



The ARAGON OUTLOOK

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900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402

Aragon High School



New Aragon students participating on Jumpstart Day

ALESSANDRO RIEDEL

School fully reopens for fall

Peyton De Winter
NEWS EDITOR

As schools reopen this fall, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the California Department of Public Health to mandate several health and safety guidelines in schools.

“The masks will not be required outdoors,” said Principal Valerie Arbizu. “We are encouraging everybody to wear their masks when they’re not eating and drinking, but they technically won’t be required in an outdoor setting. Another big change is that we won’t be social distancing.”

The District is also providing access to everything necessary to follow mandates, including masks and hand sanitizer.

“The District made some significant investments in some of those simple things,” Arbizu said.

Moving to reopen schools fully has not been done without proper preparations for the scenario where the school may need to return to hybrid or fully distance learning due to a resurgence of the pandemic. Procedures have been under discussion for the scenario, despite doubts the situation will return to the level it was at a year ago.

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Aragon jumpstarts into the new year

Mia Dang
VIDEOGRAPHER

On Aug. 5, Aragon held its first in-person orientation for incoming freshmen, while simultaneously holding Jumpstart Day for the upperclassmen.

Leading up to orientation day, Aragon’s administration team, leadership classes and Link Crew leaders worked to create a welcoming environment to raise excitement and school spirit for the upcoming school year by planning group games and presentations.

Keith Hawkins, an inspirational speaker who presented at orientation, placed heavy emphasis on maintaining a positive mindset and creating a sense of belonging within the student body.

“[Link Crew leaders] want to make sure that every freshman here knows

that they are not just a number in high school, but they are someone who matters,” Hawkins said. “We want them to understand that you do not need to be like everyone else, you just need to live your true self. It is part of the mentality for [Link Crew], and we want the students to understand our purpose and why we are here today.”

Along with Link Crew’s activity plans, Aragon’s leadership students prepared for the event by creating posters and decorations throughout the week which can be seen all over campus.

“[Leadership] got here a bit early to set up all of the food and create the signs,” said senior leadership student Julia Jeck. “Our position has been working hard to make the school a nice setting for the kids.”

Upon arrival, incoming students were given the

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The pride flag flying below California’s state flag in center court

PURVI SINGHANIA

SMUHSD decision to raise pride flag

Kamron Ramelmeier
NEWS EDITOR

Following two San Mateo Union High School District Board meetings discussing the flying of the pride flag during June and October, the SMUHSD put up the pride flag in front of the District office on June 7. The Board of Trustees initially rejected flying the flag with a 2-2 vote. Trustee Greg Land was absent during the vote and the Board re-voted with him on June 4, resulting in its passing with a final vote of 4-1.

During the May 20 Board meeting, Trustee Robert Griffin worried about more flags being called to be raised by the community to represent other students if the pride flag were raised. His comment sparked backlash from many people. Griffin apologized for his words on June 4 during their meeting for the re-vote.

“I don’t know why it happened the way it did,” Land said. “We’re supposed to be allies to our students and want to promote inclusivity and make sure people understand

that. I thought everything was going to go smoothly so I was really surprised that people were going to nitpick over policy issues. Since I wasn’t there, I called the president of the Board and insisted that we have an emergency meeting based on the fact that ... I would break the deadlock.”

At the ceremony before the flag was raised, Deputy Superintendent Kirk Black read a proclamation that the Board created on behalf of raising the flag.

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The commercialization of space

Learn more about the human exploration of outer space and the race to exploit its resources.

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“Happier than ever” album review

Check out Audrey Smetana’s review of Billie Eilish’s new album.



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Superstar athlete Megan Grant

Read about Grant’s journey of securing her spot on the U.S.A. U-18 Woman’s Softball team.

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SMUHSD raises pride flag

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"The meaning of [the proclamation] is that we stand with our LGBTQ+ community and students," Black said. "But it also says that although we have come a long way, there is still a long way to go, even in our district. We need to continue to educate people and correct our injustices. People are still people being persecuted, insulted and criticized for their identity so it's great that we [fly the flag]. Many are looking for organizations to make an action item which the proclamation was [an example of] and I'm proud of it."

Black believes hanging the pride flag on the District flag pole is significant.

"We have pride flags all over



PURVI SINGHANIA

backlash. Principal Valerie Arbizu said that in order to prevent such backlash, Aragon will ensure that there are no hard feelings among students when they are back in the fall as the school will fly the flag again in October for LGBTQ+ History Month.

"We have to do some work to make sure that people don't feel like the flag is exclusive to others," Arbizu said. "Anytime you reach out to more groups and try to include, some are going

"We need to continue to educate people and correct our injustices"

the District in classrooms, hallways and Zoom backgrounds and now we're able to match all of that on our flag pole and it's more visible there," Black said. "The only things on the flagpole are the country's flag, the state's flag and now the pride flag, then possibly the progress pride flag in October."

After the ceremony at the District office, the District provided administration officials from each high school in the SMUHSD a pride flag to hang at their school. Trustees who voted against raising the pride flag expressed concern about having to make public policy changes and facing student

to feel excluded because it will feel like a balance of power has shifted a bit and I think that's something that we'll have to work through together. I can imagine some students who may have an emotional reaction and there may be a few people that are upset or angered by it, but I think most people will see it as a simple act of inclusion. The visual symbol of inclusion in the pride flag is more important than not [raising] it out of concern that a few people may be unhappy."

The pride flag will now be raised at the District office and every SMUHSD high school during the months of June and October each year.

Link crew welcomes underclassmen

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opportunity to meet their Link Crew leaders, form connections with their new classmates through a series of bonding activities and participate in a center-court line dance. These activities, paired with colorful posters, music and snacks, were intended to help smooth the transition from middle school to high school for the new underclassmen.

"Orientation has been really fun and energetic, and I love the school spirit," said freshman Lola Lewis. "We have done a bunch of fun team building games, which definitely made me feel more comfortable being [at Aragon]."

Other attendees, such as freshman Markus Gosch, seemed to share similar thoughts on the experience.

"Orientation has shown how friendly the school community is," Gosch said. "That makes me very excited and less nervous than I was before."

Meanwhile, as orientation took place for the underclassmen, a handful of rising juniors and seniors par-

ticipated in Jumpstart Day to prepare for the upcoming school year. Returning students had their school ID pictures taken and were also given their schedules for the fall semester. Additionally, chromebooks were distributed to every student, which is a new addition that differs from prior Jumpstart Days.

"Returning to campus was fun because I got to catch up with many of my friends that I have not seen over the past year and a half," said senior Matthew Kang. "It felt very similar to the first day of school nervousness, but I was excited to see everyone again."

Aragon's assistant principal Juan Flores, enjoyed seeing the Aragon community's hard work over these past few days.

"We're very happy and excited to provide this for students who haven't been on campus," Flores said. "Everyone that I see coming here – staff, community, students, you name it – you can see the gleam in their eyes. We're happy to be fully committed to bringing excellence back to Aragon."



Aragon students step on campus for the first time this school year for orientation.

ALESSANDRO RIEDEL

How school will reopen after three semesters of distance learning

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"I'll be shocked if we ever have to completely shut down," Arbizu said, "but I can see if we got to the point where we needed to go back to a hybrid solution, we could pivot quickly to that."

"I'll be shocked if we ever have to completely shut down"

These preparations involve technology, which was the only way educators were able to conduct some semblance of a productive school year virtually. For the upcoming year, every student has been given a Chromebook. However, students can still bring personal devices on campus, the technology staff will not be able to assist with those devices.

The vaccinations will not become mandatory for students or staff until the Food and Drug Administration declares the vaccines are off emergency status. Aragon will not be excluding unvaccinated students from events and will instead search for methods to conduct events in ways that minimize virus transmission, such as holding more events outside.

The school will also keep track of who is interacting with whom to allow for contact trac-

ing in the case that a student does contract COVID-19. This will be an effort to keep track of who is exposed to the virus.

"I will be asking teachers to keep track of where students are sitting," Arbizu said. "It's like, 'Work with

students the way you normally work with students, but keep track of who's working with whom, who's sitting where, so that in the event that somebody does get ill, we have an idea of where they were sitting, at least in the classrooms.'"

"Several ... schools in California are not counting [pass/fail grades] against students"

Variants of COVID-19, such as the delta variant, have emerged and proven to have some resistance to currently distributed vaccines. Thus, the school is implementing precautions to prevent its spread among students and staff.

"For a lot of the new variants or people that are vaccinated that then get COV-

ID-19, a lot of the symptoms are cold-like symptoms," said Assistant Principal Lisa Nagendran. "We are encouraging all students and all staff to stay home when they are sick."

As of recent legislation, AB 104, it is possible to request a grade change from a letter grade to a pass or no pass mark on any student's transcript during the 2020-2021 school year, due to the untraditional nature of the year.

"Part of the benefits of that for a student might be for academic eligibility for being able to play sports," said Assistant Principal Nicole Elenz-Martin. "It also doesn't affect the GPA for the student overall. Almost

all of the California State Universities, UCs and several of the private schools in California are not counting it against students."

Those looking to fill out this form can find it on the district website and linked on the Aragon homepage. The deadline for submitting the form is Monday, Aug. 16.



Aragon will fully reopen in the fall school year.

ALESSANDRO RIEDEL

California braces as fire season begins, thousands of blazes burn



YUE YU

Sophia Qin
NEWS EDITOR

This summer, California greets the heat that creates perfect days for beach vacations and pool parties. However, unusually high temperatures, sometimes exceeding 120 degrees Fahrenheit, are nearly baking regions in the Golden State, suggesting this may not be typical summer weather: it is climate change. California has warmed an average of 3 degrees Fahrenheit, compared to the global increase of 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit. The five hottest years in history struck within the past decade. In 2019, California celebrated the end of its seven-year-long drought. However, two years later, the state has barely recovered and dry conditions are creeping back. The majority of California's water supply is sourced from snowpack, precipitation and atmospheric rivers.

fers and underground water supply. ... Rain runs off right away, so less [water] is available in the summer."

Arid summers, low humidity levels and parched vegetation provide the perfect breeding grounds for wildfires.

"We have data from tree rings, [which] tell us how often [fires were] in the past," said Susan Kocher, a forestry advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension. "Native people were living [in California] for at least 10,000 years and during that period, fires burned frequently, but ... at a very low intensity."

In some instances, small fires can be beneficial to forest health. They remove dead trees and overgrown vegetation from the floors to make room for new plants. Burned matter also serves as rich nutrients. Beginning in 1910, however, wildfire suppression attempted to extinguish fires, resulting in the accumulation of fuel. Consequently, low in-

second largest in California's recorded history. It erupted on July 14 and is active in the Butte and Plumas Counties, scorching 489,287 acres of land.

"It's heartbreaking," Kocher said. "Firefighters are doing everything they can to cope with this weather [but] it's almost impossible to stop these fires. They are spotting, which means the main fire [has] thrown out embers and the wind carries them across the fire lines two or three miles ahead to start new fires. Once something has

burned like that, it's not a given that it will regenerate into a forest in the future."

Wildfires not only destroy the surrounding natural environment, but they also negatively impact human health. The Dixie Fire hit a region already deeply scarred by the 2018 Camp Fire, California's most costly natural disaster. Families had no choice but to flee their homes for safety, which bring back unpleasant memories.

the lungs and cause respiratory to heart-related issues. It can go as far as premature death [for people with] pre-existing conditions such as diabetes [or] asthma."

Droughts also bring inconvenience to the community on a multitude of dimensions.

"With drought, water sources, especially groundwater, can become contaminated," Teyton said. "There's a risk of certain diseases like valley

"Firefighters are doing everything they can to cope with this weather, but it's almost impossible to stop"

"From an emotional standpoint, it is really scary," said Anais Teyton, a PhD student at University of California, San Diego and San Diego State University studying epidemiology and health impact from climate change. "[There are] many mental health impacts from climate change, [such as] anxiety [and] fear of the future. People have PTSD from losing their homes [and] their livelihoods."

Constant burning also compromises physical health because it releases black carbon that degrades air quality. Following wildfire events, vulnerable populations are advised to minimize outdoor activity and wear respirators.

"Health impacts can range from minimal symptoms, like a runny nose or a cough," Teyton said. "Small particles called PM 2.5 (black carbon) can go into

fever, a fungus that thrives in dry conditions. Agricultural communities may not be able to grow certain crops."

Gov. Gavin Newsom has proposed investments in water recycling, stormwater capture and reuse and other strategies to build California's climate resiliency. He also signed a \$536 million wildfire package to suppress wildfires and improve forest health. In addition to federal assistance, Gov. Newsom has urged individuals to voluntarily reduce water use by 15% and is offering cash for residents who conserve energy.

Breaking the cycle of higher temperatures, drier conditions and extreme natural disasters, and restoring the health of the Golden State's ecosystem takes the commitment of both the government and its citizens.

The ARAGON OUTLOOK

aragonoutlook.org

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"These types of fires can actually kill the forest"

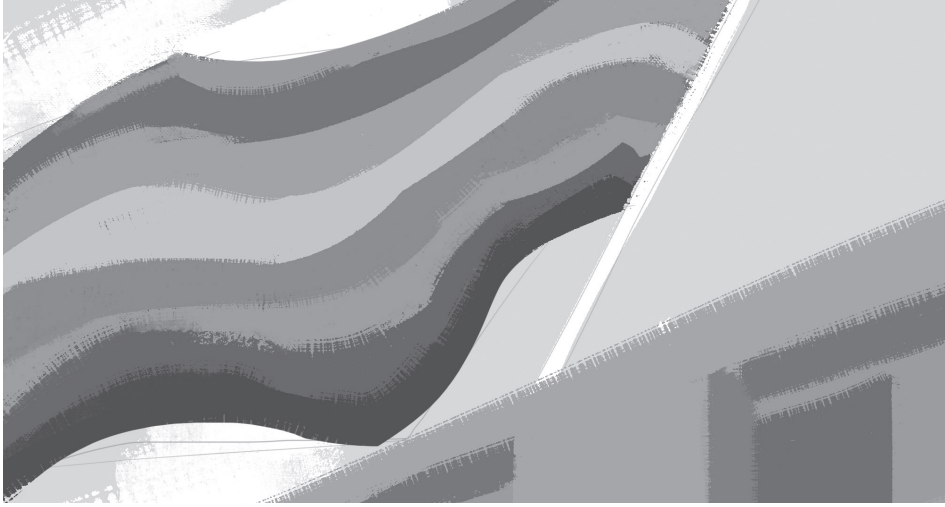
However, the annual rainfall in spring of 2021 failed to replenish the water-stressed land. California's 1,500 reservoirs are only at half their normal levels. As of July 8, Governor Gavin Newsom has declared 50 counties to be in a state of emergency.

"We've had way less precipitation over the past two winters," said Patrick Brown, an assistant professor in the department of Meteorology and Climate Science at San Jose State University. "Climate change [also causes] more precipitation to fall as rain, rather than snow. Snowpack acts like a battery [because] it will slowly melt over the warm season and trickle down into the aquifer

and out of control.

"For a while, we saw a large decrease in the total amount of area burned in California [due to wildfire suppression]," Brown said. "Now we're in a bad situation where [there's] hotter temperatures and drier conditions, [along with] excess fuel that would not have been here if we let the fires burn. ... Whenever we do have fire, it's more intense. These types of fires can actually kill the forest."

As of early August, 6,049 blazing flames dot the state's fire map according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Dixie Fire is by far the deadliest in 2021 and ranks



YUE YU

Pride: more than just a flag



Carolyn Mish
FEATURES EDITOR

I remember June 26, 2015, clearly. I was glued to the TV, anxiously awaiting the outcome of a monumental Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage: *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Monitoring the Supreme Court wasn't one of my usual 10-year-old pastimes — my interest was rooted in my own and many other people's right to marry.

One of the clearest images of that day was a rainbow flag: a symbol that cemented itself as a hallmark of joy and acceptance. Each color has a rich meaning — red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, indigo for serenity and purple for spirit. It's a symbol of pride — one that flies across the nation, a triumphant North Star for my community to look up at and know that the harm and pain we have suffered has not been futile. Modern iterations such as the progress pride flag also recognize people of color, transgender people and those lost to the AIDS crisis. These flags symbolize inclusion and recognition: actions we have been historically denied.

Despite the passage of a proclamation in support of the LGBTQ+ community, members of the San Mateo Union High School District's Board of Trustees compared our flag to a sports flag, meant to advertise and attract. Completely devoid of the history and symbolism the pride flag holds, this comparison trivializes and mocks the meaning of the rainbow flag, distracting from its hard-earned legitimacy.

Additionally, Trustee Robert Griffin compared the rainbow flag to the Confederate flag. The implication that the Confederate flag, a symbol of vitriol and hatred, is comparable to

the rainbow flag, is grossly negligent and harmful. The comments made at the May 20 Board meeting are insensitive and disappointing. However, I am unsurprised. Our district lacks comprehensive, inclusive LGBTQ+ sex education. Dozens upon dozens of documented instances of on-campus homophobia and transphobia have been reported online. Students have been harassed and invalidated time and time again. Administrators have failed to take sufficient action.

The Trustees' comments defied the Board's previous commitments to equality and allyship. This past October, it took a Grand Jury report to urge administrators into action following a slew of racist acts. To support Black and Brown students and faculty is to support LGBTQ+ Black and Brown students and faculty; the intersectionality of these identities must not be overlooked. The Board has made declarations of support toward Black and Brown community members, and the comments made com-

Board's attention. The city of San Jose's flag policy outlines that requests to fly flags other than State and U.S. flags must be raised internally, by a council member or the Mayor. If we replicate this policy on a Board level, excessive public expression and requests will not be an issue. If anything, it proves to us that online outreach and community organizing is effective.

During the special meeting on June 4, I heard about concerned emails Trustees received from the community more than future steps to support LGBTQ+ students on campus. The action taken on the Board's part to reverse their initial decision through an emergency meeting is damage control.

I appreciate Board Trustees Greg Land's, Ligia Andrade Zúñiga's and Linda Lees Dwyer's steps to alleviate the harm of the May 20 statements. Their defense of the motion to fly the flag and examination of flag code and precedence legitimized and supported

"Administrators have failed to take sufficient action"

paring the Confederate flag to the pride flag fly in the face of their previous commitment to allyship.

The state of California has incorporated the pride flag into the month of June since 2019 without issue, in accordance with U.S. Flag Code.

The logic of the Board's initial decision doesn't hold up under scrutiny. Trustees Robert Griffin and Peter Hanley both cited precedent as reasoning to avoid allowing the rainbow flag to fly.

"If we give one group recognition by flying a flag we have to give every group recognition by flying a flag," Griffin said in the May 20 Board meeting. "Or we will be hard-pressed to defend our position."

Policy can easily be enacted to prevent Griffin and Hanley's fear of public expression via the flagpole from becoming reality. The Board itself agendized the discussion of the flag along with the proclamation, rather than an outside group calling it to the

those who spoke during public comment. Griffin's apology and rescission of his original vote was a promising step.

However, the 4-1 vote to raise the pride flag at district sites is not the end. The homophobia, transphobia and queerphobia that runs rampant on campus cannot be dismissed with a simple proclamation. Policy changes can include LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education, LGBTQ+ history, improved responses to bigotry on campus and improved access to mental health resources. San Mateo Pride Center offers to work with administration toward acceptance and improved campus atmospheres.

It is vital that students feel safe reporting and seeking justice in cases of harassment and abuse. While flying the flag is a visible commitment to allyship, it is just the beginning of a long journey toward supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

Space tourism is here...sort of



Vedant Gaur
FEATURES EDITOR

April 12, 1961: Yuri Gagarin is the first man in space; July 20, 1969: Neil Armstrong is the first man to walk on the moon; November 20, 1998: The building of the International Space Station commences as the first segment is launched.

Each of these dates stands as a landmark to humanity's leaps in exploring the frontier of space. Needless to say, although the vastness of space holds many unknowns, the prospect of experiencing it is no longer out of the question — at least for some, that is.

July 11 marked the 90 minute manned space flight of Virgin Galactic's founder Richard Branson, who after 17 years of preparation, was able to achieve an altitude of approximately 280,000 feet, surpassing the Earth-space border. Jeff Bezos, founder and executive chairman of Amazon, the parent company of Blue Origin, tailed behind Branson on July 20. The crew was able to reach 347,769 feet, surpassing the Kármán line, the point in space where normal aircrafts cannot fly due to the thin air.

Human spaceflight isn't the primary objective of a certain billionaire, however. Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, has already set his sights on much deeper space observation. Although Musk bought a ticket for a Virgin Galactic flight, he made it clear that his main concern is the colonization of Mars. Similarly, Bezos sees spaceflight as a stepping stone for the eventual colonization and wider accessibility of space.

The goals of all three do coincide though; human spaceflight, tourism and extraterrestrial colonization all make one thing clear: the commercialization of space is rapidly expanding, whether we like it or not.

"The commercialization of space is rapidly expanding, whether we like it or not"

The idea of travelling to space is an intriguing one, and for many, a childish fantasy. Who wouldn't

want to experience the sci-fi novels of spaceships travelling at light speed? In that way, travel to space has become another once-in-a-lifetime activity.

Yet, where do we draw the line between recreation and the outlandish? The market for space tourism stands only as a glamorous joyride for the rich. The true remarkable nature of space shouldn't be boiled down into three minutes of floating around in zero gravity.

In essence, the billionaire space race has begun as executives battle to reach the highest altitudes and expand space to consumers the fastest. That is the simple truth for now, and likely for years to come: it's a billionaire space race, not one of the ordinary constituent.

Particularly, as NASA opens the space station to the private sector, the price of a single flight can reach upwards of \$55 million. Virgin Galactic has announced flights in early 2022 to the edge of space will cost \$250,000. Although the offer does have 600 individuals lined up, some since as early as 2013, the price tag stands as a firm barrier.

Exorbitant prices aside, the commercialized space sector is set to grow over the coming years. Currently valued at \$336 to \$350 billion, the industry is set to generate more than \$1 trillion in revenue in 2040, according to Mor-

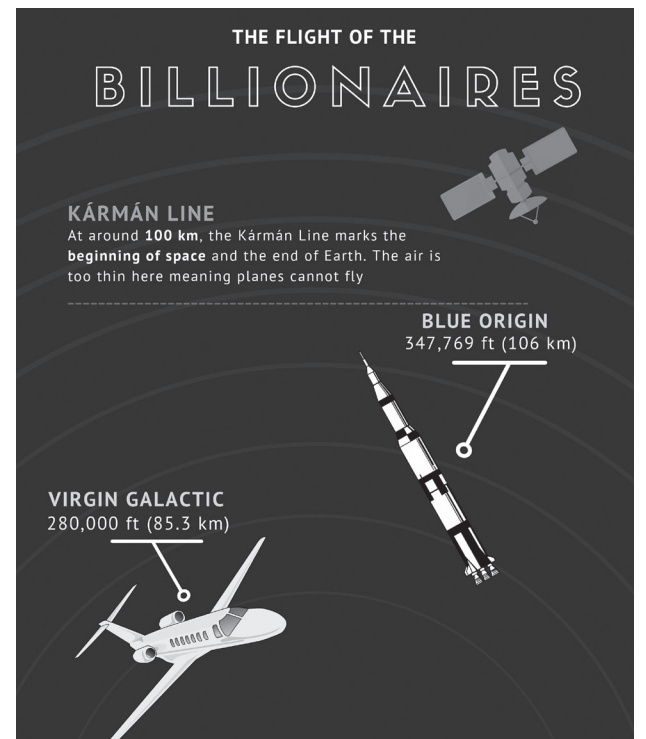
tary devices for space.

That being said, private versus public involvement in space exploration has proven to be vastly different. Governmental space exploration has almost always been for research. This funding has allowed public bodies to make advancements and focus on research which may not be as applicable to private entities due to poor return. Investment in knowledge just isn't enough to maintain a company, or even an industry, explaining why companies must choose their focus wisely when it concerns space.



JESSICA FU

Innovations have come out of these private exploits nonetheless. SpaceX was recently able to develop their booster return technology that allowed them to safely return rockets back to Earth and be reused, saving millions of dollars. Many times, innovation is certainly driven by profit, although as of now, it is beginning to feel like this drive overpowers the need for further innovation.



VEDANT GAUR

gan Stanley, one of the largest investment firms based in New York. Private companies range anywhere from companies such as Virgin Galactic or Boeing that invest in space

Equity in space in the form of ownership also comes into question as commercial space flight becomes more plausible. As of now, the edge of space does not fall under governmental jurisdiction. In 1963, the United Nations General Assembly outlined that no nation would be allowed to claim ownership of space and that space exploration is open to all states. As the area becomes accessible, however, the lack of regulations currently set in place ultimately come into question.

“Happier Than Ever”: the curse of growing up famous



Audrey Smetana
CENTERSPREAD EDITOR

Since her emergence onto the music scene five years ago, Billie Eilish has grown up before the public eye, seemingly transforming overnight from the moody alternative artist known for her fanbase of “sad teenage girls” into the full-fledged, Grammy Award-winning pop star we know her as today. And as her music career has grown, so has she — Eilish was only 14-years-old when her song “ocean eyes” first went viral on SoundCloud.

Now at 19, with the release of her second full-length album “Happier Than Ever,” she finds herself grappling with the consequences of her fame. Contemplating on the past five for-

INTERSCOPE RECORDS
mative years of her life, Eilish uses her music to divulge, often in heartbreaking detail, the unique struggles of having been forced to grow up as a teenage girl under the harsh, unforgiving glare of the spotlight.

Sonically, the album is a bit of a mess, bouncing from soft lo-fi beats to samba-inspired rhythms and punk-rock guitar riffs and everything in between. It’s far from cohesive, and probably shouldn’t work, yet somehow, Eilish pulls it off. Perhaps it works because of the way its lack of sonic cohesion matches the tumultuousness of her current controversies, or because the 16-song album’s sole producer is her older brother Finneas O’Connell. But regardless, the album isn’t really trying to be tied together through any sonic

elements; instead, it hones in on the major themes resurfacing time and time again in the lyrics: love, fame and growing up.

“Getting Older” is a deeply personal track in which Eilish laments having to “get older” amidst fame. It sets the tone for much of the rest of the album, juxtaposing straightforward confessions with soft, slow melodies. “I Didn’t Change My Number” and “Billie Bossa Nova” features a return to form, incorporating the quiet, charming cheekiness and half-smirk that pervaded much of Eilish’s older work. The

that has become her signature style, but the quiet tension already built up halfway through the album aches for release.

But this quiet singing style is not without its merits, and it is in “Not My Responsibility,” a spoken interlude Eilish first debuted over a year ago, where it is best utilized. Her bone-chilling voice cuts to the core, only overshadowed by the weight of her words. Eilish addresses the listener directly, confronting them and the public in general, on the relentless objectification she has been subjected to. Her anger and frustration is

relentless objectification and sexualization of teenage girls, especially those in the limelight.

The album’s title track, the second to last song on the album, is when Eilish finally provides a release. Starting as a slow guitar ballad musing on a toxic, irresponsible lover, the song suddenly erupts into full-on punk-rock. And then, in perhaps the best moment of the entire album, Eilish half-screams, half-belts “Just f— in’ leave me alone.” It is a giant breath out, the tension finally

OUR OUTLOOK



“It hones in on the major themes resurfacing time and time again in the lyrics: love, fame and growing up”

lead single “my future,” while somewhat underwhelming, is a good representative of the album’s general sound, starting off mournfully with Eilish’s trademark croons and halfway through bursting into laidback beats reminiscent of lo-fi music.

The middle of the album is where it begins to drag. Here, several of the songs such as “GOLDWING,” “Lost Cause” and “Hailey’s Comet,” while not unpleasant, don’t add anything new to the album. It is also here that Eilish’s trademark whispery croons begin to border on redundant, leaving something more to be desired from the vocalist who clearly has the ability to deliver loud, powerful belts, yet chooses to hold back. It is understandable why Eilish would feel compelled to stick to the breathy voice

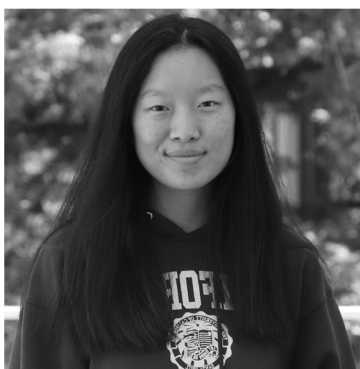
palpable, and it is no wonder; long before her 18th birthday, Eilish was already garnering attention for her “strange” style of dress — baggy clothing, which, as she would later disclose, she wore to hide her body from public scrutiny. But if anything, it had the opposite effect.

Last October, paparazzi caught Eilish walking to her car in a tank top, prompting two consecutive reactions: first, a tweet declaring that Eilish had developed a “wine mom body,” and second, thousands upon thousands of tweets simultaneously defending and sexualizing her. The next song that the interludes fade into, the haunting “Overheated,” almost certainly references this incident. These two tracks are a demand of sorts, a demand for the public to acknowledge the

shattered, Eilish no longer containing her anger behind whispered slights. The angriest, loudest moment on the album is also somehow the most beautiful; it is the epitome of catharsis, something Eilish undoubtedly needs.

The album is imperfect, but it is a powerful collection of songs with moments of intense introspection and melodic beauty. And it couldn’t have come out at a better time: emblematic of society’s tendency to tear down what it builds up, Eilish has been facing more scrutiny than ever before in the past year, plagued by Internet controversies and cancellations. The sexualization has, if anything, gotten worse. Yet with “Happier Than Ever,” Billie Eilish is making her statement to the world and ever-watching public eye: she will not take it lying down.

Opinion: the NCAA should compensate its student athletes



Amanda Hao
SPORTS EDITOR

In the Supreme Court’s unanimous decision *National Collegiate Athletic Association v. Alston* on June 21, the court ruled that some NCAA rules regarding compensation for student athletes were an antitrust law violation, but allowed the NCAA ban on athlete salaries to stand.

As a student who participated in athletics throughout childhood, I understand firsthand that the time commitment required for sports is enormous. From missing

classes and tests to sacrificing health, student-athletes undergo a lot. College athletics, which is on a whole other playing field than grade school sports, also force students to spend hours in their sport. However, while coaches get paid for their hard work and effort, athletes aren’t compensated for their continuous “work” in daily practices and games.

A deeper look into college sports reveals a dark side, especially among football players: 34% have suffered a concussion and 30% have been treated for two or more, according to Forbes. Suddenly, the allure of gridiron glamour loses its luster. On average, there are 12,500 injuries every year in college sports.

In addition, tournament schedules force athletes to miss classes. At some schools, basketball players miss a quarter of all spring semester classes to participate in tournaments.

Being a college athlete is tantamount to a full-time job and often requires students to

prioritize sports over academics and health. A 2015 Pacific-12 Conference study found that 80% of players said they missed at least one class because of football in the preceding year and 54% said they did not have enough time to study for critical exams. At Rutgers University, coaches routinely interfered with academic programs and pulled athletes out of classes. According to CBS News, a typical player spends 40 to 50 hours a week on football-related ac-

“The athletic department offered no guidance on loans”

tivities, virtually year-around. Due to the unhealthy obsession of sports during college as some athletes sacrifice their health for sports, many student-athletes cannot afford the luxury of having time to study. Consequently, athletes remain unable to receive high grades.

Greedy sports programs impose another painful misery. Most students — 70% — amass significant debt during college. Many non-athletes attempt to minimize their loans by taking side jobs — an option not available to athletes because of their rigorous schedules. The result: student-athletes accumulate debt at a faster pace.

In a June 2020 survey of 4,889 NCAA student-athletes,

around 59% of them incurred debt after graduation with one-third of athletes leaving with over \$40,000 in debt. With the Supreme Court’s decision, athletes have already started to sign endorsement deals as the NCAA’s new rules and state laws go into effect.

Jacksonville University full-back Robert DiMarco took out over \$22,000 in student loans before graduating in May 2013. DiMarco explained that the athletic department offered no

guidance on loans and financial issues, forcing athletes to take out more money than needed.

PBS estimates the cost of injuries to college athletes at \$446 million to \$1.5 billion per year. Worse, many players reject treatment, often because of the expense involved, and return to practice. Athletes should be compensated for the myriad of hardships they endure in devotion to their sports.

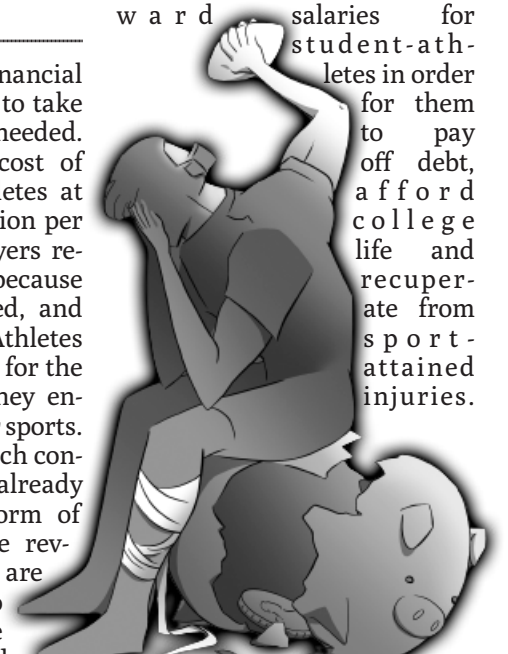
Critics of this approach contend that players are already compensated in the form of scholarships and game revenue. However, these are seldom sufficient to meet their needs. The vast sums of money trading hands because of col-

lege sports does not filter down to the players. According to Forbes, most sports revenue stays “in the hands of a few select administrators, athletic directors, and coaches.”

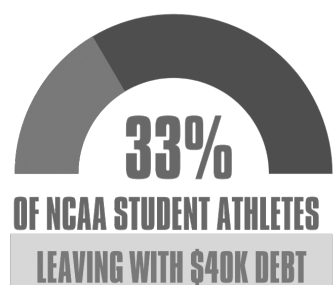
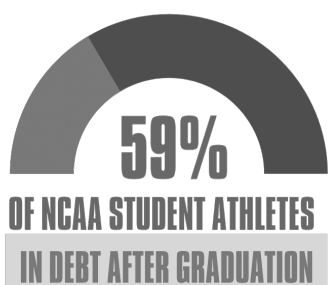
Further, while athletics scholarships total to \$2.6 billion yearly, only 2% of high school athletes are awarded some form of scholarship to compete in college.

NCAA v. Alston is the first step toward providing just treatment for college athletes. However, as rising costs of being a student-athlete surpass their scholarship compensation, the NCAA must look to ward salaries for

student-athletes in order for them to pay off debt, afford college life and recuperate from sport-attained injuries.



JESSICA FU



DATA FROM STATISTA



Softball superstar Megan Grant gets onto the U-18 Women's National Team



COURTESY OF THE WEST BAY WARRIORS INSTAGRAM

Catherine Wang and
Stephanie Lin

SPORTS EDITOR AND SPORTS WRITER

In 2018, The Aragon Outlook named Megan Grant a “softball superstar.” The then-freshman committed to the University of California, Los Angeles and went on to help Aragon’s varsity softball team dominate as a shortstop. This past June, the senior became one of 18 players to land a place in Team U.S.A.’s U-18 Women’s National Team.

Grant’s softball journey began when she joined the West Bay Warriors, a Bay Area softball team based in San Mateo, at age 12. She had already played baseball for seven years by then and the coaches immediately saw her potential. Coach Kelly McDonald, who runs the organization with her dad, vividly recounted when she first met Grant.

“She was like a gift from God,” McDonald said. “Just the way [she swung] ... we knew right away [that she was] ... something special.”



COURTESY OF MEGAN GRANT

The West Bay Warriors significantly helped Grant grow to her full potential. McDonald worked with Grant on the mental side of the game in order to help her succeed.

“The only thing that was gonna prevent her from being great was her own mind,” McDonald said. “If you’re not mentally tough enough, this game will chew you up and spit you out. ... When you recognize

“I think that she will go down as one of the greatest softball players of all time”

the greatness in Megan, you ... have no choice but to hold her accountable when she starts.”

McDonald and Grant immediately clicked in the beginning, but the friendship also made it challenging in terms of helping young Grant realize softball was a game of overcoming failures. McDonald needed to draw the line somewhere.

“I was ... very hard on her ... when she would act out,” McDonald said. “We get along so well, and then all of a sudden, it would be almost like a shock to her. Like, ‘Why are you coming after me so hard?’”

The coaches also tried to help Grant showcase her abilities to as many people as possible.

“[It’s our] ... job to make sure that [her] talent [is not] hidden in [San Mateo],” McDonald said. “[We] worked really hard to enter the absolute best tournaments that we can. We fly all across the [country].”

These efforts paid off and resulted in Grant’s unusual recruiting journey. In the summer of 2017, months after she joined the Warriors in January, the U-12 team won seventh place at the Premier Girls Fastpitch Nationals. Grant was not yet a high schooler when she got her first phone call from Washington University, currently one of the top 10 colleges in the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Softball Rankings. But the coaches wanted her to aim even higher.

“My dad [was like], ‘[UCLA] won the national championship,’” McDonald said. “‘They’re the number one team, she’s the number one player, [so] she has to be in front of them.’ [After nationals], she actually said, ‘Okay, Washington’s here, when does UCLA get to watch me?’ [Six] ... months later, she’s

at a UCLA camp.”

At the beginning of 2018, Grant committed to UCLA with a full-ride scholarship after being noticed for her skill at a camp. Usually, scouts go to both camps and games.

“I ... wasn’t even at the camp,” said Grant’s mom. “I sent her with my oldest son, and I just told him, ... ‘I don’t

think [anything is] gonna happen. But if [the coaches] want to talk to someone at the end, you’re going to represent her. [Then] he ... called me [and] ... said [that] they want [me and Megan] to come to the next [week’s] camp.”

After being called back to a second camp, Grant was in. Being committed at such a young age, however, comes with pressure and responsibility.

“Everyone kind of knows you,” Grant said. “They expect you to do good every time.

event, the atmosphere and people were very friendly and welcoming.

“Coming in, I didn’t think I was gonna ... come out with so many friends,” Grant said. “Just being with the other girls made it so much sweeter.”

The trials were challenging, but Grant’s coach supported her throughout the process.

“I was like, ‘These pitchers are good,’ Grant said. “What’s the mindset going in? And how should I adjust to how good they’re pitching? She just

“Your name is known before you even walk into the room”

Your name is known before you even walk into the room.”

Fortunately, Grant’s close bond with McDonald helps her cope with those expectations.

“We both pick up each other’s energy to the point where ... if I’m having an off day coaching, she’s like that mirror that I can’t avoid,” McDonald said. “Similarly ... she wears her emotion ... We [are] always talking [and] ... working on her communication skills.”

told me to ... be calm because whenever I’m calm, things are good for me.”

Not giving too much thought to the results, Grant was pleasantly surprised when she learned she had been accepted onto the national team. Her family couldn’t have been more proud of her.

“It’s very surreal ... that she’ll be representing the U.S.A.,” Grant’s mother said. “It’s an amazing opportunity for her. ... I get so emotional



COURTESY OF MEGAN GRANT

Having McDonald as a coach makes it easy for Grant to openly express her feelings.

“[She’s] ... someone who I could count on [to be] real and honest with me,” Grant said. “She’s [my] ride or die.”

As a student-athlete, Grant pushes her limits to make the people around her proud.

“Of course she hits every day, [but] I’m talking like waking up at 6 a.m. going to a workout, then going to hit,” McDonald said. “She totally changed her diet. She gets all her homework done ... [and] she just does not let herself slip.”

The combination of talent, support and dedication allowed Grant to be selected to participate at the Oklahoma trials for a spot on the U.S.A. U-18 Women’s Softball team. The trials took place in the U.S.A. Softball Hall of Fame Complex. Players completed various position drills on the first day and scrimmages on the second day. Despite being an extremely competitive

every time I think about it.”

Grant also reflected on everything that led up to this special achievement.

“When I first started playing, I would ... say kind of as a joke, ‘I want to make the U.S.A. team,’” Grant said. “I did not expect [it] to come [before] college.”

Seeing Grant’s determination and dedication to softball firsthand, McDonald has a lot of confidence in Grant and what lies ahead of her.

“I hope that there’s an opportunity for her to play professional ball [and] ... I think that she will go down as one of the greatest softball players of all time,” McDonald said.

The national team will be competing in Lima, Peru at the World Baseball Softball Confederation U-18 World Cup and in Cali, Colombia at the Junior Pan American Games. Grant is not yet certain where her softball passion will take her. However, for now, she will proudly represent the U.S.A.