

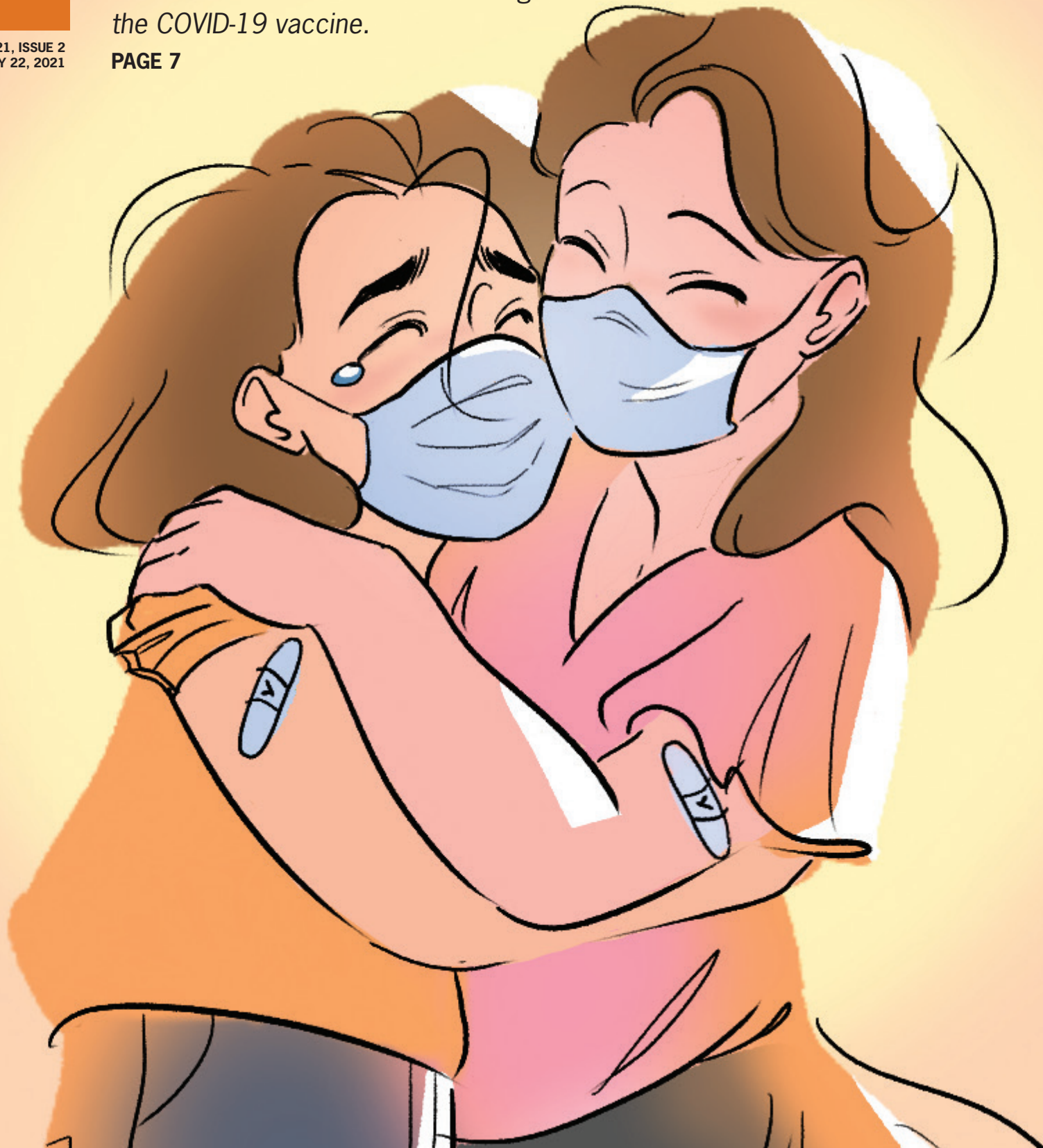


VOLUME 121, ISSUE 2
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Reunited

*Students discuss life since receiving
the COVID-19 vaccine.*

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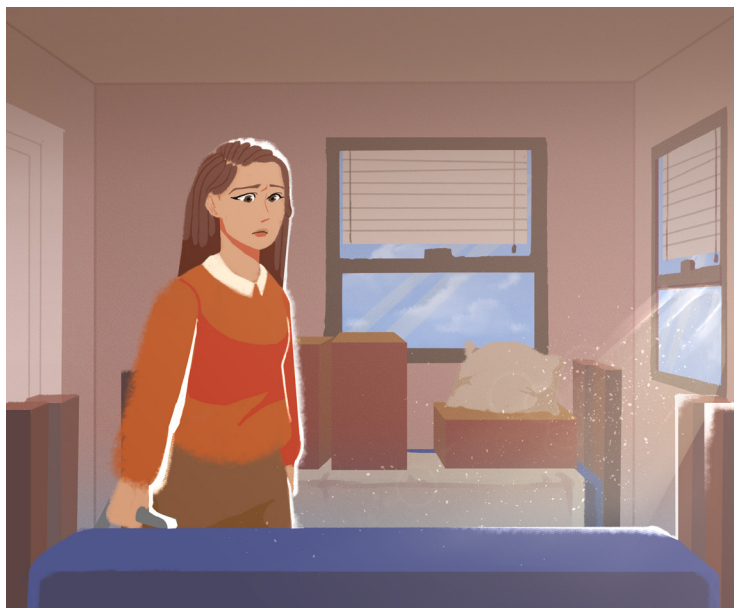
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CAMPUS

Over 700 students move into residence halls



DESTINY ALEXANDER / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

By Samantha Greyson
 @GreysonSamantha

Residence halls are operating at a 50% capacity this semester after many students canceled their housing contracts in the fall.

University Housing and Dining was able to offer spring housing to students who wished to live on campus without requiring roommates, said Justin Jaskowiak, UHD director for apartments, occupancy and conferences.

Students who signed a housing contract in the fall could be let out of the contract penalty-free if their course schedule was fully remote, Jaskowiak said.

“In a normal year, we typically only have maybe 100, 150 spaces available for students to move into (during the spring semester), because the halls are typically full,” Jaskowiak said. “Due to us having space, including full empty rooms, we could offer more contracts to students needing housing.”

Unlike previous semesters, UHD made no roommate assignments for the spring, Jaskowiak said. If a student did not put down a preferred roommate in their housing portal, they were assigned to a room alone.

“Students who are coming for the spring, if they have a preferred roommate, can match with that roommate,” Jaskowiak said. “We just need to hear that both people have chosen to ... live together. For all other students, due to the space that is available, we didn’t assign any students to a roommate unless it was a preferred roommate.”

Jaskowiak said UHD was at

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UNIVERSITY

UT implements pilot textbook access program through Co-op

By Sheryl Lawrence
@sheryl_adelle



ROCKY HIGINE / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

UT is implementing a pilot program that offers inclusive access to digital course content through the University Co-op this spring, but some students are confused by its rollout.

The Longhorn Textbook Access program provides students access to all the materials for one course on Canvas and allows students to pay for all the materials together. Students are charged the cost of the course materials through their What I Owe accounts unless they opt out, which must be done by the 12th class day. If the student does not pay by the 20th class day, access to course materials will be canceled and the charge will be removed from What I Owe.

There are 11 classes using the program this spring.

Dave Platt, vice provost for undergraduate academic affairs, said the program uses the University's and the Co-op's negotiating powers to get students the best possible textbook prices. Platt said the program will have a full rollout in the fall if the pilot goes well, and instructors will be able to choose if they want to participate in the program.

"Any faculty member who wants to adopt a Longhorn Textbook Access textbook for their classes will be able to do so," Platt said.

Cheryl Phifer, president and CEO of the University Co-op, said the program focuses on digital textbooks, which are less expensive to distribute than physical textbooks. She said these savings are passed onto the students.

"When a physical textbook

is being used, there's a cost to ship that book to the Co-op, there's a cost to unbox it, to get it ready to put on the shelf (and) to get it on the shelf," Phifer said.

As the program grows, Phifer said the Co-op will likely not carry physical textbooks for classes in the program.

Neuroscience freshman Sneha Kamal is taking two classes using the program: Genetics and Organic Chemistry 1. She said she only received one email regarding the program from the Co-op, not from the University or her professors, and opted out. Kamal said she thinks the program should be on an opt-in basis.

"It's more of a hassle for students to actually opt out, and some may forget to do it," Kamal said. "They have to pay even if they didn't want to, but if it's an opt-in thing, people who actually want to be a part of the program are part of it."

Platt said the University chose to have faculty members and the Co-op communicate with students about the program to avoid confusion.

"We made the judgment that if we send something out to all these students and most of them aren't in a course that has this kind of book, there's going to be mass confusion," Platt said.

Accounting lecturer John McGuire, who is using the program for his Managerial Accounting class, said the program benefits professors who use outside homework managers because students do not have to purchase course materials through an outside link.

"I've been teaching this course for four years," McGuire said. "Every semester, I have students have challenges trying to get their access, and they end up waiting and trying to call the help desk and waiting and waiting."

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COLUMN

Cancel campus walking tours

UT should cancel all spring semester in-person walking tours and encourage virtual tours instead.

By **Hannah Lopez**
Associate Editor

Daniel Jaffe, interim executive vice president and provost, released a statement recently declaring that UT wants to “minimize the number of people returning to

the campus community at any one time” to reduce the spread of COVID-19. In the announcement, students were asked to reconsider returning to campus.

However, despite students being urged to spend their semester at home and Austin Public Health increasing the COVID-19 community risk level to Stage 5, UT is still allowing admitted students to schedule in-person campus walking tours.

In-person campus tours are not worth compromising the health of the student body — especially when there are other virtual routes to consider.

These tours pose a serious health risk to students taking in-person classes or living on campus who will be in spaces visited by the tour participants.

In order to decrease the spread of COVID-19 at UT, the University needs to cancel all campus walking tours for the spring semester and instead switch to a virtual format.

In accordance with Austin Public Health guidelines, residents should not gather

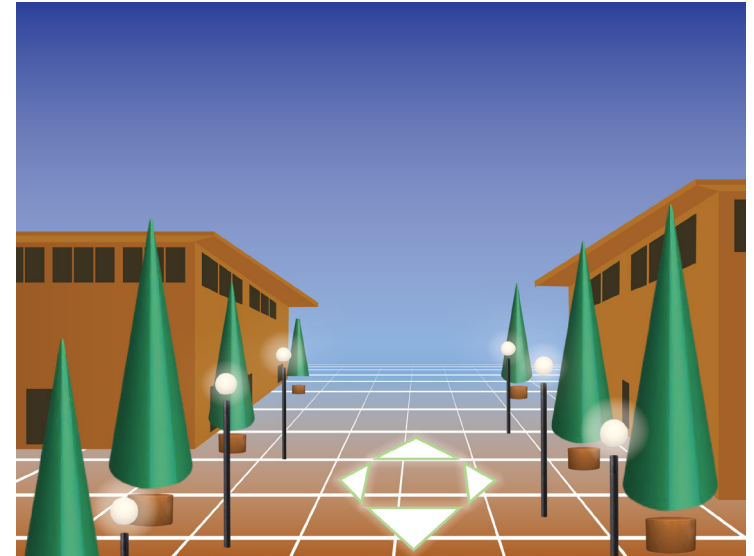
with anyone outside of their household, dining and shopping should be limited to essential trips only and all nonessential travel should be avoided.

The walking tours, which are 90 minutes and can hold up to nine people, violate all of these recommendations.

Kathleen Harrison, the communications manager for the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, said in an email that each student registrant may register two guests — meaning multiple households could be interacting within the same spaces while on the tour. Harrison said guides are trained in proper safety protocols, but accepted students and their guests still interact with spaces on campus, potentially contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

Additionally, visitors often eat at restaurants on Guadalupe Street or take breaks in student rest areas. These spaces, where students study and take online classes, are already limited due to COVID-19 closures — and unlike visitors, students don’t have the choice to move elsewhere.

Even though UT is only allowing admitted students to



CARLYSSA PHOON / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

attend these on-campus tours, tour slots are already booked up until April. This indicates a large population of visitors will still be on our campus this spring.

Additionally, due to the existence of virtual tours, the on-campus walking tours are completely unnecessary.

Not only does UT offer a 360° virtual tour of some of the most famous campus spots, but the University also provides sessions where prospective students can sign up for a live virtual tour or an online information session about admissions or academic programs. Furthermore, virtual tours offer a larger number of tour guides.

“In-person tours are led by one Texas Guide while there are between two and five Texas Guides on each live virtual tour, which allows for multiple student perspectives to be shared,” Harrison said.

Diana Ginther, a junior at Champion High School in Boerne, Texas, stated that while she hopes she will be able to tour the UT campus during her senior year, virtual tours are a service she would use if COVID-19 is still an issue.

“Hopefully once the vaccine comes in, everything will be a little bit better, but I’m just concerned for my safety,” Ginther said. “So I wouldn’t do in-person tours.”

Instead of risking both the health of students and the visitors themselves by providing in-person campus walking tours to admitted students, UT should completely transition to an online tour format this spring. If UT truly wants to claim that its mission is to “Protect Texas Together,” it should start prioritizing the safety of its student body.

Lopez is a rhetoric and writing junior from Nederland, Texas.

GALLERY



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CAMPUS

COVID-19 pods allow for social interaction with risks

By Amanda Figueroa-Nieves
@amandafn02

Some students have created pods, closed groups of people who interact with one another but not with those outside of the group, to maintain social interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Terrance Hines, executive director and chief medical officer for University Health Services, said students in pods should continue to social distance from those outside of their pod, wear facial coverings, wash their hands and routinely participate in Proactive Community Testing to protect their pod. Hines said students should also get a vaccine once they are eligible.

Hines said limited social interactions due to the pandemic can have negative mental health effects.

"Pods are a way to be able to engage with other people, to alleviate that stress and to have meaningful interactions," Hines said.

Hines said it is important to keep in mind that interactions between pod members can still be risky.

"We've actually seen through our contact tracing that a lot ... of the transmission that we've seen has come from household members, people who live in the same dorm or private residence (or) friends

who might be hanging out," Hines said. "And it's because of that close contact, because of the duration of contact and then the fact that most people are probably ... not wearing a mask (that these interactions carry a risk of transmitting COVID-19)."

Hines said students should consider potential members' risk of infection before creating a pod.

"You probably wouldn't want to form a pod with someone who you don't trust ... or maybe someone who would be at greater risk of serious effects if they were to become infected," Hines said.

Brandon Curl, a physics and biochemistry sophomore, said being part of a pod has benefited him during the pandemic. Curl, who is a resident assistant, said he has seen the negative effects of social isolation among students.

"I think there is a mental health crisis, especially among college people, as a result of the pandemic," Curl said. "Having that social pod, it really helps mitigate a lot of those adverse effects that come when you don't really see people in person."

Curl said his pod participates in Proactive Community Testing weekly, and they have an understanding to be aware of who they see outside the group. He said members of a pod have a shared responsibility for the group's

health, so being part of the pod serves as motivation to stay safe.

Max Grimes, a Plan II and biology sophomore, said he is part of a pod with his neighbors. He said they mostly socialize at their apartments, communicate about potential risks and regularly participate in Proactive Community Testing to stay safe.

"Having people to socialize with is so much better than just sitting in your room alone," Grimes said. "When you're on Zoom for a super long time, you just get fatigued. It's a lot more draining than in-person interactions."

Hines said if someone in a pod tests positive for COVID-19, they should cooperate with contact tracers and provide the names and contact information of those in their pod.

"It's really important to not be lulled into a false sense of security that you think you've created a safe space," Hines said. "The pod is only as strong as its weakest link."



DESTINY ALEXANDER / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

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The University of Texas at Austin
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DORMS

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 2

100% residence hall occupancy in the fall when it was announced that classes would be remote. The now 50% occupancy reflects the students who have chosen to forgo their housing contract for the spring.

"It's not coincidental that (the occupancy is) about 50%, but it has also matched what our students are looking for," Jaskowiak said. "We haven't turned folks away, we haven't told students no because we have the space to accommodate

the number of students that are looking for housing."

Biochemistry freshman Megan Frank moved on campus this semester to attend an in-person lab for a Freshman Research Initiative program. Frank will be living without a roommate.

"Having a roommate and learning how to compromise and communicate is a key feature of the typical college dorm experience," Frank said. "Whether you're best friends or not, having a roommate forces you to interact with another person on a daily basis, so I think living in a single-occupancy room

might leave me feeling a bit secluded."

Biochemistry freshman Lauryn Brown lived at home for the fall semester, but moved on campus and found a roommate for the spring. Brown and her roommate met on Instagram and decided to live together for the spring semester.

"Being alone, I can't do that. I came from a large family so I didn't want to be silent in my room," Brown said. "I feel like I will have a (different freshman experience), but it won't be as bad as staying home. At least I'm seeing people, I'm on campus."

LEGISLATURE

87th legislative session prompts redistricting

By Lauren Abel
@laurena0324

The start of Texas' 87th legislative session on Jan. 12 marked the beginning of legislators' redistricting process, when legislative and congressional boundaries will be redrawn.

The drawing of district boundaries in Texas influences individual representation on both a state and national level as it determines representatives from Congress, the Texas Legislature, the State Board of Education and Texas' 481 district courts. Throughout the first regular session, which lasts through April 1, legislators will propose district maps using 2020 U.S. Census data to apportion 261,180 square miles of land among approximately 29 million people.

Miguel Rivera, the redistricting outreach fellow for the Texas Civil Rights Project, said the redistricting process is particularly important for students at UT because those living in West Campus, North Campus, Riverside

and Hyde Park are all represented through different districts.

"This student population, this young body has their political power divided into all of these different districts," Rivera said. "They can't unitedly petition for needs that are pretty similar across the board when you're a student at UT."

Joseph Fishkin, the Marrs McClean Professor in Law, said Austin, which is politically liberal, has been effectively divided into multiple districts so there is no district representing the majority of Austin.

Drawing district boundaries to favor a political party or reduce the voting power of a certain demographic is known as "gerrymandering." Texas has a history of issues with gerrymandering, according to the Princeton Gerrymandering Project. Fishkin said Texas has been an outlier in how often the state has been found by courts to have discriminated against Black and Hispanic citizens when redistricting.

During the last redistricting cycle



BARBRA DALY / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

in 2011, accusations of intentionally underrepresenting minorities were brought to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, which ruled that "the State of Texas

used an improper standard or methodology to determine which districts afford minority voters the ability to elect their preferred candidates of choice."

"This problem that has long existed will become more acute because the laws and the Supreme Court have made it clear to legislators that partisan gerrymandering is not going to result in liability, whereas racial gerrymandering still can," Fishkin said.

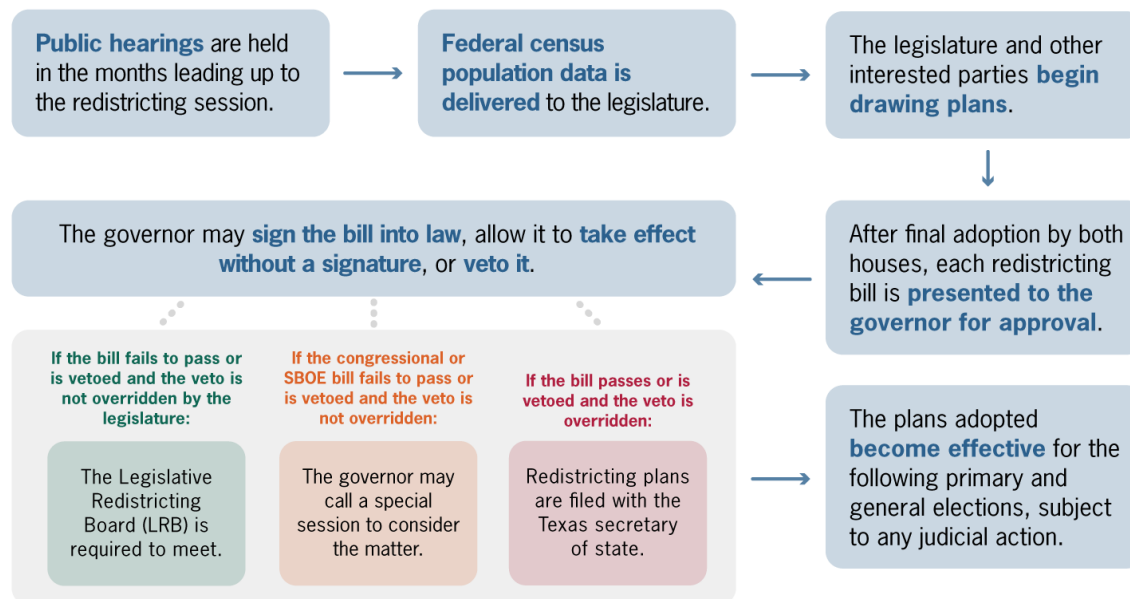
Texas' constant intrastate migration and substantial changes over the last 10 years need to be taken into consideration throughout the redistricting process, said Grant Rommel, president of The University of Texas College Republicans.

"You could see people from West Texas move out to Central Texas and if those constituents are being represented in a certain way, they need to be properly represented and not in an outdated fashion," Rommel said.

University Democrats President Brandon Bradley said the way the state is apportioned can make it more difficult for individuals to identify or contact their representatives. Government senior Bradley said as the redistricting process continues throughout this legislative session, Texas residents can advocate for accurate and fair representation.

"You have all sorts of confusing situations where it's not clear who your representative is and it's difficult for you to organize and get your representatives' attention," Bradley said.

The Redistricting Process



SOURCE: TEXAS REDISTRICTING

CHRISTINA PEBBLES / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

STUDENT LIFE

Vaccine leaves students hopeful

Students talk about what life has been like since receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

By Jennifer Errico
@errico_jenny

It had been over four months since Olivia Espinosa saw her immunocompromised friend. After each receiving two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, they reunited in an embrace.

"I didn't feel scared or guilty seeing her," nursing junior Espinosa said. "And more importantly, she felt safe around me. I realized then and there I could finally interact with my friends and family without putting them at risk."

Espinosa is one of the 9,641 people who have been fully vaccinated in Travis county. According to the New York Times, experts aren't sure if vaccinated people

can still contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

In Texas, two groups of people are currently eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Phase 1A includes frontline workers and volunteers while Phase 1B includes those who are 65 and older as well as residents with chronic medical conditions that put them at increased risk who are 16 years or older.

Last semester, Espinosa said she felt apprehensive about working in different hospital sectors. Now, she said she feels reassured knowing it's less likely she will contract the virus, especially since she's working at Ascension Seton Medical Center and Rock Springs Hospital this semester.

Chemical engineering sophomore Nathan Hardham received the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Jan. 4 and is scheduled to receive his second dose Jan. 22. Hardham has been a volunteer at the Health Transformation Building at Dell Medical School since September, assisting in screening and symptom monitoring.

As his responsibilities and contact with patients increases, he said he is relieved to be vaccinated.

"The constant possibility of contracting COVID-19, which I know everyone has experienced, was a huge weight on my shoulders,"

Hardham said. "It's just nice knowing I can help others while protecting myself and those close to me."

Hardham said after he received the first dose, he started to feel more comfortable doing more ordinary activities in public. He said he will continue to wear a mask and socially distance until most of the population has been vaccinated because he may still be able to spread COVID-19.

"I felt like I could take more risks, like go to the gym more frequently and eat indoors at restaurants again, but I still won't feel completely safe until I receive the second dose," Hardham said.

Jennifer Vaske, a nursing senior, has received both doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Like Hardham, she said she still abides by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

"It's a weird feeling, though, knowing technically I have this immunity, but I don't feel like I do," Vaske said. "I look around, and it's a sea of masks. We're still very much in a COVID world."

As one of the first people to receive the vaccine, Vaske said she felt like a guinea pig.

"My roommates constantly were asking, 'How are you feeling? Is everything okay?' And every day at work, like 15 people would swarm me as I walked in asking about my symptoms," Vaske said. "Everyone is so curious to know what it's like."

Vaske and Espinosa, who are friends and classmates, compared their symptoms and experiences throughout the vaccination process. A common symptom after the first dose is arm soreness. After the second dose, it's normal to experience symptoms such as fever or chills,

according to the CDC.

"Literally any weird thing (I felt), I would go straight to (Espinosa)," Vaske said. "After the first dose, my arm was so sore I couldn't sleep, so I called her and was like, 'Your arm is sore right?' and she would always reassure me. Even when we had different symptoms and reactions, it was just nice knowing we were both going through it at the same time."

Vaske, Espinosa and Hardham each said they hope everyone has the opportunity to receive the vaccine as soon as possible.

"I felt like this whole past year, there was no light at the end of the tunnel, but finally with the vaccine there is hope," Vaske said. "We're still very much in a waiting game, but we got through 2020 together, we can make it a little further. We're almost there."

Number of Vaccine Recipients

As of Jan. 21, Texas and Travis County have vaccinated people at similar rates.

Travis County

4.30%

of people have had at least one dose of the vaccine.

0.76%

of people have had two doses of the vaccine.

Texas

4.47%

of people have had at least one dose of the vaccine.

0.7%

of people have had two doses of the vaccine.



Percentage of People with One Dose



Percentage of People with Two Doses



Percentage of People with Zero Doses

SOURCE: TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

CHRISTINA PEEBLES / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

THEATER & DANCE

UT student writes, stars in 'Trash! The Musical'

By Grace Robertson
@gracearobertson

TW: Relationship abuse and violence

The first time Guinevere Govea saw the sheet music for her original, self-written musical, she cried.

"It's like my baby!" said Govea, a theatre and dance and journalism senior.

"Trash! The Musical," a project that took two years, 11 songs and 21 people to produce, began after Govea wrote a song that describes the experience of an abusive relationship — and feeling like trash in the process.

"(He's Not a Bad Guy) was the first song I wrote for the show and then it just grew from there," Govea said. "I started thinking of little characters."

Govea said the musical also draws from feeling frustrated with the performative and superficial way that people of color are represented in the media, which is portrayed in the plot of the main character, Hannah Sadman.

"I wanted to cover different topics like abusive relationships and being taken advantage of (and) covering this whole theme of being treated like trash,"

Govea said.

The story follows a woman of color who lives in a trash heap and interns at a publication company. When an opportunity arises to compete for a promotion, she is tokenized by a senior writer who uses her as a co-author to add diversity to his book pitch.

As an undergraduate student, Govea said she didn't think she could create such a substantial project.

"She didn't feel comfortable writing at all (because) she'd never written songs before," said Nicholas Saldivar, a theatre and dance senior. "She taps into her feelings and these big problems, and she succinctly writes it into music."

Govea cast her best friend, Saldivar, as an actor in the eight-person cast. One day, the pair was walking behind the William C. Powers, Jr. Student Activity Center when they saw The Therapy Sisters, an Austin-based jazz and neofolk trio, singing about frogs, dogs and therapy.

Saldivar, who has worked with Govea on eight productions in the past three years, encouraged Govea to reach out to The Therapy Sisters about featuring their

music in "Trash! The Musical." The band contributed two of their original songs to the production, Govea said.

"We attempt to write songs to make people laugh and also think," said Maurine McLean, bassist for the band. "And I think that's what (Govea) also does in her playwrighting."

Govea's journey to share her musical wasn't the traditional process. The cast performed a staged reading of the show in February 2020, but they weren't able to do a full production due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, Govea created a cast album that will be released in early February — nearly a year later. The collection will be available soon on iTunes, Spotify and other streaming services.

"It was so different, but at the same time so rewarding," Govea said. "Seeing all of us undergrads come together to form this cool project has been really great."

To Saldivar, Govea's skill as a playwright is what makes the project special.

"Trash! is a lot of things," Saldivar said. "It tackles race discrimination, gender dynamics in the workforce and the power of honesty and standing up for yourself."

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Guinevere Govea (center) and the cast of "Trash! The Musical" stand together on stage.

STUDENT LIFE

UT content creators find new creative pursuits amid pandemic

By Fiza Kuzhiyil
@fiza11k

"Welcome back to my channel, everyone," Amanda Saunders said to the camera.

Saunders sat in front of her grandmother's china cabinet, filming a video for her 7,000 subscribers on her college and lifestyle YouTube channel.

"It's not all glamorous right now," advertising senior Saunders said. "I live at home. I'm taking care of my (grandparents), which I love doing. ... So it's been different."

With most of campus life inaccessible due to the COVID-19 pandemic, college-based content creators on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok are shifting their videos from Speedway to inside their homes.

"It went from all of the action-packed content to now focusing on journaling prompts ... and just being more informative instead of entertainment," Saunders said.

After seeing a lack of videos about the UT transfer process, Saunders said she began making videos about her own transfer student experience in the fall of 2018.

With more time on her hands during the pandemic, Saunders said she can edit videos more thoroughly and add relatable jokes, which she said requires an understanding of pop culture and current events.

"If you were making content that didn't change ... like, you're still jumping out of airplanes and you're still vlogging at parties in these huge content houses, you really are on the brink of tone deaf," Saunders said.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Faith Bang, a communication and leadership freshman, said she stepped back from creating videos on TikTok because of the influx of content at the

time. Now, she focuses on showing her 400,000 followers what life is like as a college student during the pandemic.

In November, Chipotle and YouTube David Dobrik teamed up to give away \$10,000 to someone who shared their Chipotle order in a TikTok. Bang said she immediately headed to the Chipotle on Guadalupe Street with the last \$12 in her bank account.

"For the Chipotle TikTok, I was like, 'Okay, I'm going to talk about being broke and I'm going to go to Chipotle and show my order,'" Bang said. "There's a good amount of people on the internet who like to watch people eat, so I was like, 'Okay, I'm just (going to) eat.'"

After the video gained over 13 million views, Dobrik chose her as one of the winners of the \$10,000. Bang said the majority of the money will help pay for her tuition.

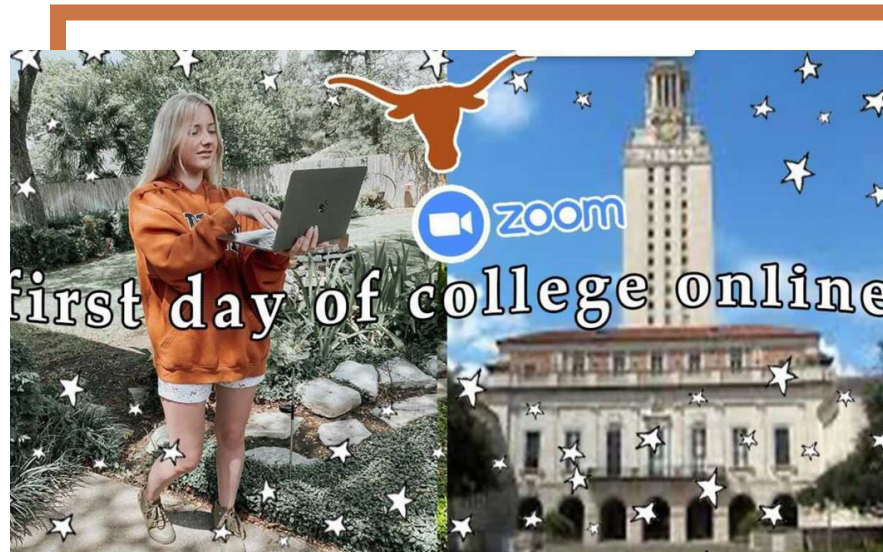
Realizing that high school seniors were beginning their college application process, business freshman Lindsay Choi said she began creating longer videos on YouTube about her student experience to target that audience.

"I thought, 'Why not make my own statistics video?'" Choi said. "I felt like I had a lot of things to say because I really struggled with my college application a lot."

After arriving at UT, Choi hoped to film dorm tours and day-in-the-life vlogs but said she now focuses on offering advice and tips to future college students.

For content creators such as Saunders, pandemic restrictions have led to more purposeful content.

"College influencers were able to ... use their platform in a positive light by showing things that you can do at home," Saunders said. "It really did shift a lot of content from just being oblivious."



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Due to COVID-19 restrictions, senior Amanda Saunders focused her YouTube content on academics instead of campus life.

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Taylor thrives through turnover

Celeste Taylor is ready to secure her role as team leader.

By Carter Yates
@Carter_Yates16

In the eighth grade, Celeste Taylor suited up for the Long Island Lutheran girl's varsity basketball team, taking a commanding presence on the court with girls who were as much as five

years older than she.

Now, the Texas women's basketball team's success in the 2020 season rests on the shoulders of an athlete who has proven she can handle the pressure of leading a team at a young age.

The Longhorns lost three starters and four total seniors from last year's squad, which finished with a disappointing 19–11 record. Moreover, the program embraced change by employing an almost entirely new coaching staff and adding five freshman players.

This influx of inexperience has forced the 19-year-old to develop into an offensive focal point and vocal leader quicker than she expected when she committed to the team in December 2017.

"My role has changed

tremendously, especially with getting older," Taylor said during a Nov. 24 teleconference. "I definitely need to be a more vocal leader, and I definitely need to play hard and just show the freshmen and my other teammates that we can get through this together."

Head coach Vic Schaefer's up-tempo coaching style and full-court press defense schemes have highlighted Taylor's best attributes on the court. The sophomore has racked up 28 steals in the ten games she's played. Schaefer's core principles of on-ball pressure and press defense are a perfect match for Taylor's preferred style of play, she said.

The new staff's emphasis on controlling unforced errors has resonated with Taylor. The sophomore has developed better

decision-making and control this season when she has the ball in her hands, something she attributes to Schaefer's offensive philosophy.

"We have to take care of the ball, and that's the end of the discussion," Taylor said. "We can't turn over the ball, we can't throw it away and we can't waste valuable possessions. He's definitely emphasized taking care of the ball."

Better ball management has led to increased scoring opportunities for Texas. While Taylor serves as a leader and defensive stalwart, junior center Charli Collier is the offensive focal point for the Longhorns, averaging 21.5 points and 11.4 rebounds per game. It's Taylor's passing, however, that fuels Texas's offensive chemistry, Collier said.

"(With) Celeste, including all of our players on this team, our chemistry has grown," Collier said in a Nov. 29 teleconference. "I feel like she distributes well, and so do our other guards. With the offense that we run, we just get to the paint as much as possible, so that helps our chemistry a lot."

While Taylor picked up new leadership responsibilities and worked to improve her offensive game one thing hasn't changed since her freshman year — her unwavering effort.

Her work ethic in practice caught his eye from the moment he came to Texas, Schaefer said.

"She's certainly probably one of our top two fastest kids when you just talk about pure speed," Schaefer said during a Nov. 18

preseason teleconference. "Her and Charli (Collier), their motor runs how I like it. They don't have a governor on their motor, they are rolling."

Taylor has more responsibilities in year two of her Texas basketball career, but despite her high-profile role on the team, she knows she must continue to do what got her to this point: hustle hard and play lockdown defense.

"For me, it's showing how hard I work," Taylor said during a Nov. 28 teleconference. "Before being vocal, I think you need to show the younger kids how hard you have to work and what needs to be done in order to win some games. I don't like to be a hypocrite, so I'm not going to tell somebody to do something if I'm not doing it."

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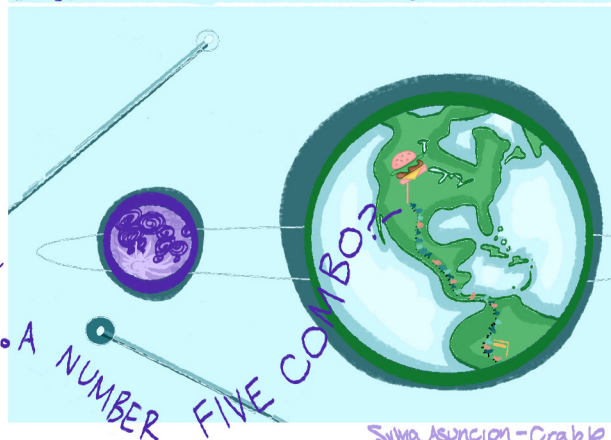
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MEN'S BASKETBALL

Kai Jones ascends Texas rotation, NBA draft boards

By Nathan Han
@NathanHan13

Heading into the college basketball season, there was a clear narrative for Texas: the Longhorns were returning every single player on last year's squad and adding five-star recruit and freshman forward Greg Brown.

What preseason polls didn't account for, however, is Kai Jones. Or, more accurately, they weren't accounting for the sophomore big man's massive improvement from his freshman year.

Head coach Shaka Smart said Jones has grown as much as any player he's seen over the last calendar year.

"Last year, at the beginning of the year, he was literally our last man," Smart said. "On this year's team, he's a guy who plays starter minutes and is in there when it really matters."

Jones hasn't just moved up Texas's rotation. The sophomore has also vaulted up NBA draft boards due to his improved play in his sophomore season. Most recently, Jones was ranked as high as No. 10 in a mock draft from Bleacher Report's Jonathan Wasserman. It's a dramatic rise for the big man from the Bahamas, who started playing organized basketball at the age of 15.

Jones spent the previous offseason in Orlando, Florida, where he played high school ball. During the elongated break, he said he worked on his game with offensive efficiency in mind.

"Everyday in my mind I was working on catch-and-shoot threes, playing with confidence, finishing with people and just playing in transition," Jones said.

The work paid off. Jones is



JACK MYER / THE DAILY TEXAN FILE

Sophomore Kai Jones hustles for a loose ball. Head coach Shaka Smart said Jones has one of the best work ethics for somebody his size that he's ever seen.

shooting 7-of-16 from 3-point range, an impressive 43%, as well as 62% from the field and 70% from the free throw line. That shooting ability, combined with highlight dunks, an intriguing mix of athleticism and a lengthy 6-foot-11-inch, 218-pound frame, helped him become the most efficient offensive player for Texas this season.

"One thing about Kai (Jones), he has the best work ethic of any 6'11" player I have ever coached," Smart said in 2019, during Jones' freshman year.

Smart has coached a prolific

“
His best basketball is so far ahead of him ... He just has the ability to move his body a little differently than 99% of basketball players.”

SHAKA SMART
HEAD COACH

list of NBA big men, including Jaxson Hayes, Jarrett Allen and Mohamed (Mo) Bamba.

When he's drafted, Jones will join that illustrious list.

But right now, despite his impressive offensive statistics, the sophomore still has room to grow on the court. He wants to improve his rebounding, defense and develop better decision-making in the flow of the half-court offense.

The good thing is that Jones has shown the ability to add to his game in a short amount of time. He did it his freshman year, going from the "last player" to earning significant minutes. He did it again during the offseason to become a lottery-projected

draft prospect.

And just a few days ago, on Jan. 19, Jones turned 20 years old, marking just his fifth year of playing organized basketball.

"His best basketball is so far ahead of him," Smart said. "He's one of those guys — we kind of felt this way about Jaxson (Hayes) when he was here — we're going to look up and he's 25, 26, doing some things that are just ridiculous. His ceiling is so high as a player. ... He just has the ability to move his body a little differently than 99% of basketball players."