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A look at the new style of the pop art movement

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Changes coming to Metra trains



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1

2016

Sticking to the plan

Town Hall addresses one-year update of Strategic Plan



ANDREA SALCEDO LLAURADO
CAMPUS REPORTER

SENIOR COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS reported to faculty and staff about the progress made during the first year of the Strategic Plan's implementation at the initial Town Hall meeting of the Spring 2016 Semester, held on Jan. 29.

President and CEO Kwang-Wu Kim and Senior Vice President and Provost Stan Wearden discussed the plan's initiatives, including the revision and creation of major and minor curricula, followed by a brief Q&A session at Film Row Cinema in the 1104 S. Wabash Ave. Building.

SEE PLAN, PAGE 10

» LOU FOGLIA/CHRONICLE

Budget crisis likely to turn students, businesses away

» **KYRA SENESE**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As tensions surrounding the Illinois budget stalemate continue to build, concerns for the future of higher education in the state are gaining momentum.

Questions regarding the delayed disbursement of state-funded grants and scholarships like the Monetary Award Program Grant have escalated into queries of the validity and strength of colleges and universities operating in a state that hasn't had a functional budget for many months.

As reported May 11, 2015, by The Chronicle, 1,923 students received MAP Grant aid for the 2014–2015 academic year, and \$7.3 million total went to Columbia students.

It has become common knowledge that the Illinois budget standoff has affected thousands of college students in need of supplemental funds for the 2015–2016 academic year, but the problem doesn't stop there. Some are questioning whether the state's financial instability is going to drive prospective undergraduate and graduate students elsewhere, effectively digging Illinois' finances into a bigger hole.

In an Oct. 5, 2015, article by The Chronicle, Assistant Vice President of Student Financial Services Cynthia Grunden said there was not yet any reason to believe the MAP Grant program would be shut down or that its funds would be cut, but that students relying on the state-funded aid should consider alternative options to pay off their debts.

However, students are still without answers after roughly seven months without a state budget. How long can Illinois college students who enrolled in college with the expectation of receiving a certain amount of aid be expected to scrape by?

An opinion piece published Jan. 27, 2016, by Crain's Chicago Business acknowledged some of the more severe damage the budget crisis could do to Illinois' reputation in the higher education realm. With the budget gridlock remaining firm, the Crain's piece suggests businesses will be more likely than ever to abandon Illinois if it seems the state can't offer an educated workforce to build their businesses.



"What about the promise the state made to the poorest students awaiting [MAP Grants]?" the Crain's piece questioned. "[The students have] held up their end of the bargain."

But the businesses aren't the only ones being driven out of state. As more time passes without progress or reassurance, high school counselors are increasingly likely to discourage young adults from pursuing in-state colleges and universities if they know the students might fare better elsewhere.

While attending college in-state used to offer students more favorable tuition rates as in-state residents, Illinois students are pressed to leave. In some cases, students who are not up for the move out of state may opt out of attending college altogether. The budget standoff in relation to education funding does not benefit the state's finances in the long-term.

What will those who could not afford in-state tuition in 2016 be able to achieve 10 years down the line? What workforce will Illinois be able to tout if the majority of its residents no longer have the experience of a four-year college or university education?

The Crain's piece also pointed out the concern that students who are forced to drop out mid-way through college have already received partial aid and accrued thousands of dollars in loans, resulting in no degree but millions of dollars of federal debt. While the governor may say he's doing what's necessary from a business standpoint, the statewide standstill is doing long-term harm to people.

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Members of the United Staff of Columbia College rallied Dec. 8 in opposition of a merit pay system, which they refuse to consider without first receiving a cost-of-living raise, as reported Dec. 14, 2015 by The Chronicle.

» FILE PHOTO

Merit pay system calls into question 'subjective' ranking system

» LAUREN KOSTIUK
CAMPUS EDITOR

A NUMBER OF full-time, nonunion staff members say they have found inadequate information and loopholes in the merit pay evaluation system introduced by the college on Jan. 12.

The college will be allocating 2 percent of the salary for all eligible full-time staff to be distributed to each department for potential raises for the 208 eligible applicants, according to a Jan. 12 emailed announcement sent to faculty and staff.

"They introduced a system that is flawed and has a lot of implicit subjectivity to it," said a source who wished to remain

anonymous for fear of reprisal.

This is the first time the college is implementing a standardized and measurable review process to determine salary increases, according to the Jan. 12 email. College spokeswoman Cara Birch said practices previously varied by department but are now consistent collegewide.

Michelle Gates, CFO and vice president of Business Affairs, and Stan Wearden, senior vice president and provost, did not comment for this story as of press time.

Another source, who asked to stay anonymous out of fear of retaliation, said there are concerns about inconsistent interpretation of performance standards. The source

said one top-performing employee might not rank as highly as a lesser-performing employee who works for another supervisor who ranks everyone highly, leaving employees at the "mercy of subjectivity."

"While I appreciate the raise, it frustrates me that there are not clear guidelines for the sustainability of the merit system," the second anonymous source said. "I think an across-the-board cost-of-living increase would show more integrity and transparency by the administration."

Birch said there are specifications included in evaluations and performance reviews and ratings to follow for both the faculty and staff, adding that it is a

"give-and-take" process.

She said evaluations and ratings are about having an open discussion with the supervisor or department chair about improvements and accomplishments, adding the checks and balances process comes from the employees or faculty themselves during the discussion.

"No system is perfect," Birch said. "This is the first time we are implementing this [type of system], so if there is going to be things that change, things will change, but it is up to the employees and individual circumstances to help shape that."

Many department chairs and supervisors completed the evaluations by Nov. 30 before they were informed about the implementation of the merit pay system, which has led some to question whether adequate funds will be allocated to departments to support those eligible for salary increases based on their rankings.

Human Resources and the budget office extended the deadline for performance review submissions until Jan. 22, according to a FAQ email sent out by the college on Jan. 12.

Birch said if a certain department did not have enough funds to support those eligible, then that department would have to reduce the salary increases for those eligible to match the total amount of funds allocated to the department.

The second anonymous source said no instruction was given that the review processes would dictate merit raises, adding that dialogue may have been different during those review processes if staff knew about the new system.

"If staff are allowed to go into the review process with a clear understanding about the merit process, we can develop a sustainable system that does not threaten disenfranchising more staff," the second anonymous source said.



» PHOTOS SANTIAGO COVARRUBIAS /CHRONICLE

Nonunion members of Columbia's staff have found flaws in the new merit pay system announced in emails sent in January to faculty and staff, according to anonymous sources. The United Staff of Columbia College has rejected this system, as reported Jan. 25 by The Chronicle.

SEE STAFF, PAGE 11



» G-JUN YAM/CHRONICLE

Luther Hughes, newly-elected SGA president and a senior creative writing major, encouraged students to join the association at the introductory social on Jan. 26.

SGA sets new agendas for diversity, transparency

» CAROLYN BRADLEY
CAMPUS REPORTER

STUDENTS CONVENED IN The Loft at 916 S. Wabash Ave. on Jan. 26 to meet the senators of Columbia's Student Government Association and to learn more about SGA's goals for the rest of the academic year.

Luther Hughes, newly-elected SGA president and a senior creative writing major, said SGA's focus for the new semester is reflected in its five goals: college affordability, student voice, building community, accessibility and transparency.

"We want to make sure we are [involved] in the events,

representing who we are and being accessible to the students," Hughes said. "Last semester, we were so involved in restructuring [SGA] that we ended up losing focus of the [accessibility]."

Hughes said he wants to increase Columbia's focus on diversity this semester.

"Diversity is a broad word we throw around," Hughes said. "Making it more tangible and seeing more results in and outside of the classroom is a big thing to accomplish here at Columbia."

Arissa Scott, SGA's student representative to the college's board of trustees and a senior fashion studies major, said the organization plans to return to Springfield, Illinois, in April to lobby for the Monetary Award Program Grant funding as the organization did the previous spring.

Scott said SGA aims to be more transparent about its actions because many students are unaware of them.

"We are very ready and focused to take on the new semester," Scott said. "We want to host more events for everyone to mingle and get to know the entire Senate."

Erika Kooda, SGA's executive vice president of communications and a senior radio and business & entrepreneurship double major, said SGA wants to use social media to increase participation at meetings.

"I want us to be approachable," Kooda said. "We are students, too, and I hope people will get that this semester."

Amanda Hamrick, SGA executive vice president and a junior interactive arts & media major,

said many students think SGA works more closely with administration than with the student body.

"We want the students to get to know [SGA] as much as possible," Hamrick said. "We are trying to hit a more personal [note] this semester with SGA and the rest of the students."

Members also welcomed Kaela Ritter, SGA's new vice president of finance and a junior business & entrepreneurship major, to the board during the first meeting.

"We are all on a common ground," Ritter said. "I think that helps with both friendship and working together. We all have our hearts set on the same things, and it works out really well."

Hughes said SGA is focused on students for the upcoming semester and he does not foresee any changes under his leadership.

"I think things will be more smooth, seamless and congruent," Hughes said. "We are all pretty much gung-ho to accomplish our goals in a tangible way."

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'Genderpoo' prompts gender fluidity around campus

» **ANDREA SALCEDO LLAURADO**
CAMPUS REPORTER

HALF-NAKED MERMAIDS WITH mustaches, same-sex couples in symbolic poses and syringes linked to slogans like "free to hormone myself" cover the walls of the all-gender bathroom on the fifth floor of the 33 E. Congress Parkway Building and five other all-gender and traditional restrooms around campus.

The temporary art exhibit titled "Genderpoo" is produced by Toronto-based artist Coco Guzman and curated by alumna Anna Rathman, a 2015 art & art history alumna.

Rathman proposed the exhibit for her Curatorial Practicum course's final project and the

initiative was executed by Columbia's Department of Exhibitions, Performance & Student Spaces partnering band The Dead Ships with the Residence Hall Association, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Office of Student Life and the library.

Rathman said she chose "Genderpoo," an exhibit that goes beyond a gallery space, to socially and politically engage its audience.

"I wanted it to be part of a larger conversation," Rathman said. "Even if somebody wasn't to encounter [it] in the gallery space, they were able to access it around campus throughout their daily lives and not just in an art setting." Leo Selvaggio, exhibitions

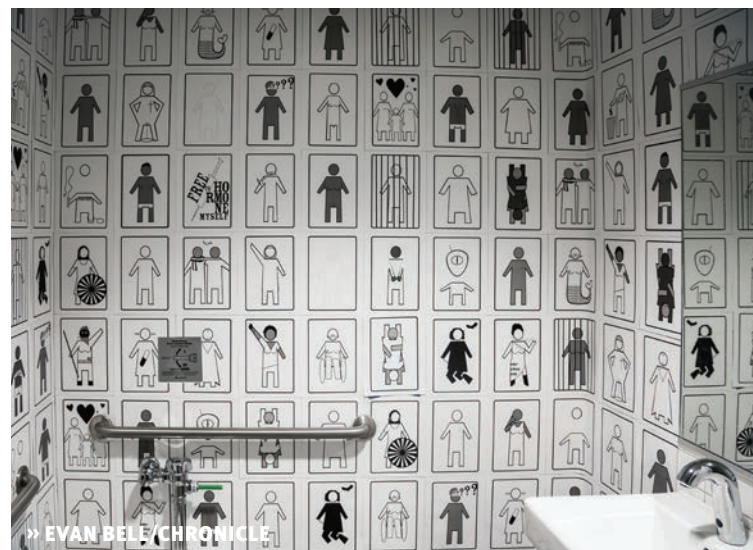
coordinator of DEPS, said the department initially planned to display the artwork in the all-gender bathrooms because it would be easy to install, but then added the artwork in gendered restrooms in hopes of reaching a broader audience.

"People that use gender-inclusive bathrooms are people that are already thinking about gender," Selvaggio said.

The month-long installment is part of a larger exhibition called "He, She, They, Ze" displayed at The Arcade gallery on the second floor of the 618 S. Michigan Ave. building. The "Genderpoo" art was mounted before the Spring 2016 Semester began and will be on display through February.

Neysa Page-Lieberman, director of DEPS, said Rathman was inspired by the gender pronoun initiatives launched on campus during the Fall 2015 Semester and the lack of mainstream art exhibitions reflecting the issue.

Sarah Conley, a cinema art + science graduate student, said the



» **EVAN BELL/CHRONICLE**

"Genderpoo" covers the walls of the bathroom on the fifth floor of the 33 E. Congress Parkway Building to evoke conversation about gender-inclusivity.

exhibit is a step toward accepting gender fluidity.

"Even at a liberal art school like this, people are still [not comfortable talking about it]," Conley said. "It's a reality. It's part of our society [and] something we should be open about."

Selvaggio agreed and said he thought this work should be displayed on campus instead of at an

art gallery because it was meant to engage everyday people.

"It makes you pause and think about the way you're kind of implicit in the system, where you are within that system and how your gender is expressed or supported or not supported within that system," Selvaggio said.

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Lyric Opera, Columbia showcase Chicago's voices



» Courtesy KYLE FLUBACKER

Anthony Freud, general director of Lyric Opera, and Cayenne Harris, director of Lyric Unlimited, worked with Lyric Opera's creative consultant, Renée Fleming, to implement Chicago Voices, similar to Fleming's project, American Voices.

» CAROLYN BRADLEY
CAMPUS REPORTER

LYRIC UNLIMITED, A division of Lyric Opera Chicago, will partner with Columbia, the Chicago Public Library and the Chicago History Museum to launch Chicago Voices, a multi-year initiative

celebrating the story of Chicago communities and the diversity of Chicago's vocal traditions.

Cayenne Harris, director of Lyric Unlimited, said the opera company partnered with Columbia because the Lyric lacks space and technology for breakout groups and other programs.

"I thought Columbia would be an interesting partner on this project because of its leadership in the world of media education," Harris said.

Kwang-Wu Kim, president and CEO of the college, expressed Columbia's excitement about joining the partnership.

"Columbia College Chicago is proud to join [the] Chicago History Museum and Chicago Public Library as partners with Lyric Opera on its Chicago Voices initiatives," Kim said in a Jan. 28 email. "Our college celebrates the diverse voices and creativity of Chicago and we are looking forward to hosting aspects of the February 2017 event on campus."

Alejandra Boyer, manager of Lyric Unlimited, said all the organizations are advocates for the arts.

"It is special to work with other organizations in Chicago that are working toward the same cause," Boyer said.

Boyer said Lyric Unlimited is inviting Chicago residents to

share stories from within their own communities.

She said the top 10 applicants will have the opportunity to share their stories in a video profile on the Chicago Voices website, where people can vote to decide if they would like to see a story turned into a musical theater work.

"[We are looking for] stories that talk about how a community has given to the city of Chicago or how Chicago has helped define their community," Boyer said.

Harris said Renée Fleming, a creative consultant to Lyric Opera, spearheaded a similar project at the Kennedy Center called American Voices that featured master classes and discussions about music genres and voice with music industry experts.

Harris said the project inspired Lyric Opera to create an expansive project in Chicago that would take place over many years.

"Our mission is to provide a relevant cultural service to the broadest population in the city," Harris said.

Jennifer Lizak, the coordinator of special projects in the Department of Cultural and Civic Engagement at the Chicago Public Library, said the program asks participants to relate their stories to the theme.

"The library's mission is to encourage, explore, and have fun through exploration, engagement and learning," Lizak said. "This is one way in which we can help meet that goal."

Michael Cansfield, the grants manager for the Chicago History Museum, who joined the partnership because of his classical music background, said the project is steeped in history because the organizations want to look at the type of music that has come from Chicago in the past and present.

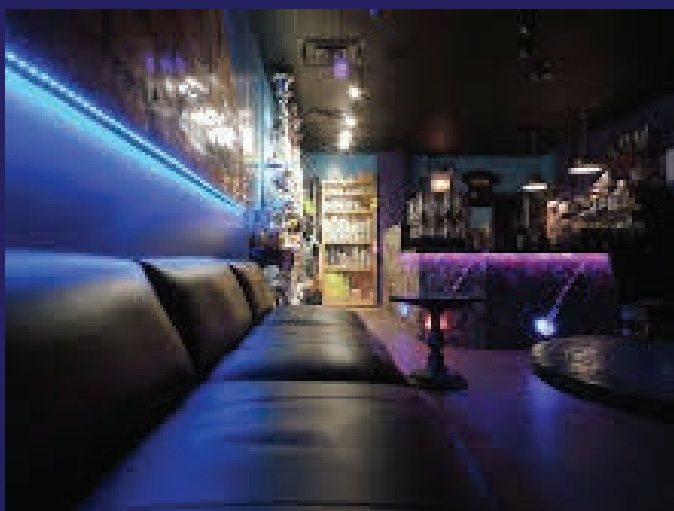
"I always think it is a good idea to partner with other cultural organizations in town," Cansfield said. "When we partner together, we can be stronger than we are on our own."

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Block Party kicks off spring semester

» **MATT CARLTON**
CAMPUS REPORTER

MARK KELLY, VICE president of Student Success, commanded students to turn The Loft into a mosh pit to ring in the spring semester.

Kelly delivered his iconic “Hell Yeah” liturgy to new and returning students Jan. 28 in the 916 S. Wabash Ave. Building for the 2016 Block Party, an annual event

welcoming returning students and initiating new students into the college community.

“We are the high church of creative practice,” Kelly said. “We have a calling, we have a belief system [and] we have values.”

The three-hour event featured representatives from 75 student organizations and health clubs, as well as information on upcoming college events. The meeting

encouraged students to learn about the college’s various organizations and resources.

Josh Corson, a junior creative writing major, attended the Block Party to represent Point Blank, a poetry club he launched in the Fall 2015 Semester.

Corson said the club currently has 15–20 members and hosts open mic nights featuring well-established Chicago writers and student performers throughout the semester.

“The hope is to connect the poetry community and writers to what is going on around the city of Chicago,” Corson said.

Jacki Licciardi, coordinator of Student Organizations & Leadership, said she organized the Block Party to help students get more involved with Columbia and the student body.

“This is vital because being involved in extra curricular activities helps build a community,”



» **MARIA CARDONA/CHRONICLE**

Mark Kelly, vice president of Student Success, spoke to new students about the spring semester and gave his famous “Hell Yeah” liturgy.



» **MARIA CARDONA/CHRONICLE**

Students waited in between roars of “Hell Yeah” and listened to Mark Kelly give his Spring 2016 Semester speech.

Licciardi said. “You make friends and build connections, and it is important for students to feel connected to college outside of their courses.”

New students were also encouraged to start their own organizations or clubs. The more involved students are with their peers, the more successful they will be, Licciardi said.

New students were welcomed and encouraged to work hard and take advantage of the college and its resources.

“This is the moment where we welcome our new students [to] become a part of our community,” Kelly said. “[It] reminds us all what the hell we’re here for.”

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Alumni film 'Four Monologues' becomes mobile

» **MATT CARLTON**
CAMPUS REPORTER

COLUMBIA PROFESSORS AND alumni recently collaborated to make poet, novelist and biographer Aram Saroyan's manuscript "Four Monologues" into a performance by turning it into a short film.

Originally published in a play called "The Laws of Light" written by Saroyan, "Four Monologues" was initially a book project in 2011 by former professor Clifton Meador's Advanced Print Media class in the Center for Book, Paper & Print.

"I first saw the book after it was done and was amazed at the ingenuity and beauty of what they had done," Saroyan said in a Jan. 26 emailed statement.

Brian Shaw, a professor in the Theatre Department and a 1986

alumnus who directed the film, worked with a team of alumni and professors to create it.

"[The executive producer] called me one day out of the blue and told me they had these monologues and they were looking to do a performance," Shaw said. "I saw the book and thought it was beautiful."

Just under 27 minutes, the film humanizes the characters through scenes dedicated to one character talking to the camera. It focuses on four Russian poets attempting to understand each other and the world around them in Stalinist Russia.

The film also featured several performances from members of the Columbia community, including John Mossman, an adjunct professor in the Cinema Art + Science Department, Stephanie Shaw, an alumna and senior lecturer



Stephanie Shaw (above) and John Mossman (below) were both actors in the film "Four Monologues" in which each character delivers a monologue.



» Courtesy FOUR MONOLOGUES

in the Theatre Department, and Jessica Ann McCloud, a 2004 theatre alumna.

The film, book, interviews and behind-the-scenes photos of the filming process have been released

through a mobile app on iOS and Android platforms.

The film also features animation by Ron Fleischer, an associate professor in the Cinema Art + Science Department, original composition by Ilya Levinson, an associate professor in the Music Department, with design, production by David McNutt, a former professor in the Audio Arts & Acoustics Department, and other contributions from alumni Oliver McNutt and Derek Fisher.

The book designed by Meador's class consists of four separate sleeves to hold the monologues in. The reader can pull each character's monologue out of the sleeve, representing a "pocket of memory."

Shaw and his team added another layer to the characters by giving them an audible voice and a face to attach the prose to, Shaw said.

"It is an art film and the performances are really beautiful," Shaw said. "There is a lot of emotion and thought in the material and the film captured that."

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PLAN, FROM FRONT

Wearden focused the discussion on the overall student experience including issues of academic quality.

"Having a Strategic Plan doesn't mean things were badly broken here," Wearden said. "It just means we're trying to be systemic and systematic in the ways we think about where we're going. It means we're trying to move ourselves together in the same direction."

Objectives outlined in year one of the plan include revising college curricula to provide all students with the same introductory skills. A draft of the revised common core is scheduled for completion and faculty review on May 15, 2016.

Wearden discussed the ongoing revision of the first-semester freshman program, known as "Big Chicago," to be completed by the Fall 2016 Semester and the creation of a new undergraduate major that would appeal to more students to increase enrollment and retention.

"We also need to work on the actual academic quality and that's where

my efforts have been primarily this year and where many of you have been engaged as well," Wearden said.

Kim noted the college's branding initiative was making headway, adding he will be leading the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee created on Jan. 28.

Wearden noted the benefits to be realized from the plan's implementation of a professional advising model, a faculty-led student mentoring program and a career center that would centralize and coordinate all student internship opportunities.

For a brief 10 minutes following the presentation, faculty and staff were invited to ask Kim and Wearden questions regarding the Strategic Plan. One questioner was Cat Bromels, print service manager in the Design Department.

Bromels expressed discontent about union members' salaries, which have been the subject of collective bargaining for almost three years.

Reflecting on her remarks, which evoked applause from those present, Bromels told the Chronicle: "I want to know how



Senior Vice President and Provost Stan Wearden shared a one-year update on the implementation of the Strategic Plan at the Jan. 29 Town Hall meeting.

» LOU FOGLIA/CHRONICLE

[Kim] expects us to build a unified community when so many have so little hope on campus about being able to afford groceries."

Kim responded by saying he was once in that position when he made \$30,000 at the beginning of his career, but acknowledged the need to address salaries and look at compensation to reward faculty and staff.

Matt Doherty, a lecturer in the Design Department, said he was thankful for the presentation because it allowed college community members to be involved in the Strategic Planning process. "This is an amazing opportunity, and I'm really thankful," Doherty said.

Kim said the feedback was welcomed, noting the importance of

periodic reports on progress made toward the Strategic Plan's goals.

"You have to make the information available so that people who are interested have access," Kim said. "This is about access. You can't force people to be interested, but you have to provide the information."

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STAFF, FROM PAGE 3

The new system could also “discourage” chairs and supervisors from giving staff high rankings in the future for fear of depleting the allocated funding and short-changing all others.

Another concern among eligible staff members is the college’s pool of raises—2 percent of the base salary for eligible employees in a particular department—is insufficient to provide a 2.5–5 percent raise for exceptional performers with high salaries, the first anonymous source said.

Birch affirmed that an exceptional ranking should be considered “rare,” a statement previously expressed in the Jan. 12 email sent out to faculty and staff regarding the merit pay system.

The ranking system, described by some as “morale-breaking,” is said to have the potential to create a competitive atmosphere between colleagues; for example, if someone receives a ranking higher than 2 percent, that employee chips away at other colleague merit pay.

As the United Staff of Columbia College nears its third year of contract negotiations with the college, the timing of the announcement of the merit pay system for nonunion, full-time staff members has led some to question the staff union’s efforts for

across-the-board increases for its members, who have not received a cost-of-living adjustment since 2012, as reported Jan. 25 by The Chronicle.

Some staff members believe the administration has their best interests in mind and that

the college’s current higher-ups inherited an “awful mess,” but that they need to make decisions more transparently and informatively.

“The college understands that performance-based increases [are] a new process,” Birch said

in an emailed statement. “So we continue to encourage and welcome all nonunion staff members to have conversations with their supervisors about their specific questions or concerns.”

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» FILE PHOTO

The United Staff of Columbia College Chicago rallied in front of the 600 S. Michigan Ave. Building on Dec. 8, 2015.

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Artists leave their mark in Grant Park

» Photos Courtesy TONY TASSET/KAVI GUPTA

» **GRETCHEN STERBA**
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

CHICAGO IS ALREADY home to hundreds of artists, but nearly 400,000 more may soon join the city—at least in name.

Tony Tasset, an artist and professor in the University of Illinois at Chicago's Art Department, will install a multicolored construction in Grant Park in February with two 40-foot-long acrylic panels bearing the names of nearly 400,000 artists, ranging from the most famous names in the art world to relatively obscure ones.

Tasset said the art piece aims to deconstruct the hierarchy associated with artists, especially those who are well-known.

"The idea is that the biggest artist in the world—Pablo Picasso—could be right next to someone who's barely shown at all [or] who had one show 20 years ago at a university gallery," Tasset said. "They're at the exact same level as any Andy Warhol or Picasso."

Tasset said the piece was originally designed for the Whitney Biennial, a very selective New York designed exhibition, but he wanted to subvert that process by including all the artists as he could on the art piece.

Tasset said the artists' names on the monument are listed in alphabetical order in the same font size to represent the equal status of its artists.

"I'm not trying to compare artists," he said. "This is a monument to creativity as opposed to a monument as a kind of destruction or memorial of a tragedy. I thought it'd be interesting to make a monument more creative—perhaps even positive—instead of a monument for a tragedy."

According to Bob O'Neill, president of the Grant Park Conservancy and Advisory Council, the monument features artists living and deceased, and visitors can use their smart phones to look up artists they are unfamiliar with.

O'Neill also said mixing science, culture, nature and art makes for a more multidimensional experience. He said the art, in combination with the landscape, can spark conversation and create culture in the city.

"With this piece, we want more creative people and more artists in the park and using the park," O'Neill said. "It shows a respect for art, and we want Grant Park to be known as a park that does that."

Jessica Maxey-Faulkner, director of Communications for the Chicago Park



"The Artists Monument" is made of two enamel-filled etched acrylics on plywood mounted on two steel shipping containers with almost 400,000 names of artists known and unknown.

District, said the public art installations are part of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's larger efforts to bring public art directly into the city and its neighborhoods. Maxey-Faulkner said the installation will cost the park district \$24,000.

"Whenever we are able to make art more accessible to the citizens of Chicago, we're one step closer to our goals," Maxey-Faulkner said.

Tasset said he hopes people will see how "ridiculously inclusive" the monument is.

"[An artist] emailed me saying he's been depressed trying to get his work out there, but he said my piece made him feel part of a community," Tasset said. "That was sweet. That just kind of made the whole piece for me."

gsterba@chroniclemail.com

behind the **beat**

» JACOB WITTICH
MANAGING EDITOR

Rihanna rih-invents with 'Anti' release

Rihanna has consistently served popular music since her 2005 debut with *Music of the Sun*, which produced the singer's first of 13 (and still counting) No. 1 singles, "Pon de Replay."

If there was one thing fans could count on from Rihanna—known for her signature yearly album releases and club-friendly hits—it was for her to produce a banger.

Now, just more than 10 years and seven albums later, Rihanna's most anticipated album yet has finally dropped.

Released Jan. 27 for free download through streaming service Tidal, *Anti* marks a clear departure from the Rihanna many have grown to love. Fans expecting another collection of dancehall anthems and radio hits will be disappointed to find that *Anti* is entirely banger-free.

Instead, the album is full of downtempo, introspective and heartfelt songs.

Anti shows an abrupt change in Rihanna's musical style, but it is her strongest album yet.

Each of its 13 tracks offers a sound that is more mature and developed than anything Rihanna has previously released. The overall album is cohesive, original and unique in the sense that only Rihanna could pull it off.

Until now, Rihanna has largely been considered a singles artist. With each of her previous albums came a larger-than-life lead single followed by a string of major-to-moderate hits. *Anti*, however, contains no clear singles.

But it does contain a handful of standout tracks, including the electric guitar riff-heavy, smooth "Kiss It Better," Rihanna's six-and-a-half-minute cover of Tame Impala's psychedelic



"New Person, Same Old Mistakes" (renamed "Same Ol' Mistakes" on *Anti*) and the doo-wop love ballad "Love On The Brain."

Notably missing from the album, however, are the three buzz singles—"FourFiveSeconds," "Bitch Better Have My Money" and "American Oxygen"—Rihanna released in early 2015 during the beginning of the album's promotional campaign. It's OK, though, as the style of the songs doesn't exactly fit the style of the album and would detract from its cohesion.

Their absence, however, is unsurprising given that Rihanna announced she would do "the very antithesis of what the public expects" shortly after revealing the album's title in October 2015.

The release of *Anti* is a turning point in Rihanna's career. The album cements Rihanna's status as a living legend and proves her ability to release quality music and not just disposable pop hits, delivering on the artist's promises of a major "Rih-invention."

While *Anti* may not be the Saturday night pregame album many expected, the release is high-quality and innovative, eclipsing the singer's previous seven albums.

jwittich@chroniclemail.com



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FROM THE FRONT ROW

Local artist Shaffer Jones opened for Saint Millie Jan. 28 at the Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave.



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Lil Tits lets 'Freak Flag' fly



» COURTESY LIL TITS

From left, Madalyn Garcia, Karissa Talanian and Hanna Hazard make up the punk band Lil Tits and plan to release a full-length album by the end of the year on vinyl with a tour following.

» **ZOË EITEL**
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

With vocals nearly as loud and intense as its backing instruments, Chicago band Lil Tits is fighting “girl band” stereotypes. The group’s signature punk sound has been described as everything from “Dirt Rock” to “Witch Punk.”

Lil Tits has been in the local scene for about six years, and current members include Hanna Hazard on guitar and vocals, Madalyn Garcia on bass and Karissa Talanian on drums.

The Chronicle spoke with Hazard about Lil Tits’ sound, its “equalism” philosophy and the meaning behind the title of its 2014 digital EP *7 Year Bleed*.

THE CHRONICLE: Where did the name Lil Tits come from?

HANNA HAZARD: Honestly, it was a joke. We found this hat at a thrift store; it was some weird children’s play company called “Lil Tits,” and we thought it was hilarious, so we started calling ourselves Lil Tits. A lot of people thought we were a rap group. Eventually, we got really into our music, so it was like, “Well, we can’t change our name now.”

Is Lil Tits a feminist band?

I consider us an equalist band. I was at a show recently, and a girl said, “I’m all for feminism. I’m all for girls paying \$1 for what guys pay \$2 for.” I looked at her, and I said, “That’s not feminism. That’s sexism. That’s not equalism.” I really want to stay away from the fact that we are an all-girl band. A lot of the time we get asked, “What’s it like to be an all-girl band? What’s it like to be a girl playing music?” My rebuttal is always like, “Would you ask a twin what it’s like to not be a twin? They don’t know.” I don’t really know what it’s like not to be a woman playing music.

How do you describe your sound?

A lot of the time I say it’s loud, noisy, rough [and] raw, and it’s a circus. We like to call it an “evil circus.” We’ve gone through incarnations. We had a [different] drummer for about the first three years, and when she left, we had a record coming out, so we got a new drummer, Karissa. She’s done a couple other psychedelic rock projects, and [Madalyn and I] came from punk and metal backgrounds, so having [Karissa] come in with the psychedelic background has really made the group sound like a weird circus.

What is the Chicago music scene like?

It’s all about supporting other artists. I think

it’s cool that Chicago has really wide ways of making it underground. Lil Tits has been around for almost six years now, and it wasn’t until two years ago that we finally started getting some action. The thing is, you really can’t—especially in DIY and underground Chicago—give up. I don’t know how many shows we’ve played where we’ve f--ked up or sounded like shit or nobody wanted to help put out our record. It’s a business, and once you start looking at it like that, you realize that Chicago has a really helpful community of underground spaces and labels.

What does 7 Year Bleed mean?

I was reading a book, and it said for a woman’s lifetime, if you look at how much she bleeds on her period, if you were to condense it, it would be seven years that she would be bleeding. So, we were talking about how f--ked up it is that we bleed for seven years over our lifetime, so we were like, “Why don’t we call [the EP] *7 Year Bleed*?”

What does Lil Tits have coming up?

We just came out with our seven-inch [EP] that’s called *Freak Flag*, so that just released, and we went on tour in October for that on the East Coast. In the summer, we’ll be recording a full-length 12-inch that will come out on vinyl sometime, hopefully, in the fall, and then we’ll be touring in the spring.

zeitel@chroniclemail.com



Songs to cry to

Staff Playlist

» **GRETCHEN STERBA**
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

» **JAKE MILLER**
FILM CRITIC

» **LAUREN KOSTIUK**
CAMPUS EDITOR

» **ETHAN STOCKING-ANDERSON**
OPERATIONS COORDINATOR



All I Ask **Adele**



All My Friends **LCD Soundsystem**



You Ain’t Alone **Alabama Shakes**



The Sound of Silence **Simon & Garfunkel**

Young and Beautiful **Lana Del Rey**

Werewolf **CocoRosie**

Vienna **Billy Joel**

Fade Into You **Mazzy Star**

Is There Somewhere **Halsey**

Hurt **Nine Inch Nails**

Creature Fear **Bon Iver**

My Big Nurse **David Byrne & Brian Eno**

A Thousand Miles **Vanessa Carlton**

David Sylvian **Waterfront**

Pale Blue Eyes **The Velvet Underground**

Christmas Time Is Here **Vince Guaraldi Trio**

From Time **Drake feat. Jhene Aiko**

Daniel **Elton John**

Go Go Chaos **Bonjah**

Sadface Penance Raps **Open Mike Eagle**

‘Van Gogh’s Bedrooms’ reunite, make history

» ZOË EITEL
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

VINCENT VAN GOGH created the first of his three versions of “The Bedroom” paintings in 1888 in Arles, France, with two more painted a year later in an asylum in Saint-Rémy, France.

The Art Institute of Chicago has held the second copy of “The Bedroom” in its permanent collection since 1926, and it will soon be joined by its earlier and later incarnations in the exhibit “Van Gogh’s Bedrooms” scheduled to run from Feb. 14 through May 10.

This will be the first time all “The Bedroom” paintings will be shown in the same museum in North America.

Approximately 36 of Van Gogh’s paintings, letters and other works will also be on display as part of the exhibit.

Van Gogh’s paintings are a representation of who he was emotionally and psychologically, which is part of the reason the paintings are so compelling to people, said Steven Naifeh, co-author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book “Van Gogh: The Life.”

Van Gogh painted the first “The Bedroom” in anticipation of the arrival of his first guest, Paul Gauguin, in the yellow house in Arles, said Susan Slocum, an adjunct professor in the Art & Art History Department.

“It was probably the happiest time in [Van Gogh’s] life,” Slocum said. “Everything was coming together for him, and he was just anticipating this joyous event. The copies were made later when he’s in Saint-Rémy. They are looking back at this happy moment.”

According to the museum’s website, “The Bedroom” and its

copies look almost identical at first, but upon closer examination, have unique details.

“[The Art Institute’s copy] was painted when [Van Gogh] was very isolated,” Slocum said. “The whole experience of his disappointment with Gauguin, with himself, his trying to hold on—he used painting as his lifeline to sanity.”

Slocum said Van Gogh likely did not have “The Bedroom” in front of him while creating the copies in the asylum, so they were probably created from memory.

Naifeh said he will speak about Van Gogh’s artistic influences at his lecture, scheduled for Feb. 25. “Even with how individual and psychological his paintings are,

[Van Gogh] was—as all artists are—inspired by other artists,” Naifeh said. “My talk is about some of the paintings that were particularly influential. One of the touchstones of the talk is the collection of works by other artists who were important to Van Gogh.”

A Jan. 19 Art Institute press release said “Van Gogh’s Bedrooms” will include a digitally enhanced reconstruction of Van Gogh’s bedroom, so guests can experience the space where Van Gogh lived and worked in the yellow house.

“The incredible thing about [Van Gogh] is he is so beloved that there are exhibitions of his work all the time, and what’s astonishing is that you can still come up with an idea that hasn’t been done,” Naifeh said. “To pull these three paintings together with the paintings related to them has never been done.”

Columbia students get free admission to the museum, but the Van Gogh exhibit requires an additional \$5 ticket.



» Courtesy THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
Vincent van Gogh, “The Bedroom,” 1889. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection.

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Chicago poet writes about grotesque, beautiful struggle

»GRETCHEN STERBA
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

A DECADE BEFORE the specter of black deaths came into public conversation, poet Phillip B. Williams was already writing about it for his new collection of poems, "Thief in the Interior," which was released in January 2016.

In February 2005, a 19-year-old bisexual black man in Brooklyn, New York was murdered and his body parts were later found separated and stashed in garbage bags.

This particular crime haunted Williams, a Chicago native, who felt compelled to write, "Thief in the Interior," his new collection of poetry. The poems cover issues ranging from hate crimes to his father's addiction struggles and murders like that of the young Brooklyn man Rashawn Brazell.

"I had to force myself as a writer and poet to look at things that make a lot of people uncomfortable," Williams said.

Born in 1986 and raised in Humboldt Park, Williams experienced violence from an early age. Growing up in the 1990s, the War on Drugs was ending, but the violence was just beginning. He recalled a time when a white man—who was his sister's age—was shot to death on the same block on which Williams lived.

"It was one of those pivotal moments [when] even though as a child I was outside playing, there would be violence almost every other week around the block or on the block," Williams said.

Williams started writing poetry in first grade, but did not get serious about the craft until the end of high school. Soon after graduation,

he was informed of the brutal death of Brazell through a friend on the blogging website Xanga.

Williams said he identified with Brazell because they were close in age and he felt a connection between him and people in his life. According to Williams, no one seemed to care about the crime, and news organizations were not covering it.

"It hurt that no one cared about this person who seemed to be a pretty cool guy, but was killed," Williams said. "The media picks and chooses who is allowed to be the victim."

"Thief in the Interior" is about finding the beauty in the grotesque, Williams said, but it is also about understanding how people are complicit in creating things that make them uncomfortable.

Nate Marshall, visiting assistant professor of creative writing at Wabash College, met Williams a few years ago through a mutual friend and became friends with him after Williams kept "badgering" Marshall to send a writing

sample to the literary journal, Vinyl, which Williams edits. It turned out to be one of Marshall's first published works.

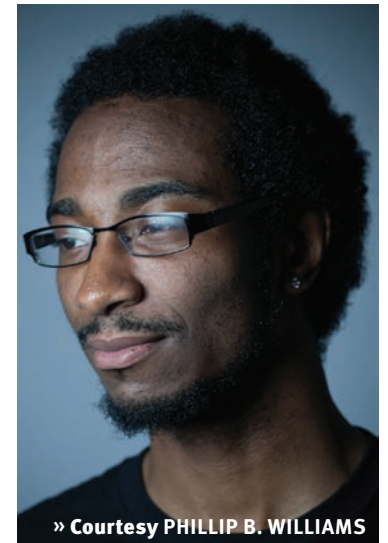
"The thing that stands out to me when I think about his work, is that when I read his work it's very meticulously crafted and very thoughtful," Marshall said.

KMA Sullivan, publisher at YesYes books, met Williams five years ago and said working with him in the context of literature is an incredible experience.

"Phillip is constantly reading, writing, and reaching out to poets to bring them into conversations on language, art and their relationship to important issues of the day," Sullivan said.

Regarding the release of his new book, Williams said he wants to focus on the book and have his readers think critically about real current events.

"I think that's the best thing we can do—not with just the book, but with what's happening—we have to be aware," Williams said. "If there's any point we feel overcome



» Courtesy PHILLIP B. WILLIAMS

Phillip B. Williams, author of "Thief in the Interior," raises awareness about the violence black individuals face.

by the atrocities of the world, it's OK to not look at that article or not go to that rally. Activism can be very draining. Awareness itself can be very draining, which is why so many people avoid it—but [do] not avoid it, just take it slowly."

gsterba@chroniclemail.com

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"WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH" POP ART?

Story by Spencer Hall

Design by Alexander Aghayere



Courtesy artwork by :

Joe Flores – "Snoopy" / "Praying Costanza" / "MF Bart"

Nick "Thumbs" Thompson – "Mr. Burns x Adventure Time"

Jared "Circusbear" Flores – "Waka Waka"

Twylamae – "Break the Internet" / "George Hotline Bling"

Throughout the last 27 years, Bart Simpson has been many things. He was an Academy Award winner, boy-band sensation and even somehow managed to stay 10 years old the entire time.

However, he was recently able to add another title to his already high-profile resume—a fine art subject.

The iconoclastic cartoon character is part of a growing pop art trend in which fine artists and commercial illustrators repurpose well-known figures—from "Adventure Time" characters to "Zoolander" and anything in between—to create works of art with contemporary references and cultural icons meaningful to millennials.

This new form of pop art builds upon the aesthetic that guided the first wave of pop artists in the '60s like Andy Warhol and the neo-pop artists in the '80s like Jeff Koons—taking everyday objects and placing them in a new context.

In place of Warhol's silk-screens of comic detective Dick Tracy, artists are using different references, such as a Bart Simpson and Marty McFly mashup and George Costanza from "Seinfeld" doing Drake's "Hotline Bling" dance. Many may have drawn inspiration from the 15-year-old Bootleg Bart phenomenon in which Matt Groening's character turns up in unexpected places, such

as playing for the Chicago Bulls or marching off to Iraq.

While tourists still scoop up these images on T-shirts in New York City's Chinatown amid faux designer handbags, the gallery world is also taking notice of pop art by staging shows in London, Paris and Los Angeles, greeted by enthusiastic audiences.

Gallery 1988, a Los Angeles-based art gallery run by Jensen Karp, specializes in this genre. Eric Price, a sculptor who has had several shows at Gallery 1988 featuring his mask-like effigies of Batman and Willy Wonka, to name a few of his subjects, said having a place for like-minded artists to share work based on popular culture gives the artists a sense of community seldom found in the fine art world.

"For the longest time [while] learning the arts, I always had that eye for pop and art," Price said. "I wasn't ashamed by it, but I didn't feel welcomed in the fine art community because of it. Being able to work with these specialized galleries, meeting other artists and getting the chance to showcase with them is an honor and [it's] great to know I'm not alone."

Many of these artists said their love of television and film while growing up helped shape their present-day artwork.

Geoff Trapp, a New Jersey-based pop artist who creates original paintings, mixed-media works and prints for Gallery 1988, said he was fascinated as a kid by the film industry, which ultimately influenced his current references to films like "Raising Arizona" and "Goldeneye," which appear in Trapp's toys based on those films.

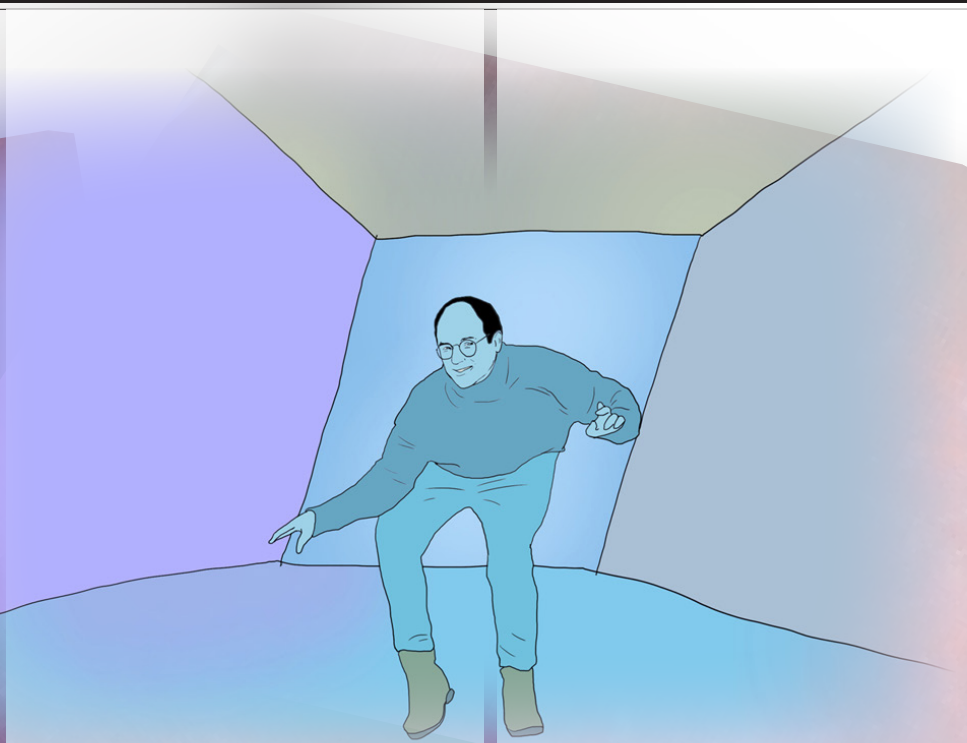
"A lot of people—when they're younger—want to be involved in the film industry because there are all these great movies out there that influenced us so much when we were kids," Trapp said. "That's my influence. I find it a lot easier to draw from that well of fantasy and these great movies we grew up with."

Some artists prefer to print their designs on novelty items such as stickers, lapel pins and other merchandise that appeal to a younger audience.

Twylamae, an illustrator from Melbourne, Australia, known for her "Seinfeld" designs, has garnered a dedicated following by sharing new work daily on her Instagram account, featuring original illustrations on her personal website and selling keychains to tote bags on her Etsy page, "Twylamaeshop."

Twylamae said social media has allowed pop art to grow because artists can use their followers as a sort of focus group to see what their audiences like and respond positively to in real time.

"In this digital age, everyone loves to see things they recognize, things they relate to and things that make them laugh," Twylamae said. "If you can combine those elements and turn them into works of art, people will respond well to them. We're all sort of slaves to television and tabloids. It's part of our daily lives. It just feels good to make light of that."



London-based illustrator Nick "Thumbs" Thompson also found a cult following through Instagram. Thompson, who has only been creating his repurposed illustrations of mostly "Simpsons" and "Adventure Time" mashups for eight months, said the sudden interest in his doodles is mind-blowing and lucrative.

"It's pretty crazy," Thompson said. "When I started, I was just drawing Bart Simpson and making stickers, never thinking anyone would take it seriously. Now—eight months later—I have shops in California and Texas buying all my stuff to sell. There are people spending thousands of dollars on this stuff that I just mocked up on my computer. It's crazy to think that it could be considered as proper artwork."

This art movement may be on the rise, but it has had its setbacks—licensing disputes, accusations of copyright violation and the stigma attached to borrowing another artist's work.

Trapp said even pop artists in the days of Claes Oldenburg and Robert Rauschenberg never got the amount of respect they deserved because of the repurposed images and icons in their pieces.

"We're still viewed as the illustrators of the art world, even though a lot of stuff [pop artists] were doing was superior to what the fine art community was doing," Trapp said. "I don't know if we get a fair shake because of our affiliation with pre-existing media—we're so closely tied to movies and the pop culture community."

Martin Brochstein, senior vice president of Industry Relations and Information for the International Licensing Merchandisers' Association said it is important for artists to realize the line between creating fan art and selling this type of artwork for a profit.

"The fact that 27 years down the road people still want to do this—that says something," Brochstein said. "That's the balance the creators and the owners try to strike—encouraging that interaction while doing what's prudent in a financial and legal sense. Where the line gets crossed is when they want to profit

from it. There's a difference between making your own T-shirt for yourself with Bart in a situation of your own making, and going out and selling a thousand of those somewhere."

One argument these artists use to circumvent copyright law is that they're producing works of parody.

Jerry Glover, a partner at the law firm of Leavens, Strand and Glover—a Chicago firm specializing in entertainment and intellectual property law—said the law governing parody requires the work to make some sort of commentary on the original. The function of the commentary is to transform the original work into something new.

"There are exceptions to the rule," Glover said. "The fair use defense says although things are protected by copyright, you have to be able to build on the work of others for progress in the arts and sciences. To be able to use a piece of someone's copyrighted material in furtherance of another purpose is allowed, assuming you are not destroying the market for the original and you are only using as much as necessary for the purpose you have and that you are transforming the original into something new and different."

Chicago illustrator and 2014 Columbia design alumnus Joe Flores—whose Instagram "joefflomontana" has nearly 9,000 followers—said he makes sure each of his designs has an original spin to avoid infringement.

Flores said artists have to carefully walk that fine line between appropriating someone else's work and transformation.

"People are seeing how far they can get away with these designs before legal issues get involved," Flores said. "There have been some pretty amazing pieces that have been shut down due to the fact it was bootlegged and not officially licensed. A lot of people understand the risk they are taking by doing this type of work, but they are just trying to put stuff out there that appeals to the audience."

Jared "Circusbear" Flores, a designer toy artist who also shows work at Gallery 1988, and has no relation to Joe Flores,

said the accessibility of digital images through the Internet conflicts with conventional notions of intellectual property ownership.

"It speaks to a much larger trend of a culture of repurposing," Jared Flores said. "With the way social media has changed the way we repurpose images constantly, we consume imagery and redistribute it once we consume it. It speaks to loss of authorship, and as a culture, we have lost that sense of need over ownership of our work."

Twylamae transforms some of her subjects, such as the "Seinfeld" characters and scenes from shows such as "Arrested Development," into cartoon characters, which is a wholly new creation.

"Rather than replicating something to seem exactly like its original so we can sell it as a cheap knockoff, we are drawing inspiration to create an entirely new work of art that has a sense of familiarity combined with our own artistic integrity," Twylamae said. "I'm not about cutting and pasting. I'm continually developing and refining my style so I'm creating products that will be recognizably 'Twylamae.'"

"Simpsons" creator Groening appears to be supportive of the movement although one might expect someone in his position to fight back, according to Joe Flores.

In July 2015, an exhibit in Los Angeles featuring more than 70 international artists—including Joe Flores—highlighted original art dedicated to the spiky-haired hell-raiser Bart Simpson. Groening attended the exhibit to look at the worldwide artists keeping his character alive through their original works, Joe Flores said.

"It was on such a magnitude of anything you've ever seen before," Joe Flores said. "It was just an entire gallery dedicated to Bart Simpson. It showed me that pop art is taking the world by storm and referencing these icons. Galleries are catching on to the trends of the masses to try to stay in tune with younger millennial crowds."

Thompson said the artworks pay homage to the memories of popular characters and helps keep them alive. He said by creating and transforming these already well-known characters into something new, he is working to further the legacy of a beloved character.

"This type of art rejuvenates these characters and gives them a new lease on life," Thompson said. "Whether it's Bart Simpson or 'Adventure Time,' it's always going to lead back to that original cartoon. It's never going to do any harm to them."

In times when social media, reality television and meme culture are taking over the airwaves, pop art helps communicate and act as a sort of satirical take on those ideas, Joe Flores said.

"Pop culture is this language we speak now. We communicate through something as small as using these characters and iconography," Jared Flores said. "It is current and essential and it's where we are now."

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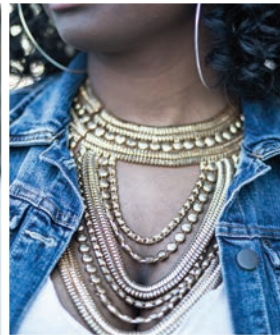
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WHAT WOULD YOU STEAL FROM YOUR PARENTS' WARDROBE?

» PHOTOS BY MARIA CORDONA/CHRONICLE



Amari Lilton
senior advertising major



"My mom's necklace that I am wearing today. She has very good style. She is the Goodwill queen!"



Alexander Singleton
senior creative writing major

"My dad's short and soft leather jacket. I've always wanted it, and I always try and steal it, but he always stops me."



"I am really into extra-large, baggy clothes, so I would take my dad's sweater he got from his dad. It's super comfy. I already have taken it, like, four times."



Sofia Grajal-Puche
freshman creative arts therapies major

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New Second City e.t.c. cast puts diversity in spotlight

» **ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI**
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

THE SKETCH COMEDY community breaks the gender ratio norms in the newly announced cast for Second City's 40th revue in its e.t.c. theater. The revue opens in mid-April.

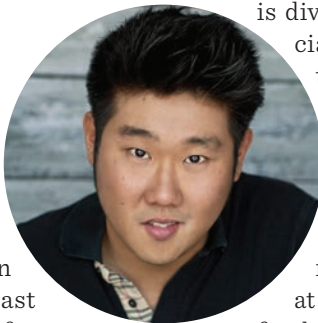
The currently untitled production—directed by Second City creative director Matt Hovde—marks the first time since 1988 a Second City cast will include more women than men in a residential show.

Returning cast members Lisa Beasley and Scott Morehead, from the current e.t.c. revue, "Soul Brother, Where Art Thou," are joined by Aasia LaShay Bullock, Peter Kim, Katie Klein and Julie Marchiano for the new show.

Most of Second City's shows have featured an equal number of men and women, but the revue's cast will include four women and only two men. The cast



is composed of two black women, two white women, one white man and Kim, the first gay Asian man to be on a Second City residency stage. Kim, a writer and actor touring with Second City's Touring Company with Marchiano before being cast in the e.t.c. show, said the casting choice is a game changer for the comedy company because it refashions the usual casting procedures for Second City.



"Feminism is at the forefront of entertainment right now—as is diversity—especially after all the Oscar news," Kim said, adding that this casting announcement comes at a pivotal time for the industry.

Kim said Second City is changing the theater community by opening new doors and avenues for more diverse actors.

"What Second City is really good at is not shying away from what is hard," Kim said. "They take on the challenge and they are the consummate leader of the industry."

He said being the first Asian male cast in a residential show will be challenging, but he is excited to share a new perspective that

will resonate with other gay Asian men.

Marchiano, who said she is more than just the "goofy white girl," said her role is a dream she has worked toward since moving to Chicago in 2011.

"I have a lot to say, but I also am excited to be a vehicle for other people's voices who have things to say, too," she said.

Katie Mae Weber, a sophomore theatre major, said she frequently attends Second City shows and is excited to see new perspectives on stories about women.

"I want to see a comedy show that I haven't seen before," Weber said. "With brand new people and a brand new dynamic, how can that not be incredibly exciting?"

Kim said he is ready for the challenges, and Marchiano hopes the show will bring people together.



» Photos Courtesy ROBIN HAMMOND

From left: Julie Marchiano, Peter Kim, Aasia LaShay Bullock and Lisa Beasley make up part of e.t.c.'s diverse new cast for the theater's 40th residential stage revue, set to open in April. Katie Klein and Scott Morehead complete the six-person cast.

"I am excited for people to be affected emotionally—hopefully physiologically—and leave a little perturbed," Kim said. "My personal goal as a contributor and ensemble member is to disrupt."

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Submissions must:

- * Be video, if performance-based.
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- * Be 1 - 2 pages (print).
- * Be 3 - 10 images (photography)
- * Reference and explain at least two services offered by the Columbia College Chicago Library (chat-with-a-librarian, research consultation, printing, media equipment, etc.)
- * Be written, performed and produced by current Columbia College Chicago students.
- * Be submitted no later than February 1st, 5pm CST.

Results will be announced on February 5th.

QUESTIONS?
Contact Molly Hart at mhart@colum.edu

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Q&A 'Touched with Fire' director Paul Dalio talks art, love and madness

» JAKE MILLER
FILM CRITIC

"TOUCHED WITH FIRE," writer and director Paul Dalio's feature film debut, was originally called "Mania Days" but later adopted the title of the book, "Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament," a collection of case studies by psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison.

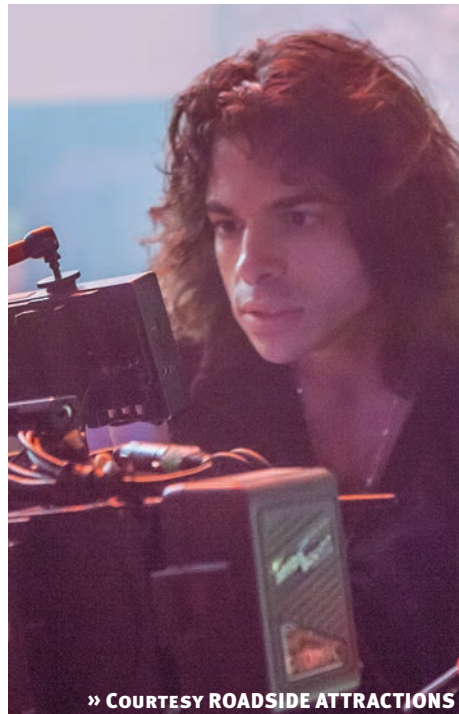
The film is a soul-stirring romance that stars Katie Holmes as Carla and Luke Kirby as Marco, two bipolar poets whose fiery love affair is fueled by their illness.

Dalio himself was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and refers to reading Jamison's book as a life-changing experience.

The Chronicle spoke with Dalio about the film, his attitude toward mental illness and his own struggles with bipolar disorder.

THE CHRONICLE: Many films deal with mental illness. How did you approach the issue differently in "Touched with Fire?"

PAUL DALIO: The most important thing is that I wanted to approach it through their eyes. As a filmmaker with bipolar disorder



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Paul Dalio wrote, directed, edited and composed music for "Touched with Fire."

that was a responsibility because there [are] not many opportunities for it to be portrayed to audiences by someone who actually has it. I also wanted to show the beauty of it—not

even in a forced way. There is a redeeming aspect that comes with these expansive emotions, which often take the form of art and love. There are beautiful things that go along with the darkness, and [exploring that] is necessary to reduce the stigma.

How did you go about making such heightened emotions accessible to an audience that might not be familiar with them?

The most important thing is creating strong characters and finding amazing actors that can embody those characters in a way that is human and relatable but also truthful. At the same time, cinema has an extreme power to control all the senses with sound, image, movement and editing, and that's a huge advantage. We had a three-month preproduction period so we could control every element and create something that would saturate the senses.

Why did you adopt the title from Kay Redfield Jamison's book?

When we hooked up with the distributor, they were considering changing the title. They thought that it would be difficult for people to think of mania as something

beautiful. Certain people thought it was going to be some kind of horror story set in an institution. After that, while searching for another title, it became so obvious. [Reading] the book was [the source] of the shift in my spirit that led me to the place that allowed me to create this film. I lived the journey. The book is what inspired me.

What would you say to artists who fear mental illness might hold them back?

The most important thing to know is that it's extremely difficult and it takes a lot of sacrifice and patience. In film school, I went through two manias that led me to psychosis. I was in a correctional facility. Most people don't get out of that, but I had the fortune of meeting certain people who gave me hope—for instance, [Jamison]. I never knew that I could be creative, on medication and happy. Once I got that hope, I fought tooth and nail with a lot of patience to get to where I am now. People who are going through the worst of it need to know that they can get out. I will always be walking a tightrope. I still slip, but I've gotten better and better at catching myself. Ultimately, I've found it to be such a gift that if I was offered a cure, I wouldn't take it.

"Touched with Fire" will be released in Chicago on Feb. 19. Check back for The Chronicle's full review in its Feb. 22 issue.

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The Loyola University Museum of Art is the 11th stop of the sex trafficking exhibit, sponsored by Girls Educational & Mentoring Services, a nonprofit organization in New York that helps sex trafficking victims.

Exhibit aims to empower sex trafficking survivors

» **ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI**
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

A TRAVELING EXHIBIT sharing the stories of female sex trafficking survivors is scheduled to run at the Loyola University Museum of

Art from Feb. 6 through March 19. It will highlight victims who have positively changed their lives and their communities.

The exhibit, called “More than a Survivor: More than a Story,” originated in New York as a project

of Girls Educational & Mentoring Services, the only organization in the state serving girls and young women who have experienced commercial sexual abuse and domestic trafficking. According to a GEMS representative, the exhibit is intended to present survivors in an honest and empowering light.

“A lot of the stories being put out there are very focused on [dramatic] stories and experiences that are important to highlight,” a GEMS representative said. “But at the same time, it doesn’t really move the movement forward.”

The representative said the exhibit’s mission is to depict survivors as active members of their community who, more than being victims, have made positive differences. Marian Hatcher, a Loyola University Chicago alumna featured in the exhibit, became

nationally-known as a survivor after she left prison 12 years ago and rebuilt her life. She is the human trafficking coordinator in the Office of Policy in the Cook County Sheriff’s Office and is also a member of GEMS.

Hatcher said she is looking forward to the exhibit’s opening and excited that the Cook County Sheriff is introducing the show on its opening night at the Loyola museum. Hatcher and survivor Shamere McKenzie, also a Loyola alumna, will speak on their experiences at the reception.

“Shamere is my adoptive spiritual mentee-daughter,” Hatcher said of McKenzie.

Hatcher and McKenzie join 20 other women featured in the show through portraits and testimonies, coming from all over the country. The GEMS representative said each woman brings her own story to the table, but they are all positive and meant to be supportive.

McKenzie said her portion of the exhibit is aligned with Sun Gate Foundation, an independent organization she founded devoted

to helping human trafficking survivors and working to educate women on sex trafficking.

“I strongly believe education is an avenue of hope,” she said. “That’s what people need to know—although atrocities have happened, there is hope.”

She said the exhibit started in 2014 and has traveled to places such as Arizona, Oregon, Georgia and Washington D.C.

Pam Ambrose, director of the Loyola Museum of Art, said in a Jan. 27 emailed statement that it is important for LUMA to display stories about individuals who have moved forward from a traumatic experience and are successfully building their careers.

“Sex trafficking is a worldwide problem and often Americans are not aware of how prevalent sex trafficking is in the United States,” Ambrose said. “This exhibition serves also as a visual ‘thank you’ for the efforts from our own Cook County Sheriff’s Office to curtail sex trafficking in the Chicago area.”

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Recipe



»BRITTANY BROWN
MULTIMEDIA REPORTER

I love the concept of granola bars. However, I've yet to find a bar that's economical, nutritious and tasty. Not to mention if you have allergies; reading the fine print on boxes in the cereal aisle can be daunting. My life changed when a friend pulled these bad boys out of her fridge, and I've been making batches of them since. The best part is that you can add and omit ingredients to your liking or get creative with them. Consider this recipe your canvas.

bbrown@chroniclemail.com

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 cup rolled oats | 1/2 cup chocolate chips |
| 2/3 cup coconut flakes | 1/3 cup honey or agave nectar as a substitute |
| 3/4 cup peanut butter | |
| 1/2 cup flax seeds | |

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine dry ingredients in a medium-sized bowl. Then add peanut butter and honey and mix well.
2. Put the bowl in the refrigerator for 30-60 minutes or until thoroughly chilled. This makes forming shapes easier.
3. Use a tablespoon to spoon out the mixture and roll into balls with your hands.
4. Keep refrigerated in an airtight container for up to one week. If you stack them, insert wax paper between layers.

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Video: “High School Musical’ Stars’ 10-Year Reunion”

The cast of “High School Musical” reunited on its 10-year anniversary to chat about old times and watch their original audition tapes. Everyone but Zac Efron was able to attend the event, but he did make an appearance via video chat. The reunion was featured on Disney Channel, but later published on YouTube Jan. 20.



Blog: “Andrew Zimmern”

Andrew Zimmern, host of the food-focused international travel program “Bizarre Foods,” lends his cherubic demeanor to his personal blog. While largely a collection of recipes and photographs of international food and locales, Zimmern also posts helpful tips for cooking and cookbook recommendations. For the aspiring chef or even a mere foodie, it is a must-follow.

THINGS I’LL ENJOY DOING WHILE I CAN

» **ANNIE JOHNSON**
MARKETING CONSULTANT

Traveling:

So far, I have traveled to Atlanta, New Orleans and Cleveland. I always find myself becoming very excited when I travel to different places. It’s a great feeling exploring new cities and sightseeing. This summer, I plan on traveling even more and taking a trip to Miami or Las Vegas!

Sleeping in:

Life as a full-time working college student means sleep doesn’t always come my way. But when it does, I will always take advantage of it—especially if it’s on a day that I don’t have classes. It’s a great feeling. It’s a time to relax and, most importantly, sleep!

Catching up with friends:

I’m always on the go. Whether I’m at work or school, it seems like I never have time to do anything. But when I’m free, I always find myself around friends. We do everything from bringing back memories and having great conversations to just catching up with each other.

Watching TV:

Who doesn’t love “Being Mary Jane,” “Growing Up Hip Hop,” and the Lifetime Movie Network? Well, I do! Especially “Being Mary Jane” and Lifetime. On the weekends I enjoy catching up on my favorite shows and watching movies.

Taking pictures:

Photography has become one of my favorite hobbies. When I’m on the go and visiting new areas, I bring my camera to capture different scenery within the downtown area.

THINGS TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK

» **BEGINA ARMSTRONG**
AD & BUSINESS MANAGER

It’s the beginning, and it’s the end:

As a senior, I’ve had to repeat this mantra over and over again to myself in every class this week. While it’s the start of a new semester, it’s also my last, and I’m ready to get out of here.

We are artistic warriors:

Even if this isn’t your final year, you can join me in affirming the creative tenacity and grit that is an undercurrent at Columbia. Perseverance is not just a buzzword; you’re really amazing because you’ve endured Chicago’s punches.

Don’t stop:

If you’ve made any New Year’s resolutions, and they’ve fallen to the wayside, get back at it. When I returned from vacation, I resolved to holistically take better care of my body. Lots of water, exercising, and living positively are all apart of that commitment. Don’t stop.

Get organized:

I received a planner for Christmas. If you’re not as messy as I am, and you don’t need a subtle reminder to tidy up, then there’s hope. Don’t wait to get it together. As Shia LaBeouf would say, “Just do it!”

Pour everything into your projects:

One of my dreams is to become a Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, but I won’t get there if I don’t pour everything I have into my writing. You’re about as good as your creative work, so make remarkable things and put them where people can see them, especially the people that matter. Be shameless in all your endeavors, and plug yourself whenever you can.

LAZY DAY TO-DO LIST

» **RHIANNON AUSTGEN**
MARKETING CONSULTANT

Wear pajamas:

First and foremost, get into your pajamas. This will ensure that you have the perfect lazy day. There is no way you can enjoy your day off by wearing jeans and a bra. My favorite pajama wear is a basic T-shirt and boy shorts.

Clean sheets:

The worst thing in the world is lying in a bed full of crumbs and week-old sheets. Grab the extra pair of sheets your mom secretly put in your bag and throw them on your bed for a nice clean feeling.

Order food:

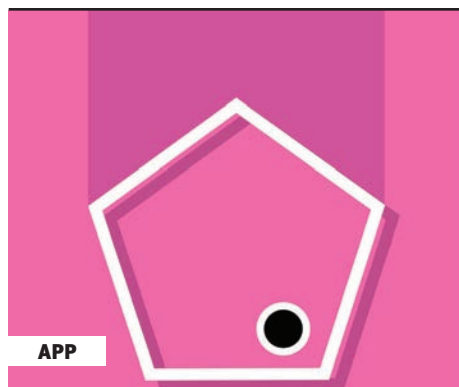
Hopefully you have a little extra cash for your perfect lazy day. Hop on GrubHub or Seamless and order your favorite food items before you get too “hangry.” Remember that food is essential, so feel free to splurge and overdo it.

Take a bubble bath:

The only downside of ordering food online is that it takes forever. However, with my foolproof plan you won’t even notice the time go by. Light all the candles and incense in your house and start a bubble bath. But keep a robe close by so you can quickly jump out when your food arrives.

Relax and enjoy:

Sometimes the hardest part about a lazy day is the guilt you have knowing you could be doing something more useful with your time. But in this crazy chaotic world, you need a lazy day at least once a week. You deserve it!



APP

SWAP BALL— ENDLESS ARCADE BOUNCER



» OLIVIA POLONY
METRO REPORTER

This is not the game to play when you are bored and in need of a distraction. The ball, which bounces around the interiors of various shapes that change color, demands you tap the ball to make its color match to keep it from exploding. It will only leave you in a state of distress and make you feel dizzy. Overall, it was a sad experience and a waste of iPhone battery life.



SCREEN

“HISTORY” BY ONE DIRECTION



» ZOË EITEL
ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

This video was a lot more than I was ready to handle with its nostalgic clips that made me uncomfortably emotional. I don't recommend watching while in a public setting unless you're comfortable crying in public. The video is a perfect match to the song and says what One Direction has been saying for months: they've had an amazing almost six years, and they are not over.



MUSIC

“WOOD” BY ROSTAM



» SPENCER HALL
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

Rostam—the solo pseudonym of now former Vampire Weekend virtuoso Rostam Batmanglij—released his single “Wood” two days following his heartbreaking departure from the influential indie band. While fans were undoubtedly bummed by the news of his departure, the song keeps that classic VW sound and has one fan in particular excited for the future.



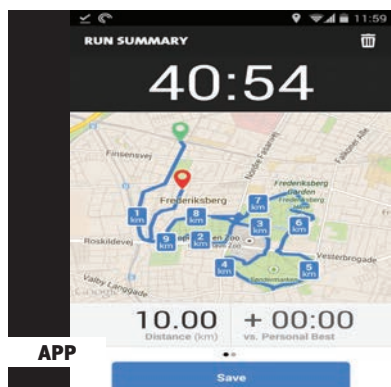
RANDOM

DUNKIN' DONUTS REOPENING



» MEGAN BENNETT
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

As someone who hardly ever leaves Columbia's campus, you cannot image my devastation when I discovered the South Wabash Avenue Dunkin' Donuts location was closed for renovations. Now that they've reopened, it's like life has begun once again. I live for the donuts and coffee, but was not okay with travelling two extra blocks to get them.



APP

FREELETICS RUNNING



» MCKAYLA BRAID
METRO EDITOR

The app's goal is to help you stay on track with workouts and whatnot. First, you have to provide some information about your current health, then you get asked fun questions about how out of shape you are. Next, you can choose to pay money for a 'coach' to help you with your goal. Thanks, but no thanks. I don't think paying \$34.99 for three months is going to motivate me. That money is better spent on food.



SCREEN

WIZ KHALIFA SINGS ADELE



» MATT CARLTON
CAMPUS REPORTER

Wiz Khalifa freestyled over Adele's “Hello” and it was lame. Of course, the first words out of his mouth were “roll one up and let's get high.” Wiz exhausted the “cool suburban mall stoner” vibe so long ago. Come on man, do something different. We're not in middle school anymore. I would be interested in hearing something with some substance from Wiz and not the same song over and over again.



MUSIC

“ANTI” BY RIHANNA



» ANNIE JOHNSON
ADVERTISING ACCOUNT REP

Rihanna is back with another single that has topped the charts. From her new album *ANTI*, her single “Work,” which features Drake, is a catchy and chilled-vibed song that will have you grooving to the beat. “Work, work, work it to me,” has become my favorite line throughout the song. It will keep you in a good mood and have you dancing all day. If you haven't listened to her new single, go download it now.



RANDOM

KANYE WEST'S TWITTER RANT



» SELENA COTTE
COPY CHIEF

Rapper Kanye West is known for his dramatics, and his Jan. 27 Twitter rant, targeted at rapper Wiz Khalifa, was his latest stunt. It can only be described as beautiful. West listed 17 reasons he was “better” than Khalifa, and each was more outrageous and egotistical than the last. Even better is both West and Khalifa's ex Amber Rose's response, which cannot be printed in this wholesome paper.



EDITORIAL

Government must be held responsible for Flint crisis and its solutions

Arround the country, we are watching the greatest environmental crisis in decades unfold. We are waiting for the governments—local, state and national—to expedite the remedies.

In April 2014, city officials in Flint, Michigan, officially changed the city’s water source from the much-admired Detroit water system to the highly polluted Flint River to cut costs. This caused immediate problems including harmful water quality and pipe damage, according to a Jan. 21 New York Times article.

In October 2015, the city switched back to the Detroit system, but its pipes

had already been so corroded by the terrible river water quality that they contaminated even fresh, safe water with lead, according to the Jan. 21 article.

The crisis in Flint has been declared a state emergency by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and a federal emergency by President Obama. Public figures and companies have donated money and bottled water, but the contaminated water caused such extreme damage to the infrastructure of Flint that more than remedial aid is needed.

The responsibility of finding and funding a solution to the Flint water crisis falls

to the city, state and potentially the federal government. The government agencies responsible have known of the contamination issues for nearly two years and the fact it has taken this long to take action is horrifying. Even now, the work toward solving the crisis seems slow—the old, contaminated pipes have yet to be replaced, according to a Jan. 26 NBC report.

Snyder said distributing clean water and filters is the priority before examining the pipes. Distributing bottled water is important, but residents need a more permanent solution quickly.

Environmental and civil rights groups have filed a lawsuit demanding the prompt replacement of pipes in Flint, noting that residents “can’t live off bottled water,” according to a Jan. 27 CBS article.

It has become apparent that a permanent solution to the crisis is needed and there are several possibilities to consider.

First, the government could repair or replace the pipes in Flint.

Although expensive and time-consuming, this would put Flint on

the road to being a functioning city with a clean water supply again.

Another option would be to evacuate Flint entirely. In the case of the Love Canal water crisis in 1978, which was caused by the poor disposal of hazardous waste, the families living in the area were evacuated or relocated to other cities.

This remedy would not be easy. Flint has a population of 100,000 with 40 percent of residents living below the poverty line—much larger than the Love Canal neighborhood near Niagara Falls, New York. It might not be realistic to evacuate a population of that size, but the government should consider offering a package to aid those people who might be interested in leaving.

What happened in Flint is an emergency and a tragedy. It should be solved regardless of the cost. Flint residents are suffering because their government put them in this deadly situation and left them helpless. Such a gross error and abuse of power should not go unnoticed, but the main priority should be getting the people of Flint safe access to this vital human resource.

STUDENT POLL

What do you think the response to the Flint water crisis should be?

It is definitely something that should be solved quickly. Water is something we should all have safely.



CHASE CONNER
sophomore journalism major



CHARLOTTE KENNETT
junior theatre major

I think [the government] needs to get involved and use their power to correct what has been done.

I think most crises having to deal with our citizens are very much the government’s responsibility.



CARL MURRAY
junior business & entrepreneurship major

EDITORIAL

State takeover will not fix CPS

On Jan. 20, Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner, along with Illinois Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno and Illinois House Republican Leader Jim Durkin, proposed a state takeover plan for Chicago Public Schools, according to a Jan. 20 Chicago Sun-Times article.

The proposed takeover plan includes replacing the current mayor-appointed school board, weakening the Chicago Teachers Union’s bargaining power and allowing CPS

to file for bankruptcy, according to a Jan. 20 Chicago Tribune article.

CPS is struggling—especially with budget issues—but Rauner’s proposal is not the help the district needs.

Replacing the mayor-appointed board with another government-appointed one is not going to help the district overcome their problems. As the CTU and parents contend, people who serve on the board should be elected, not chosen by outside government officials who have no personal stake in CPS.

Additionally, weakening CTU’s bargaining power would decrease the quality of teachers CPS can attract. Collective bargaining gives teachers an opportunity to improve and renegotiate their salaries, benefits and conditions.

Years of deficit spending have left the district with \$6.2 billion in outstanding debt and an operating budget of about \$5.7 billion, according to a Jan. 21 WBEZ article. Although CPS has financial issues, being able to file for bankruptcy, as Rauner’s plan would permit, does not guarantee CPS would be successful in restructuring its debt. CPS needs more funding from the state, not a takeover or the opportunity to file for bankruptcy.

Rauner’s plan takes the focus off students’ well-being and education and puts it on profits and politics. CPS’ main goal should be to provide quality education for students.

Rauner’s plan reveals he is thinking of CPS as a company. If CPS is run like this, the needs of students are more likely to be disregarded in the interest of saving money.

City officials, including Mayor Rahm Emanuel and state Democrats, have opposed the proposal and said it will not pass, according to a Jan. 21 WBEZ article. Without their support it is indeed highly unlikely the proposal will go through. But if it did, it would be detrimental to the future of CPS and Chicago’s children.

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Did you catch a mistake, think we could have covered a story better or have strong beliefs about an issue that faces all of us here at Columbia?

Why not write a letter to the editor? At the bottom of Page 2, you’ll find a set of guidelines on how to do this. Let us hear from you. —The Columbia Chronicle Editorial Board



COMMENTARY

Self-destruction is not artistic

» SELENA COTTE
COPY CHIEF

“Do you tear yourself apart to entertain like me?” is a line from the song “Gasoline,” by Halsey, a 21-year-old singer-songwriter idolized by many Columbia students and young artists throughout the country.

The notion that artists must put their work ahead of their own well-being to be successful is not new. As early as elementary school, children hear stories about Vincent van Gogh, who cut off his own ear while making the art now displayed in museums worldwide.

Singer-songwriter Kurt Cobain died famously in 1994 of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, and this act is romanticized by musicians and music lovers alike almost as much as his art is admired.

The same sensibility permeates a series of self-portraits by visual artist Bryan Lewis Saunders. The art went viral in 2008, depicting his varying levels of creativity under the influence of multiple drugs, which ultimately resulted in brain damage.

Researchers have long sought a link between creativity and mental illness or addiction to explain why

creatives tend to lead self-destructive lives. The results are equivocal, but it seems obvious that untreated mental illness and addiction have cut short many a brilliant artistic career.

Drug overdoses and suicidal acts have taken the lives of countless talented and beloved artists, such as singer-songwriter Amy Winehouse, poet Sylvia Plath, actor and singer Cory Monteith, actress Marilyn Monroe and writer Ernest Hemingway.

While it is a common perception that one has to put self-care in the backseat to reach success, doing so is an insult to the creative process. There are multiple exceptions to the rule that all artists must self-destruct. Painter Georgia O’Keeffe became a successful artist while abstaining from drugs and overcame her depression, creating art until she died at 98 of natural causes.

Singer-songwriter Lorde openly rejects party culture in her music and personal life and maintains tremendous critical and commercial success.

Addiction and substance abuse are not essential to creativity. Comedy writer David Sedaris said in a

May 27, 2008, *Time Out Chicago* article that he quit drinking and doing drugs and has still produced best-selling novels that push the boundaries of modern prose.

Multitalented artist Lady Gaga admitted to regretting her romanticization of cocaine use as “sexy” in a 2012 interview with *Amanda de Cadenet*, as it hindered her well-being and her career.

Time and time again, we see celebrities and artists speak out against prior drug usage or attend rehab programs, often to complete a project they’re committed to, like John Stamos in July 2015, who went to rehab to get over alcohol and prescription drug abuse in order to finish filming “*Fuller House*” for Netflix.

Actresses Gwyneth Paltrow and Jessica Alba are just a few public figures who have created successful businesses promoting healthy lifestyles. As this trend gains traction, we hope it will continue and influence the lives of artists of future generations. This will change the way we connect art and self-destruction.

scotte@chroniclemail.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

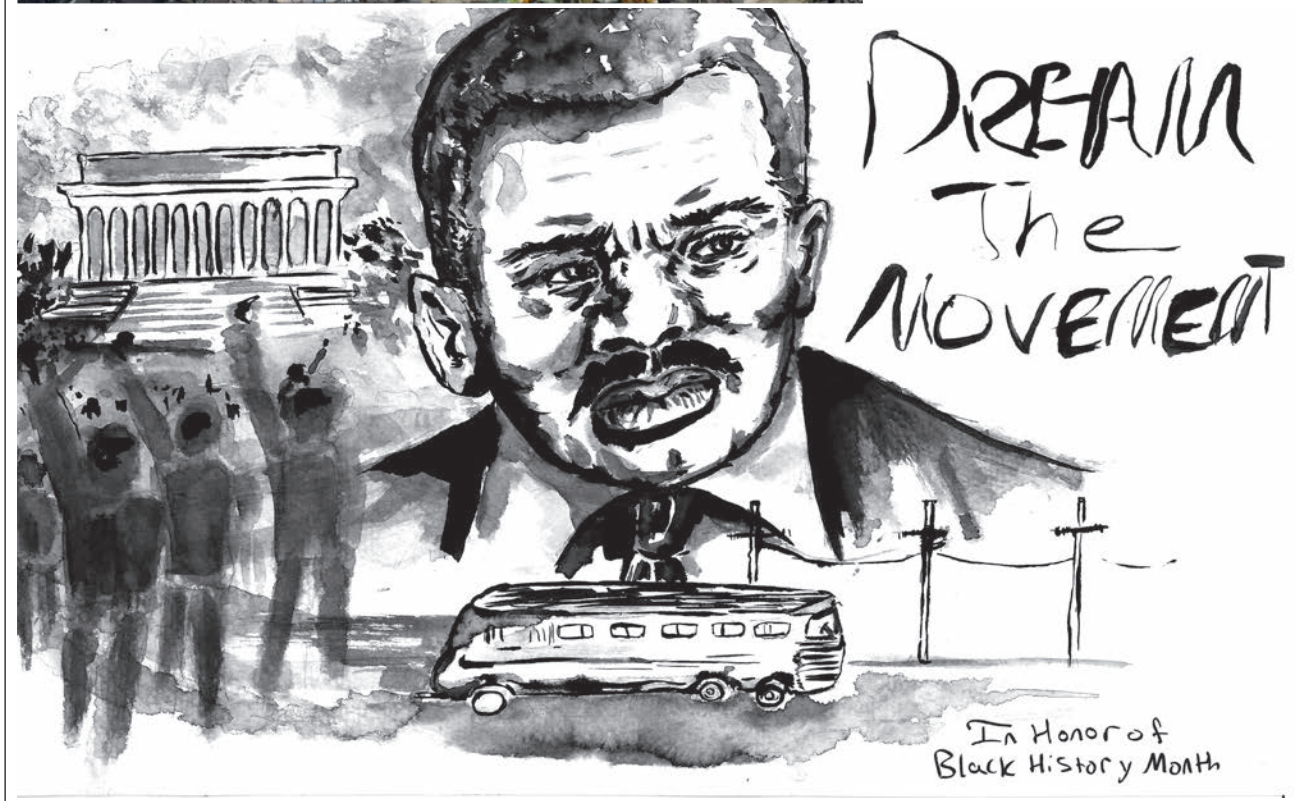
In response to non union staff merit raises, union negotiations

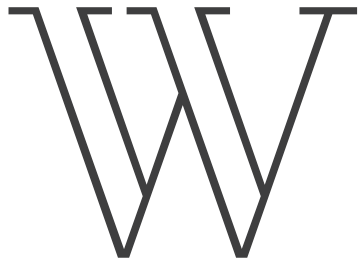
US of CC had no right to block staff’s opportunity to earn merit pay. The majority of their forced constituency does not support opposition to the concept of merit. US of CC has virtually no leverage in their aggressive ideological bargaining and very little support as a representative body. Their long term plan is obstruction and political grandstanding. They try again and again, unsuccessfully, to drum up interest in their unproductive activism while the everyday staff like me lose new opportunities for compensation. Please release us, US of CC, to be judged on our merits, like the 208 staff members eligible for raises. We do not support your do-nothing, agree-to-nothing agenda. Let me say ‘yes’ to merit, even if you prefer not to be judged on your skill and effort.

Jennie Fauls
Assistant Director, Program in Writing and Rhetoric



EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION
by Alexander Aghayere





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Mario Koch	Art & Art History
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Martin Macias	Communication and Media Innovation
Carlos Prias	Cinema Art + Science
Elina Ruka	Photography
Zena Salam	Fashion Design

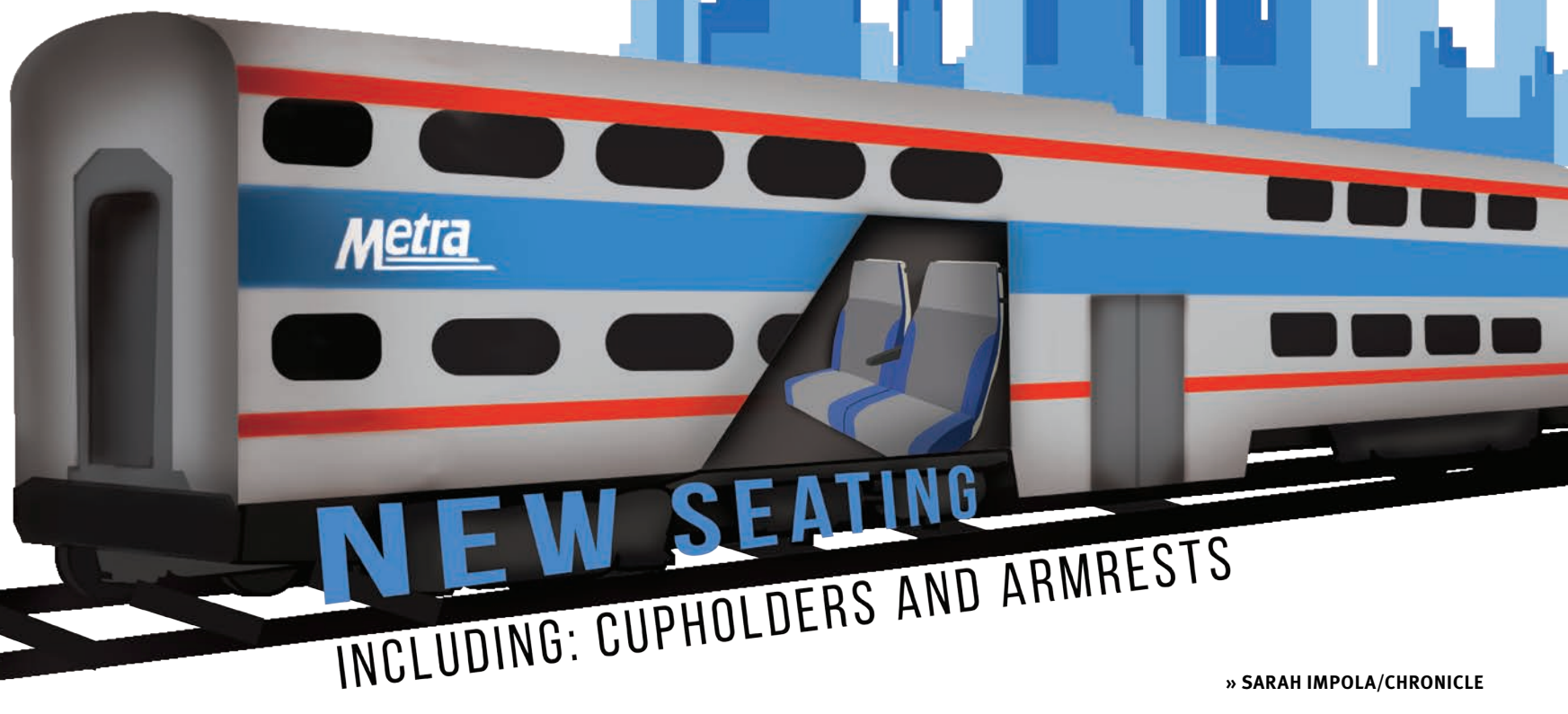
The Weisman Exhibition runs from September 6 - October 28, 2016 in the Arcade Gallery, 618 S. Michigan Avenue, 2nd Floor. Please join us for the opening reception on September 8, 5-8pm.



colum.edu/weisman



Metra on track to make major changes



» SARAH IMPOLA/CHRONICLE

» MCKAYLA BRAID
METRO EDITOR

DRAMATIC NEW SAFETY technology, along with better, more comfortable seats with cupholders and armrests are on the horizon for Columbia students who commute to school aboard Metra trains. But there's a catch. Fares are due to increase to pay for the improvements, rail officials say.

Metra began installing seats with more amenities, such as cupholders, armrests and better lumbar support, during the week of Jan. 26 for a test run. Beginning Feb. 1, train fares and fees for purchasing tickets on board a Metra train will increase to fund these resources, according to Metra press releases.

Railcar 7437 on the Milwaukee District line is the first car to test the upgraded seats.

"These new seats offer amenities our customers have never had before—cupholders, armrests and higher backs," Metra Executive Director and CEO Don Orseno said in the press release. "We will be asking our customers to give us feedback about the new seats,

and we hope they like them and find them to be more comfortable than the current seating."

According to the press release, Metra's new seats cost the same as the old bench-style seats, so they will be installed when old seats need replacing. The transit authority plans to add new seating in two cars each month in all lines except Metra Electric and will seek

“These new seats offer amenities our customers have never had before—cupholders, armrests and higher backs.”

— Don Orseno

feedback from riders starting in February.

Curtis Koch, a junior radio major who commutes more than an hour from Crystal Lake, said he is looking forward to the upgrades. He added that cupholders would likely reduce spillage problems in the train cars.

Metra spokesman Michael Gillis said Metra will also install a new system for the west suburban Burlington Northern Santa

Fe line called Positive Train Control, which is expected to be operational by the end of the year.

Gillis said PTC combines GPS and radio technology to monitor engineers' handling of trains and override the engineer to stop the train if needed. For example, if an engineer was traveling too fast for the track conditions,

PTC could stop the train.

Gillis said Metra has worked to implement the system since the United States Congress passed a law in 2008 making PTC mandatory, but the system could cost upward of \$350 million to install and \$15 million to \$20 million annually to maintain.

According to a Nov. 11 press release, a one-way Metra ticket price will increase by 25

cents, a 10-ride ticket will increase by \$1.75 and a monthly pass will increase by \$2.50 on Feb. 1.

"This year, part of the fare increase that is going to start on Feb. 1 will help us pay for the additional operating cost," Gillis said. "Part of the money we are getting for [fare] increase[s] will pay for the operating cost of PTC, and the other half of it will go toward our capital program, of which PTC installation is a component."

Gillis said there has always been a charge for purchasing a ticket aboard a Metra train instead of before boarding, but effective Feb. 1 the fee will increase from \$3 a ticket to \$5 a group—meaning more than one person—and if someone is traveling alone, they are responsible for the entire \$5.

Gillis said the fee increase is an attempt to encourage passengers to transition to the mobile Ventra app, noting that passengers who board the train without tickets can avoid the fee by purchasing tickets with the app.

mbraid@chroniclemail.com

Black youth experience high unemployment

» **OLIVIA POLONY**
METRO REPORTER

NEARLY HALF OF young, African Americans in Chicago are jobless and out of school, according to a new youth unemployment report that shows Chicago to be far worse at keeping young people off the streets than other major cities.

The study, commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network, a nonprofit organization that provides education for inner city youths, and prepared by the University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute, which conducts urban research, looked at 20- to 24-year-olds in Chicago in 2014 and found that 40.9 percent of black youths are out of school and work.

In New York, that number is 27.3 percent and in Los Angeles it is 29.3 percent, according to the report.

While black youths struggle disproportionately to receive

education or find part-time employment, according to the report, Hispanic youths in Chicago fare somewhat better with only 18.7 percent in that category. By contrast only 6.7 percent of white youths lack jobs and educational opportunities.

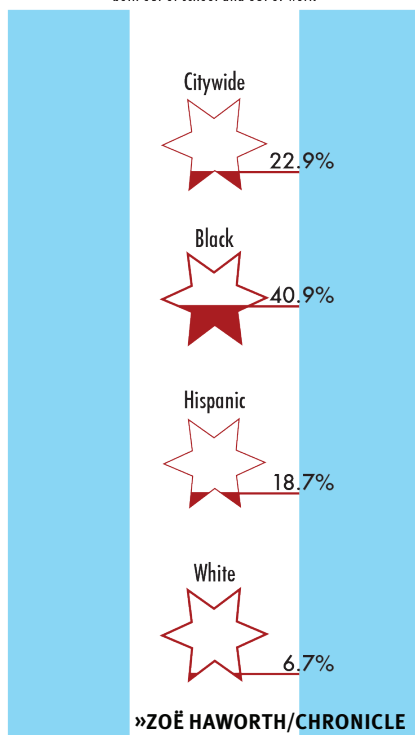
"This has gone on for a long period of time," said Teresa Cordova, director of the Great Cities Institute. "It's more than just a momentary problem."

According to Cordova, a lack of commercial and manufacturing opportunities in hard-hit neighborhoods on the city's South and West sides is at the root of staggering unemployment rates, adding that it creates a cycle of joblessness and criminal behavior.

"There is a definite relationship between these communities that are highly segregated and places where there is low employment," Cordova said. "If we're going to

Unemployment among youth (20-24) in Chicago in 2014

both out of school and out of work



» **ZOË HAWORTH/CHRONICLE**

address these issues, we need to address what's happening in the neighborhoods themselves."

Cordova said the situation is

most severe for 20- to 24-year-old black males, 46.7 percent of whom are jobless, according to the report.

Jack Wuest, executive director of the Alternative Schools Network, said he hopes people will see studies like this one and take action by working to bring jobs to affected communities.

"It's a huge burden for them because they can't make much of a living," Wuest said. "It's a huge burden for society because it leads to violence and guys working on the streets and getting arrested for different nonviolent crimes."

Wuest said a lack of work opportunities in these neighborhoods leads to an uptick in crime that in turn triggers higher health care, prison and welfare costs assessed on the public through taxes.

"Kids in the inner city, those neighborhoods have been destroyed," Wuest said.

A study conducted in 2012 by the University of Chicago Crime Lab, where at-risk youth from deteriorating and crime-ridden

neighborhoods were offered spots in an eight-week summer jobs program in government and nonprofit positions, found that participants experienced a 43 percent drop in arrests for violent crime.

The program, One Summer Plus, provided participants with mentors to help support them through their new workload.

"People have thought for a long time that it makes sense that a job would be important to avoid violence," said Kelly Hallberg, the scientific director of the U of C Crime Lab who conducted the study. "Until we did this work, there wasn't a lot of very strong evidence that showed the connection between offering a job and the reduction in violence."

Cordova said results of reports like hers and the one conducted by Hallberg are hard to ignore.

"The report really confirms what we know and what people who are living this reality know," Cordova said.

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Blackhawks' community rink proposal scores goal

» MEGAN BENNETT
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

THE CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS' proposal to create a new practice rink that will also be available for community use was approved by the city's Plan Commission on Jan. 21.

The facility, initially announced in a July press release from Mayor Rahm Emanuel, is proposed for the Near West Side between 1801-1853 W. Jackson Blvd., a location soon to be vacated by Malcolm X College, according to the Plan Commission report.

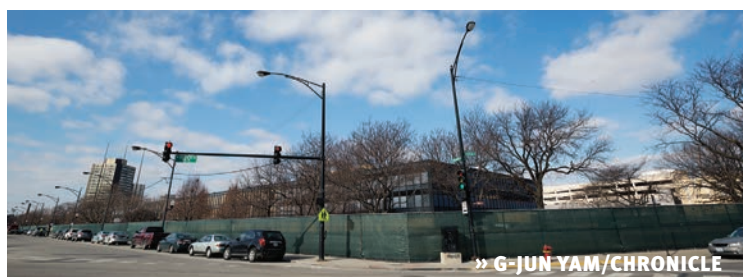
Reports given to the Department of Planning and Development in December and January said the facility would take up approximately four acres of land, including a parking lot, two regulation-sized ice rinks, locker rooms, retail and fitness spaces, and a restaurant.

The plan moves to the next step of approval, the Zoning Committee, on Feb. 9, according to Peter Hassen, senior executive of marketing for the Blackhawks.

The unanimous approval by the Plan Commission was anticipated, Hassen said. The team hopes to begin construction this summer with an estimated November 2017 opening.

"The vision of our owner, Rocky Wirtz—to build a facility and provide benefits to the community here in which we've resided for almost 100 years—it's somewhat unprecedented," Hassen said.

Since the team only needs one ice rink to practice when they are not at the United Center or traveling, the additional rink will continue efforts the Blackhawks have already started with organizations like Chicago Public Schools and



The Blackhawks' practice and community rink proposal will be located where Malcolm X College is vacating, according to reports approved by the Plan Commission Jan. 21.

the Chicago Park Districts, he said.

Hassen said the aim is also to help children "build character" through educational tutoring as well as lessons in nutrition and fitness.

"[The goal is to] leverage what the Blackhawks have done over the last six years and try and get more kids to understand the game, love the game and maybe we impact their life in some positive way," he said.

A new rink will provide access to anyone in Chicago interested in hockey, according to Pete Johnson, general manager of Johnny's IceHouse, the existing Blackhawks practice facility.

Currently, the city has only two public indoor skating rinks, according to the Chicago Park District website.

Alderman Walter Burnett Jr. (27th Ward), whose ward would house the proposed rink is a member of the Plan Commission. He predicts the same success for the plan as it continues to the city's Zoning Committee.

In addition to supporting children from various economic classes, Burnett said he is also excited about the amenities the rink would bring, including new jobs.

"It's a win-win situation," Burnett said.

Earnest Gates, executive director of the Near West Side Community Development Corporation whose organization has collaborated with the Bulls, said the rink will be an opportunity for local kids to similarly learn about a new sport.

"We're planning to establish an identical relationship with the Blackhawks," Gates said.

The rink's additional educational resources are estimated to be worth approximately \$3 million, Hassen said. The team's philanthropic group, Blackhawks Charities, is currently collecting donations and grants, he added.

The team tries to be good community neighbors, Hassen said, and this is a way to continue those efforts on a large scale.

"We always take a look and say there are people that can see the United Center [from where they live], but they don't always get a chance to come in here... What we'd like to do is give them an opportunity to see what happens here and see there is opportunity here," Hassen said. "The community rink is an extension of that."

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» MCKAYLA BRAID
METRO EDITOR

ALI KARBASSI IS the founder and CEO of CoderDojoChi, a nonprofit organization that teaches elementary through high school students how to code and the importance of technology and science in their future careers.

Karbassi, a web developer with more than a decade of experience in the field, started the group in 2013 to offer children the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of science and technology, which is a gateway to highly skilled jobs.

Karbassi spoke with The Chronicle about founding and operating CoderDojoChi, volunteering and the most rewarding part of his job.

THE CHRONICLE: Why did you create CoderDojoChi?

ALI KARBASSI: The idea is to bring [science, technology, engineering and math] to everyone in

the City of Chicago. We mainly aim for kids ages 7–17, so preschool all the way through high school. Our courses are free and available to everyone. Most schools do not have a technology class [and] there [are] no programming classes out there, so we want to make sure [kids] have that exposure.

What is most rewarding about your job?

The eyes opening up and [the kids] being like, “Whoa, I can do this.” The problem kids see right now is that anything technology-based is this scary black box, like “I don’t know how it works, it just works” [or] “I don’t know how the Internet works, I don’t know how to make a website or a game or an app or anything like that.” We show them it’s very simple, it’s just baby steps. You can learn it in two to three hours and again kids age 7 or 8 years old are doing this. When they do it for the first time [and] that curtain is pulled away, they feel like they can

Ali Karbassi is the founder and CEO of CoderDojoChi, which helps children of all ages learn to code.

do anything. They build their own games and stuff right away—It’s that feeling of opening their mind up to the world that I love.

Does your organization take student volunteers?

I’m the only employee. The rest of the crew is all volunteer-based. We’re constantly looking for more volunteers. The thing that makes us unique is that when we run our courses, we have a two-to-one mentor ratio, which means for every two kids, there’s one mentor there. The volunteers during our classes act as mentors and teachers. When we have a class of 30 kids, we have 15 mentors, and then we have the main teacher who keeps everyone on time.

What is your overall goal for CoderDojoChi?

The ultimate goal is to be a free



» Courtesy ALI KARBASSI

space for kids to learn science and technology. We want to be able to change how everyone views technology and open it up to a vast range of individuals. One thing that we see a lot is a child growing up looking at technology and seeing who’s in that field. Sometimes it’s not who they are—it’s not their gender or their race. [With] most jobs, any type of person is in that career. Sadly, in this current state of technology, most careers are

male-dominated. We want to make sure that women can do this work, so they can follow through and go get a degree if they want to or just learn on their own. We want everyone to feel like they can do this work. That’s our endgame, our goal.

For more information regarding classes and volunteer opportunities, please visit <http://CoderDojoChi.org>

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Medical pot backers aim to expand program

» OLIVIA POLONY
METRO REPORTER

MEDICAL MARIJUANA ENTREPRENEURS in Illinois say they are concerned business will capsize if the state's pilot program does not expand the list of eligible health conditions.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health's website, 39 illnesses qualify for medical cannabis treatment and roughly 4,000 patients are registered statewide. Because many illnesses are excluded from the list, some dispensary owners are worried.

Joseph Friedman, chief operations officer at PDI Medical in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, said of the listed conditions only "a handful are out there in a big way," and as a result, his dispensary does not get as much business as he hoped for.

"What's happening to not only my dispensary, [but] every dispensary and cultivation center around the state, is we are all very

concerned about the future of the program," Friedman said. "It's the patients that are not going to be served that should be served with this incredible miracle plant."

For a condition to become eligible in Illinois, it must be approved by the Medical Cannabis Advisory Board, which is composed of patients, doctors and medical experts who, according to Friedman, are well-versed in the science and benefits of medical marijuana.

After receiving the board's support, proposed additions to the list of eligible conditions must be approved by Gov. Bruce Rauner.

"This isn't an advisory panel that rubber-stamps every condition," Friedman said. "They're looking at how cannabis can really help with the symptoms of these conditions."

The advisory board has recommended eight conditions for eligibility including PTSD and chronic pain, though none have been approved, according to Friedman.

In Chicago, Dispensary 33 owner Zachary Zises said patients are his first priority.

"We are a mission-driven organization. We are for-profit, but nevertheless we are driven by a desire to help those who can benefit from the medicine we're selling," Zises said. "The fact that there are only 4,000 — registered patients across the state — certainly it creates some financial hardship, but ultimately the hardship falls primarily on the patients."

Zises and Friedman said many of the 39 eligible conditions are rare and Illinois politics play a major role in the process of getting more patients into dispensaries.

"For every legislative act to expand the current program beyond its sunset date of Jan. 1, 2018, the government has vetoed everything without explanation," Friedman said.

According to Zises, despite the government's hesitance to support the Medical Cannabis Advisory Board's proposals, marijuana is safer than prescription pain medications.

"What we dispense here is essentially the safest medicine possible," Zises said. "People are being denied the opportunity to treat themselves."

Zises said recent reports depict numerous deaths due to prescription drug overdoses and, according to reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of marijuana overdoses remains at zero.

William Hollander, a representative of Midwest Compassion Center in Illinois, expressed optimism about the future of the medical cannabis pilot program in Illinois.

The MCC dispensary is currently under construction and has yet to experience the restricted market firsthand.

"At 4,000 registered patients, the industry is not sustainable," Hollander said in a January 27 email. "Since medical cannabis has become available in Illinois, we have seen an increase in registered patients month-over-month and I believe this number will continue to grow."

The three dispensary owners agree that if more medical conditions are not approved, their businesses will not survive in Illinois.

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» COURTESY JOSEPH FRIEDMAN

Case displaying paraphernalia at PDI Medical in Buffalo Grove, Illinois.



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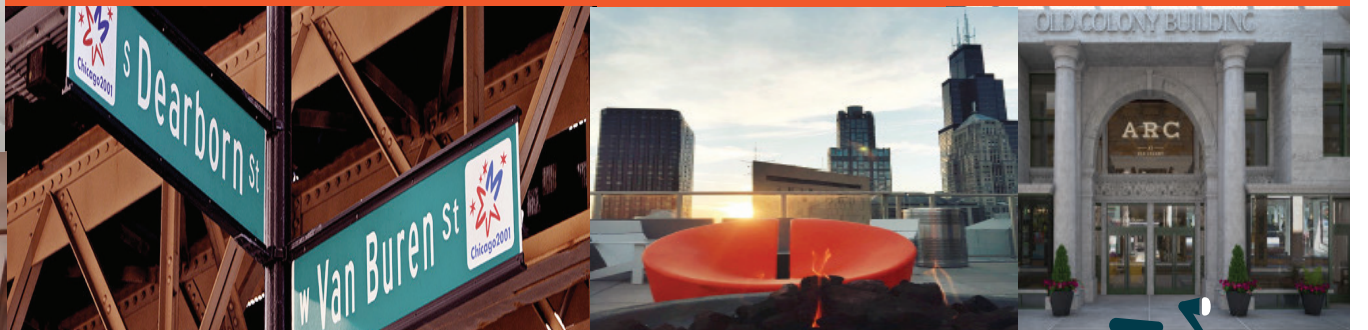


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