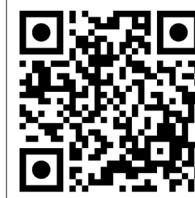


Igniting
Students
To Make a
Difference

The Torch



Bergen Community College's Student Newspaper



Colombo // Pixels

The Dividing Line: The 2024 Presidential Election in the Eyes of Students

Kaila Mack // Staff Writer
Matheus Faria // Staff Writer

With the presidential elections coming up in November, it seems to be on the forefront of many people's minds. Following last month's presidential debate, many Americans feel that the candidate they are choosing to vote for is the lesser of two evils, rather than a person they feel confident about regarding leadership, policy, and competence. Some are choosing to simply not vote at all, as they feel their vote does not make a difference. The fact that they do not feel excited about either candidate likely plays into their decision to refrain from voting.

However, it is important not to fall into this way of thinking. The vote of every citizen is important, and if enough

people decide this is not true, it will make a difference. In fact, according to data collected by the Tisch School of the Arts, "In states like Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Arizona, young Black and Latino voters were instrumental in swinging tight races for Biden" in 2020. Had enough voters in these states decided their vote did not matter, the election might have turned out differently.

With eight million young people eligible to vote for the first time this year, it is important to consider what young voters think about when they consider which candidate they see as the best fit to lead the country.

A survey done by the Pew Research Center revealed that 80% of voters believe the economy is a vital factor in choosing a candidate. The survey also found that for Trump

supporters, the economy, immigration, and violent crime were viewed as the most important issues, with less concern about issues such as climate change and racial inequality. Those who supported Harris listed health care, Supreme Court appointments, the economy, and abortion as very important issues. We asked students at Bergen Community College to share some of their thoughts and concerns about the upcoming election. Here is what we found.

The aforementioned ambivalence of American voters toward both candidates was on full display among Bergen students. When asked which candidate they were going to vote for, the majority responded with a resounding "neither." One student remarked, "I'm way too busy with schoolwork right now to really care

about all of that. Even if I did, everything that comes out about [Donald Trump and Kamala Harris] is all negative," reflecting the consensus of the student body.

This sense of unease was mirrored by those who expressed their desire to vote for one of the candidates. As mentioned above, the most common motivator for these students was to vote for a candidate they believed violated their values less than the other. Explaining why he decided to vote for Trump, a student stated, "[Trump's] policies align closer to my values; however, his personal conduct and views on social justice and the environment are less in line."

The question is, come voting day, how many students will take to the polls and make their voices heard?

News

Women in STEM Mentorship Program Seeking Applicants

Rose Swan // Staff Writer

On September 19 at 12:30 p.m., a small group of BCC students gathered in S-329, a narrow beige room that connects several faculty offices, to learn about the PepsiCo Women in STEM Mentorship Program. The program, brought to BCC by Professor Barbara Brown-Abolafia, allows students to meet twice a month with scientists working at PepsiCo, either in person or online, to discuss their goals and challenges in STEM. PepsiCo scientists join the program as volunteers and are trained as mentors by Million Women Mentors, a national organization.

Every year, about 10 students participate in the program. The requirements are minimal: the program is open to women and genderqueer students in STEM majors, but students who plan to major in STEM may also apply. Applicants must be scheduled to graduate in May 2025 or later. Usually, the program receives fewer than 10 applicants and has never had more than 12. If more than 12 apply this year, the program would prioritize the first applicants, and later applicants would be placed on a waitlist. “I would love to have that problem,” says Professor Brown-Abolafia. While the program has a retention rate of over 90%, the few

students in its history who have dropped out left their mentors with no opportunities to be reassigned. Having a waitlist would allow the program to fill these gaps while also offering additional students the opportunity to meet with a mentor before the end of the year. Science students are encouraged to apply regardless of major, and those who don’t plan to work at PepsiCo or any similar company are also welcome.

However, Professor Brown-Abolafia stressed that students seeking mentorship from healthcare professionals should seek other opportunities. Professor Brown-Abolafia encouraged prospective mentees to use their relationship with their mentor to build their professional network and to ask their mentors about future opportunities such as internships. This is sound advice, given that the program itself is the result of Professor Brown-Abolafia’s own networking efforts.

PepsiCo mentoring programs already existed at high schools in the area but hadn’t expanded into any colleges. The possibility was discussed at Westchester College, where a friend of Professor Brown-Abolafia was part of the conversation. This friend provided her with the contact information of a PepsiCo representative, which she used to initiate a discussion about bringing

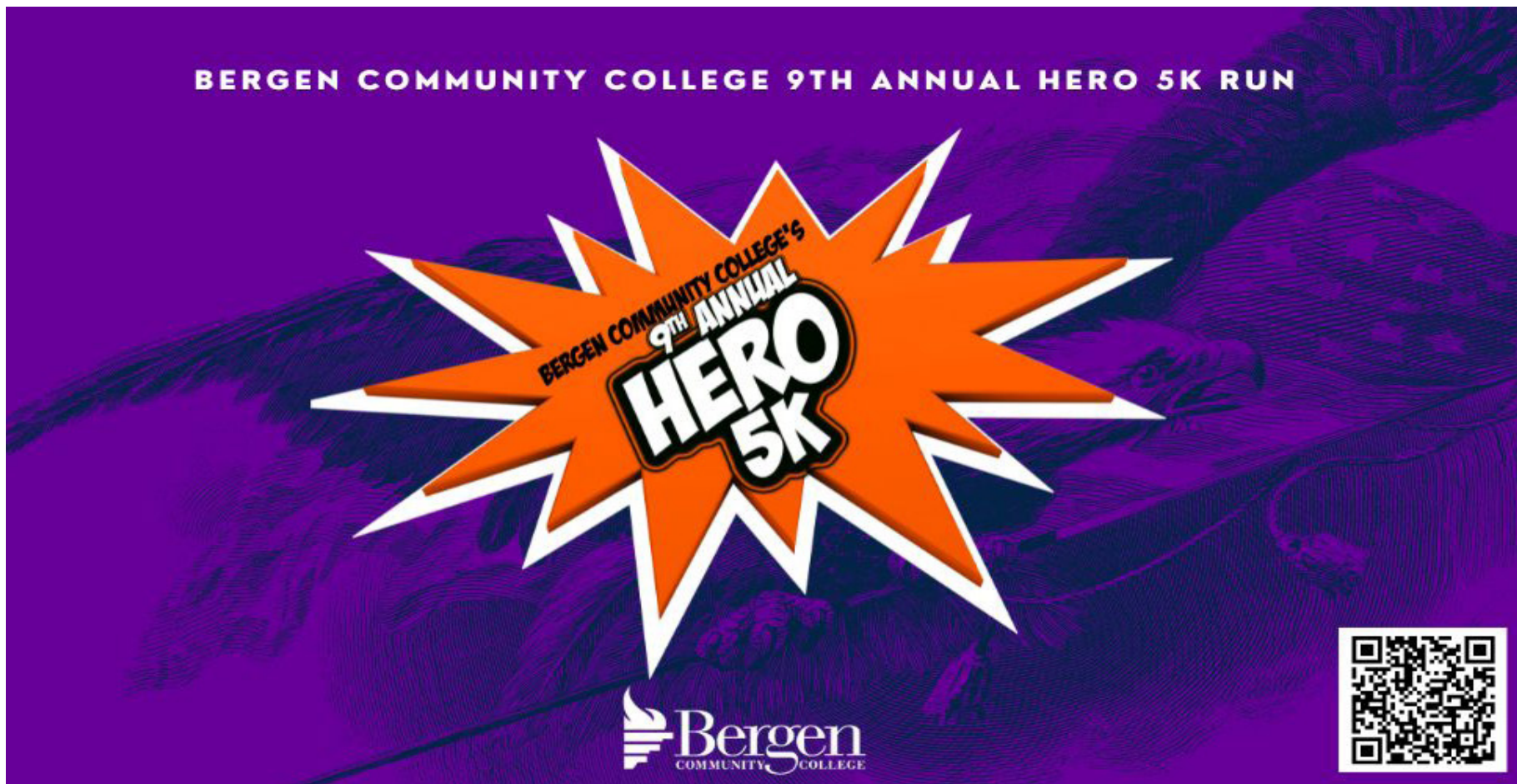
the program to BCC. While the program was never implemented at Westchester College, it has survived at BCC, which remains the only college to have such a partnership with PepsiCo.

PepsiCo was not represented at the meeting on September 19, but speakers from the company will give a presentation at the next program

event, which will take place on October 16 at 5 p.m. in room C-211. Students interested in the program should send a short email to Professor Brown-Abolafia at babolafia@bergen.edu as soon as possible.



Mayrem Tos // Photographer



Bergen Community College to Host 9th Annual Hero 5K Run

David Tsai // Staff Writer

Bergen Community College will host the ninth annual Hero 5K Run/Walk on Sunday, November 3, as part of its ongoing commitment to supporting military veteran students. The event will be held at the Paramus campus. Participants can register for one of three races: the HERO 5K (\$35), the Robert Dyer Kids 1K Fun Run (\$15), or the Virtual HERO 5K (\$35). All proceeds will benefit services for the college's veteran students.

Online registration is available at RunSignUp.com, there will be no registration at the event with cash or

check, although last minute registration on a smartphone is allowed.

On Friday November 1st, in-person 5K runners can pick up race packets which include a T-shirt and bib. Packets will also be available for pickup on race day for those who arrive early.

The HERO 5K will begin at 8:30 a.m., followed by the Kids 1K Fun Run at 9:30 a.m. The Virtual HERO 5K can be completed anytime on Nov. 3, with results uploaded the same day. Participants in the in-person races are encouraged to arrive 30 minutes to an hour before the start time.

For the in-person HERO 5K, course marshals and markers will guide

participants, with a water stop at the halfway point and refreshments provided at the finish line. The course will be closed to traffic for safety. Awards will be presented to the top three male and female finishers in each age group.

Runners who are unable to attend in person can register for the Virtual HERO 5K. After uploading their results, they will receive a race T-shirt by mail within 7-14 days. However, virtual participants are not eligible for awards.

The Robert Dyer Kids 1K Fun Run, open to children 7 and younger, is a non-competitive, untimed race. Participants will receive capes to decorate, and all finishers will receive

medals.

Volunteers play a crucial role in the success of the event. Those interested in volunteering can register through the event website. Volunteer shifts run from 6:30 to 10:30 a.m., and volunteers will receive a complimentary T-shirt.

For more information, contact Race Director Julie Seda at jseda1@bergen.edu.

Arts & Entertainment



Tatiana Yulo // Staff Writer

My Time at the Clairo's Charm Tour

Tatiana Yulo // Staff Writer

In 2018, Georgia native Claire Cottrill jump-started her career by recording her songs “Pretty Girl” and “Flaming Hot Cheetos” and uploading them to YouTube. The singles garnered the attention of multiple major music labels, which gave Cottrill the opportunity to release her first single, “Diary 001.” Fast forward to 2019, 2021, and 2024, and Cottrill’s albums “Immunity,” “Sling,” and “Charm” have achieved great success for the pop-indie singer now widely known as Clairo.

Clairo’s recent release, “Charm,” was paired with its own tour, allowing her fans to see her live worldwide. The tour began with a 10-day residency at the Fonda Theater

in Los Angeles and Webster Hall in New York City. Luckily, I was able to attend and experience her last show at Webster Hall. The venue was packed with fans over the age of 18, all enjoying their Thursday night listening to their favorite artist perform. It was overwhelming but ultimately enjoyable. I left the show feeling like my serotonin levels were through the roof. I also left with a new shirt and \$40 less in my bank account, but the show was worth every penny and left me thinking about it for days.

The show, and my personal experience, were astonishing. The opening act, Frankie Cosmos, was an absolute gem. Her colorful outfits and short hair paired with her electric guitar made her set feel very “charming”—not to be too on the nose. As for Cottrill’s setlist, she transitioned from jazzy new

songs that had the crowd swaying to us belting out “Bags” at the top of our lungs—one of my personal highlights of the night.

Cottrill consistently makes it to the top of my Spotify artists at the end of the year, and her songs are always on repeat in my playlists. The feeling, the serotonin, and the experience of seeing her live are things I will never forget. Below are some of my favorite Clairo tracks, in case this read inspires you to dive into her music:

- “Bags”
- “Blouse”
- “Amoeba”

For a more jazzy vibe, check out “Charm.”

I’m Not Excited For The Weeknd’s “Hurry Up Tomorrow” Album and You Shouldn’t Be Either

Anthony Danilov // Co-Editor

It’s no surprise that ever since “Starboy,” The Weeknd, Abel Tesfaye, has become pretty mainstream and therefore has pivoted toward a more pop-focused sound with his music. In his early transitions, he was doing pop in a way that was different and felt like a fresh revamp of 80’s pop. It didn’t feel too on the nose. However, with his final trilogy as “The Weeknd” coming to an end, it feels as if Tesfaye is giving fans less and less insight to who he is and is instead choosing the route of the generic star who panders to the higher-ups of labels and finds no problem in selling out - leaving integrity on the back burner.

I don’t believe in blindly following an artist, no matter how

much you love them, and with Tesfaye's recent announcement of "Hurry Up Tomorrow," The Weeknd's final hurrah feels lost. The album's title is completely devoid of any true meaning and feels like a last-minute decision, creatively speaking. Many fans believe that they've cracked the code on what "Hurry Up Tomorrow" means for The Weeknd, but every comment left on the topic comes off more and more like the aesthetic filler that Abel has a knack for - monkey see, monkey do.

Aside from that, the hype for an album has simply died down. Just like his fellow artists, Taylor Swift and Harry Styles, touring for months on end can really have that effect. As an artist with an amassed fan base you have the unique advantage of using scarcity to your advantage, but when your name is appearing in the headlines every other day to no avail of any new music, things can start to get a bit tiresome.

The way I see it, Tesfaye decided to start teasing his project way too early on and therefore suffered from indecisiveness. For one, the album cover and colors concerning this final era confused his fanbase. Everyone seemed to be expecting deep blues or a purple tone for the visual palette guiding the album, just as he teased in the early beginning of it's rollout, yet as time went on it seemed Tesfaye had all of a sudden decided to revert to an "After Hours" red, which read to me as even more pandering. It seemed the pressure he was facing to deliver a final great project must have got to him and he went with the safest option; delivering aesthetics that match what his fans consider to be his best work.

In regards to the story, in

"After Hours" we saw Abel's alter ego (The Weeknd) "crash out," essentially, and recollect his crazy journey as a celebrity consumed by drugs and toxic love. With "Dawn FM," especially with the music video for the sole single "Take My Breath," it was clear that listeners were entering the end of the life of "The Weeknd" and seeing his death take him to purgatory. As the album plays out, Jim Carrey takes the mantle to narrate The Weeknd through the world of '103.5 Dawn FM', a radio station that plays as the soundtrack to his time there until he reaches the end - what is teased, throughout many of the tracks on the album to be "After Life." Right there and then it seemed so clear where Abel was heading with his story.

What made me, and many other fans, legitimately upset, is that all that build-up and storytelling seemed to have been thrown out the window with "Hurry Up Tomorrow." We thought for the final record we would be heading into a rebirth for his alter ego and, confusingly enough, up until recently, it seemed that Abel

was feeding into that narrative as well. Countless (weird) visuals were posted on a daily basis on Instagram of Tesfaye and his AI version of his younger self, magazine interviews explaining his creative perception, and just as everything seemed to click..."Hurry Up Tomorrow!"

Now, with the album's lead single "Dancing in the Flames" out as well, the rollout is leaving more and more fans unexcited. The song itself comes off as a "Dawn FM" throwaway that could be used for some type of commercial which, what do you know? That's exactly what it was used for. The single's music video was in fact a commercial for none other than Apple and their new iPhone 16 Pro. Not only was it painfully clear the video was shot in your regular Hollywood backlot, but the direction was dreadfully aimless. For four minutes, The Weeknd gave us nothing new or exciting with visuals that were disappointingly uninspiring and lyrics that seemed to be written by OpenAI. Not a good look for Tesfaye or Apple.

All this is not to say that

both "After Hours" and "Dawn FM" were not amazing world-building projects that are arguably some of his best work - at least in this era of his artistry. The single choices for his past two projects were basic pop records too, whether it be "Blinding Lights" for "After Hours" or the aforementioned "Take My Breath" for "Dawn FM" but they were a side of Abel which we hadn't seen before. They felt passionate. "Dawn FM," to this day, is still my favorite project from him just because of how committed he was to the concept built behind every single track he recorded.

At the end of the day, artists are going to do brand deals and partner with companies. It's a part of the business and can lead to a wonderful result if done tastefully. But when one of the biggest musicians in the world kicks off their magnum opus without any sort of effort - that is when you lose my attention. So can I say that I'm excited about this new final installment for The Weeknd? No. Not whatsoever.



Gallery Bergen: “Talking Tintypes”

Meredith Cruz // Staff Photographer



Opinions

The Presidential Debate Recap: Harris vs. Trump, Round 2024

Noah Yeboah // Social Media Editor

The much-anticipated 2024 debate between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump on September 15, 2024, felt less like a political duel and more like a WWE event—minus the chairs. Harris, ever composed, stood across from Trump, who came armed with his signature mix of bravado and reality-TV theatrics. The debate featured three main characters: Harris, Trump, and Trump...again. Seriously, it was like watching a Trump family reunion, but with podiums.

The night kicked off with the candidates addressing the economy, and Trump wasted no time reminding everyone he's a Wharton grad for the 137th time (we get it, Donald), but Harris wasn't fazed. She calmly dismantled his fiscal policy, bringing up actual numbers instead of alumni associations. But Trump wasn't about to let facts get in the way of his performance. He quickly pivoted to immigration, pulling out one of his greatest hits: a debunked story about immigrants eating their neighbors' pets. Yep, that happened.

Harris, meanwhile, doubled down on her unofficial slogan, "We're not going back," cleverly contrasting Trump's throwback policies with her forward-looking vision. She threw shade with the precision of a seasoned politician, subtly implying Trump's policies were as outdated as MySpace profiles. The crowd didn't cheer since

there wasn't one, but you could almost hear college students across the country typing out the next viral tweet.

One of the most heated exchanges was on foreign policy. Trump, ever the wild card, teased some kind of "secret plan" to end the Israel-Hamas conflict, like he was about to drop an album. Harris, ever the professional, stressed the importance of diplomacy, reminding voters that maybe, just maybe, foreign policy should involve actual

planning and not just catchy slogans.

By the end of the debate, both candidates dropped enough soundbites to fill a semester's worth of Political Science 101 discussions. Trump was his usual bombastic self, taking every opportunity to steer the conversation back to his own greatest hits: "the best economy ever," "Hillary's emails," and of course, "Wharton." Meanwhile, Harris kept it cool, showcasing her ability to engage without being pulled

into Trump's showmanship.

The real question on everyone's mind wasn't who won, but which moments would make the best memes. College students, professors, and political junkies alike now have a treasure trove of moments to dissect, laugh at, and maybe even learn from. In the end, it wasn't just a debate—it was an experience.



Letter From The Editor-In-Chief

Hello readers!

This is Hosna Kachooee, the new editor-in-chief of the Torch! I'm a computer science major and love gardening in my spare time. During my first year at BCC, I became acquainted with the Torch and met the most amazing editors who encouraged me to write for the newspaper.

I'm thrilled to be managing Bergen Community College's student newspaper and getting the amazing opportunity to work with all our talented editors, writers, designers, and photographers. We worked very hard to present this semester's first print issue and we hope you like it!

Our goal for the semester is to do more collaborations with other student organizations and provide you with new sections on both our print issues and website.

We're always open to feedback and new members so feel free to contact me via email, thetorcheic@gmail.com, or come drop by our office at A-332 to say hello!

You'll be hearing and seeing a lot more from us, so stay tuned and have a great rest of the semester!

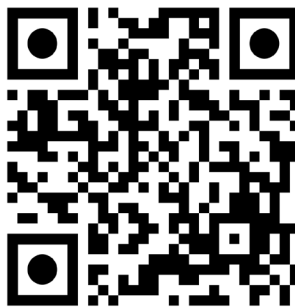


THE TORCH, a member of the Associated Collegiate Press and the College Media Association, is the official student newspaper of Bergen Community College. The purpose of THE TORCH is to report on the events at BCC and the local community, and to offer the BCC community a forum for expression. The opinions expressed in THE TORCH are not necessarily those of THE TORCH. All the materials submitted to THE TORCH become property of THE TORCH.

CORRECTIONS

The Torch strives for the highest journalistic standards and accuracy. Readers are encouraged to contact us if they find any mistakes in any edition of the Torch.

Stay in touch with us!



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Laura Manis <i>Copy Editor</i>	Michael Pardo <i>Photo Editor</i>
Violet Ratliff <i>News Editor</i> <i>Opinions Editor</i> <i>Ads Manager</i>	Noah Yeboah <i>Video Editor</i> <i>Social Media</i>
	Michael Berkowitz <i>Advisor</i>

Features

Taste the Future: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Bergen Bistro

Noah Yeboah // Staff Writer
 Matheus Faria // Staff Writer
 Yoan Rakotoarimanana // Staff Writer

Grand Opening Review

After a summer hiatus, Bergen Bistro reopened with a bang. The menu for opening day included an assortment of delightful options: a vegan tomato soup, Caesar salad, a choice of herb-roasted chicken thighs, oven-fried sole, or a vegan stuffed pepper for the entrée, all rounded out with a cookie tray for dessert and a strawberry lemonade mocktail.

As we stepped into the room, we couldn't help but notice the intricate details that had transformed this once-conference room into a fine dining establishment. The elegant table settings, paired with soothing piano and saxophone music playing in the background, immediately set the tone for the professionalism you can expect from the students behind the Bistro.

The vegan tomato soup set the tone with its rich, flavorful base, blending tomatoes, a vegan cream substitute, and various spices to create a hearty, comforting dish. This was followed by a beautifully plated Caesar salad, featuring traditional dressing, crunchy breadcrumbs, and roasted cherry tomatoes that paired perfectly with the crisp romaine lettuce.

More Than Just a Meal

Dining at Bergen Bistro is more than just grabbing lunch — it's a way to support local students as they prepare for their future careers. These students

If you're looking for a dining experience that's as educational as it is delicious, check out Bergen Bistro. Run by Bergen Community College's Culinary Arts Program, the Bistro allows talented students to showcase the knowledge they've gained in the classroom in a real-world setting. Luckily for us, that means top-tier dishes served at an unbeatable price.

Located in Room C-210, this student-run gem is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays at noon, offering an impressive four-course meal for just \$12. Yes, you read that right — a full dining experience for less than what you'd pay for a typical lunch in the city. But what makes it special isn't just the price. It's the passion, effort, and dedication these future chefs pour into each plate.

What's on the Table?

You never really know what's on the menu until you sit down. That's part of the charm. The students prepare a constantly changing selection of dishes based on what they're learning that week — from soups and salads to main courses and desserts, each meal is a showcase of their growing skill sets.



Noah Yeboah, Yoan R., Walid Louhah

aren't just cooking in the kitchen; they're also responsible for everything you experience during your meal, from greeting you at the door to ensuring your food arrives looking as good as it tastes. The main course took things to the next level. The oven-fried sole was perfectly seasoned, tender, and rich with flavor — enhanced even further with a squeeze of lemon. Accompanied by creamy mashed potatoes, roasted carrots, and Brussels sprouts, this dish was the total package. The strawberry lemonade mocktail brought it all together, blending sweetness and acidity to refresh and complement every dish served.

Why You Should Go

There's nothing quite like being part of someone's journey, and that's exactly what you get when you dine at Bergen Bistro. You're not just enjoying a great meal — you're investing in the future of culinary arts. Plus, at \$12 for four courses, you're getting an absolute steal.

Make your reservation by reaching out to Rebekah de Jesus at rdejesus@bergen.edu, or swing by Room C-210 to see what these students are cooking up. Whether you're a foodie, a fan of supporting local talent, or just someone who loves a great deal, Bergen Bistro is the place to be for lunch this week.



BURNING QUESTIONS

With The Torch

Welcome to the Torch's official advice column, where we provide you with equivalently hot answers for your burning questions!

Feel free to reach out to us with your questions by scanning the code below.



**Careful...
it gets
hot in
here!**

DISCLAIMER

Burning Questions submissions to the Torch are entirely anonymous. The Torch has no way of verifying the information and has no knowledge of the participants' identities. Our goal is to provide a safe space where students can ask for advice, free of judgment and exposure to unwanted attention.

If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to thetorcheic@gmail.com.

"I've always prided myself on maintaining healthy boundaries with my professors, but this semester, one of them has crossed the line. Let's call him Professor X. I've always had great rapport with him in class, and he's helped me a lot academically, but recently things have gotten... weird. It started with him offering to 'mentor' me after class, which I thought was innocent enough. But then, the texts started. At first, they were about homework or upcoming projects. Then, late at night, I'd get a 'how was your day?' or 'what are you up to?' message. Weird, right?"

Then came the dinner invite. He said it was to 'discuss my future' and that I had a lot of potential. Feeling uneasy but not wanting to offend him, I went. The conversation was professional at first, but soon, it turned personal. He asked if I had a boyfriend, what my 'type' was, and whether I'd be interested in 'dating someone older.'

I felt trapped. I want to report him, but he's a well-liked professor, and I'm scared no one will believe me. What should I do? Should I confront him? Report it? Or keep quiet and just hope it doesn't escalate? I'm stuck, and I don't know where to turn."

Hi Bergen Student,

There are several factors to consider in this submission; however, to be completely clear: your professor engaged in unprofessional behavior that needs to be addressed.

No professor should mentor students with the ulterior motive of romance. Unfairly, he used this academic front to pursue something personal. I understand the pressure you felt to go along with his friendliness. In your position, I would worry about jeopardizing my grades and possibly damaging a good connection with an otherwise lovely professor.

Professor X took advantage of you. He has a duty to guide students toward success, not to corner them into making unwise, uncomfortable decisions. If he had sincere intentions, he would have stated his romantic interest directly. Instead, it sounds like he gradually lured you into a date under

the guise of academia. Do Professor X's actions show respect for you? Is this older man unaware that he jeopardizes your academic integrity? I would argue he recognized a bright student who values their education. In his position of power, he can hold that over your head, seeking a return for his mentoring. This is completely inappropriate.

On the other hand, I would question why you accepted his dinner invitation. Did you not cross your own boundaries? While we are victims in this situation, we must still maintain personal responsibility. You knew his texts were becoming informal and felt uneasy about the dinner. By saying yes without clarifying his intentions beforehand, you illustrated that you were willing to subject yourself to a questionable outside-of-school interaction. I highlight this not to shame you, but for your safety. If you entertain his texts and dinner, how can you tangibly prove your innocence? Nothing good comes from sacrificing personal values. Please trust your instincts! Should you report him? Although I have only heard one side, I would strongly encourage you to do so. While I do not know who Professor X is—or his exact texts, mannerisms, or dialogue—it is evident that he initiated unprofessional acts and violated school policies. According to the Bergen Community College Employee Code of Professional Conduct, it clearly states that “employees must refrain from romantic relationships with an individual whom they supervise. Faculty members shall not engage in romantic relationships with a student for whom the faculty member has any academic responsibility (such as having the student in his or her course, mentoring or otherwise advising the student, writing letters of recommendation for the student, etc.). If a supervisor becomes involved in a romantic relationship with someone he or she supervises, the supervisor must disclose this to the director of Human Resources so that an appropriate transfer of supervisory authority can occur.”

Never let fear guide you. Professor X broke an employee policy; therefore, you have a valid reason to report him. It is not your responsibility to convince the Bergen administration but merely to inform them. Therefore, don't worry if people don't believe you. Opinions don't alter the truth. We wish you clarity and courage!

—The Torch

If you are experiencing something similar, or have in the past, please reach out to the appropriate campus resource. We encourage you to take action and not withhold such details.

Reach out to ***HumanResourcesGroup@Bergen.edu*** to report inappropriate behaviors and/or harassments.

“Title IX bans sex discrimination throughout our college and campus community — in all programs and activities including, but not limited to, academic and student affairs programs, athletic programs, financial aid and student records and accounts, and health and counseling services. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment, including sexual violence, which is a crime.” (Bergen.edu)

For more information on Title IX, visit: ***<https://bergen.edu/about-us/title-ix/>***

For personal counseling, reach out to ***PersonalCounseling@bergen.edu***

UWill Crisis Support: ***(833) 646-1526***

Preferred Behavioral Health: ***(800) 542-0184, then press 2***

24/7 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: ***988***

For more information on counseling, visit: ***<https://bergen.edu/health-wellness-and-personal-counseling/personalcounseling/>***

“I’m a nursing major, and between clinicals, exams, and barely getting any sleep, the last thing I needed was relationship drama. But here we are. My boyfriend and I have been dating for over a year now—he’s the typical athlete type, always working out, super popular, and honestly, I thought we were solid. That was until last weekend.

I was hanging out at his apartment, waiting for him to get back from practice when his phone buzzed. It was unlocked, so I glanced over, and what I saw made my stomach drop: a text from a guy named ‘Chris’ saying, ‘Last night was crazy, I can’t stop thinking about it.’

I knew this ‘Chris’—he was always around, supposedly just a friend. But my gut told me something was off. I went down a rabbit hole, scrolling through their texts, and it was all there. My boyfriend has been hooking up with Chris behind my back for months. And not just random stuff—explicit, detailed messages about the nights they spent together. They’d been having sex, meeting up after practice, and worse—there were videos.

The most insane part? He never even mentioned being into guys. I had no clue. I’ve always been supportive of LGBTQ people, but finding out like this? That he’s been lying to me the whole time? It’s like my whole relationship was built on a lie. Now I’m stuck. Do I confront him and risk the embarrassment of being ‘that girl’ whose boyfriend was secretly hooking up with a guy? Or just break it off and never tell him I know?”

Hello Bergen Student!

Wow.

Where to begin...

First, embarrassment should never be the primary factor when it comes to decision making. If we avoid challenges due to sole humiliation, we will never know humility.

Second, if you and your boyfriend were in a long-term relationship, then enough maturity should exist to have a difficult conversation. I think it’s best to be direct and explain the situation. Keep in mind, you must admit that you violated his privacy by going through his phone.

Now, I would say “confronting” isn’t the right approach to this conversation. I think we should keep this quick and clean. If your boyfriend has been cheating on you for months...he is not worth your time—and neither are theatrics. Speak to him privately and in person. Tell him that you’re aware of his intimacy with Chris, and therefore, you’re breaking up. Additionally, I would assure that his sexuality is protected. Ultimately, it’s none of your business as to whom he cheats with, but it’s certainly your right to know that it is happening.

Personally, this would have to conclude our friendship as well. If your boyfriend truly respected you, he would’ve broken up with you the moment he began entertaining Chris. Instead, he repeatedly betrayed your trust and intends to continue so. His principles obviously diverge from yours, therefore, it’s in your best interest to find new influences.

Most importantly, be firm in your decision. Don’t allow your boyfriend to create excuses or request second chances. Maintain your dignity and self respect. However, keep an open heart to forgive. If he’s truly sorry, let it end on peaceful terms.

—The Torch

Don’t see your submission? Find it on our website at www.bergentorch.org!

Health, Lifestyle & Tech

Recipe Of The Month

No-Knead Focaccia With a Delicious Mediterranean Topping

Hanieh Kachooee // Guest Writer

Perfect for a large crowd, this delicious no-knead focaccia with its bright topping should definitely be on your dinner party menu. I know the chill time can be a little daunting, but that's why focaccia is a great recipe for gatherings! You can prep it a day or two in advance and when it's showtime, it takes less than an hour to put it all together. Plus, the chill time totally depends on you; I chilled it for 50 hours, which is what worked for me. You might be wondering whether the dough tasted a bit sour after 50 hours of chilling - the answer is nope!

As for the topping, I like to use the focaccia as a blank canvas and experiment with different toppings. This particular topping with its Mediterranean palette has been the biggest crowd-pleaser so far! When baking this, your whole house will smell like a pizzeria. There will be notes of toasted walnuts, tomatoes, olives, garlic, and of course, tons of herbs! But please use this topping as a guideline. Use what you have and what you like. If you don't like black olives, which I've used a lot of, omit it completely or use another type of olive. Don't like walnuts? How about pine nuts? Not a fan of purple basil? Go with green. Don't have fresh garlic in season? Use garlic cloves! You get the point; it

is super customizable and you can even adjust how many toppings you want on your focaccia. I've sort of loaded mine because that's how my family and I like it. If you like yours a bit more bare, reduce the topping ingredients by $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.

Ingredients:

This focaccia tastes even better when paired with this roasted red pepper hummus! Use the QR code below for that recipe:



Serving: 10-12 people
Prep time: 20 minutes
Cook time: 27 minutes
Chill time: 8 - 72 hours

Notes:

Since green garlic was in season, I opted for that, but you can also use garlic cloves. For 1 stem, use 1 clove.

I didn't add salt to my topping as the olives and sun-dried tomatoes were salty enough. Taste your topping and add salt if needed.

Ingredients:

- 710 ml (3 cups) lukewarm water
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tsp instant dry yeast
- 725g (6 cups) all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp salt
- 5 tbsp olive oil

Topping:

- 70g walnuts (around $\frac{3}{4}$ cups)
- 80g Sun-dried tomatoes (around $\frac{3}{4}$ cups, packed)
- 50g black olives (around $\frac{1}{3}$ cup, pitted, chopped)
- 80g green olives (around $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, pitted, chopped)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped basil, I used purple
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped parsley
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped cilantro
- 3 scallions, chopped
- 2 green garlic stems*
- 1 tbsp nigella seeds, optional
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil + more for dimpling

Seasoning:

- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp onion flakes
- 1 tsp garlic granules
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp black pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sumac, optional

Instructions:

1. Start by dissolving the sugar in lukewarm water, then add your yeast and mix. Let it sit in a warm dark spot (like inside a turned-off oven) for 5-10 minutes or until there's froth on the top.

2. Grab a large bowl and add the flour. Make a well in the center with a wooden spoon and pour in the yeast mixture and 3 tbsp of olive oil. Give it a good mix with a wooden spoon and before everything is well combined, add the salt. Mix for a few minutes until everything comes together. The dough should be wet and sticky, so don't add any more flour! If you do, it should only be a tablespoon or so. Drizzle the remaining 2 tbsp of olive oil over the dough and grease the sides of the bowl. Cover with saran wrap and refrigerate overnight or for up to 72 hours; I refrigerated mine for 50 hours.

3. When you want to bake the focaccia, remove the dough from the fridge and transfer it to a greased large baking sheet with the help of a greased spatula. For a thinner focaccia, I used a 13 x 16.5 in (33 x 42 cm) baking sheet. Let the dough

proof at room temperature for 45 minutes to an hour. In the meantime, we can prepare our toppings.

4. For the topping, chop the walnuts and sun-dried tomatoes into medium chunks, and set aside. Wash and dry the herbs and garlic, then roughly chop them. In a pan, add the chopped walnuts, sun-dried tomatoes, herbs, garlic, spices, and olive oil. Give everything a stir and place on medium heat. The topping should only be sauteed for a few minutes or until everything is fragrant and the herbs have turned bright green.

5. Preheat the oven to 428°F (220°C). Once the dough is done proofing, lightly sprinkle the topping evenly across. Then lightly drizzle some olive oil and with greased fingers, start dimpling. Gently push your fingers into the dough halfway to create dimples. Lastly, sprinkle the sesame and nigella seeds over the focaccia. Once the oven is preheated, bake the focaccia for 27 minutes. If the baking sheet you're using is smaller than mine and therefore you have a thicker dough, you will need to bake your focaccia for longer. You can tell it's ready when the edges are golden brown and the top is lightly toasted.

6. When you take it out of the oven, lightly drizzle it with olive oil again and let it cool for at least 10 minutes before cutting into it. You can serve this with dipping oil like a delicious zaatar oil or with some fresh white cheese and herbs.



Hanih Kachooee // Guest Writer

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Psychology Tip Of The Month

Reclaiming Calm: A 15-second Breathing Exercise to Regulate the Nervous System

Francesco Maneri // Guest Writer

Fall is here at BCC: 8 a.m. walks across the quad are through thin, crisp air, the smell of freshly brewed coffee permeates the halls, and pumpkins are beginning to sprout all over campus. The semester is in full swing. For many, if not all of us, the academic year signifies growth, both intellectually and personally. We are striving toward our goals and the future we envision for ourselves. But as we chip away at our workload, it is only natural for some type of stress to take shape in the background. While stress may seem standard for students, its repercussions come in multitudes, some of which we may be unaware of.

Because of its intensity, stress can change our physiology. One way it does so is by affecting our breathing. When our bodies are under stress, we

tend to unknowingly hold our breath. By involuntarily delaying exhalation, the muscles largely responsible for breathing are forced to tense, ultimately restricting our breath. As a result, a response from the sympathetic nervous system—commonly known as the “fight or flight”—is triggered: you may feel your heart beating faster, start to sweat, and experience an acute sense of panic. Rest assured, this is a completely normal bodily response when the brain senses a stressful or dangerous situation. Thank you, evolution. But what if there is no significant or immediate threat? For those times, there is a simple technique we can use to regulate our breathing quickly and efficiently.

According to Dr. Daniel Amen, founder and CEO of Amen Clinics, who specializes in brain health, a particular breathing pattern—known

as the 15-second breath exercise—may help regulate the nervous system within two minutes. The pattern is as follows: Inhale for four seconds, hold for one and a half seconds, exhale for eight seconds, hold for one and a half seconds, and then repeat the cycle for about two minutes for maximum benefit. “What researchers discovered,” said Dr. Amen when detailing the effectiveness of this method on author Mel Robbins’ podcast, “is [if] you take twice as long to breathe out as you breathe in, it produces an automatic relaxation response in your body.” The relaxation response Dr. Amen refers to is associated with the parasympathetic nervous system, which is triggered by the exaggerated exhale and is largely responsible for the body’s ability to rest and relax. Interestingly, while the 15-second breath exercise is a powerful tool for short-term relief, it can

also promote long-term benefits when practiced regularly. “If you practice this on a regular basis,” Dr. Amen said, “cortisol will go down, and you are [going] to be flooded with a feeling of calmness and relaxation.”

Considering this, you may find the 15-second breath exercise helpful the next time you are on the go and begin to feel overwhelmed or if you are looking to add a new tool to your overall wellness routine. It is important to note that while the effectiveness of this technique is backed by science, its usability may vary from person to person. If you feel you may benefit from additional resources on campus, please call 201-447-9257 or email personalcounseling@bergen.edu for more information.



Stanley Morales // Pexels

Sports

The Knicks Are Getting Feisty

Damir Munoz // *Sports Editor*

The season was looking grim for the New York Knicks until Sept. 27, 2024, 10:14 p.m. EST, when NBA reporter Shams Charania announced that the Minnesota Timberwolves had agreed to a deal that would send Karl-Anthony Towns (KAT) to the Knicks for Julius Randle, Donte DiVincenzo, and a first-round draft pick via Detroit. The Knicks essentially solved their problems and potentially saved their season with one big move.

The Knicks had been left with a gaping hole at the center position with the loss of 7-footer Isaiah Hartenstein. And with the injury history of center Mitchell Robinson, who is currently estimated to miss the first month and a half of the

season, there was growing uncertainty about who would man the position. Talks had begun to circulate about a potential small-ball lineup in which Julius Randle, the 6-foot-9 forward, would slot in at center during certain stretches of the game or even until Robinson had returned. But historically, Knicks head coach Tom Thibodeau (Thibs) has shown a reluctance to not have a standard center on the court at all times. Last season, there were only 4% of total possessions where the Knicks did not have at least one of Isaiah Hartenstein, Precious Achiuwa, or Mitchell Robinson on the court.

KAT is a two-time All-NBA participant, four-time All-Star, former 3-point contest winner, and the former Rookie of the Year award winner.

During the 2023-2024 regular season, KAT averaged 22 points per game, 8.3 rebounds, and 3 assists, while shooting 50% from the field and 40% from three. This brings a whole new look for the Knicks, who have put all their eggs into this season. KAT has been the most effective long-range 7-footer the NBA has seen since his debut in 2015. His ability to create for himself while also staying as effective off-ball as a spot-up shooter has made it difficult for opposing coaches to game plan against him.

The trade came as a shock for fanbases of both Minnesota and New York. On the side of the Wolves, KAT had been drafted by the Timberwolves and had been with the organization for the last nine years. “Stunned” was the only word KAT could use to describe

how he was feeling after the trade was announced. From the Knicks’ standpoint, Julius Randle had signed with the team in the summer of 2019, after New York had only won 17 total games during the 2018-2019 season. Randle had taken a chance on the Knicks, and he played a major role in their postseason berth, a feat that hadn’t been reached since 2013.

The Knicks have not won an NBA championship since 1973, the fifth-longest championship drought in the entire association. This season, with a lineup of Jalen Brunson, Mikal Bridges, OG Anunoby, Josh Hart, and Karl-Anthony Towns, the Knicks have lined up their best attempt to break that streak.



Markus Spiske // Pexels

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