

# The Berkeley Beacon

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## SGA officials criticize candidate's campaign for executive treasurer

Chris Van Buskirk, *Beacon Staff*

Sophomore Joseph Davidi dropped out of the spring 2019 Student Government Association executive treasurer race which leaves freshman challenger Brady Baca with a likely victory in April, as the only actively campaigning candidate.

The executive treasurer handles approximately \$1 million in funding allocated to SGA-funded student organizations and possesses the most authority over the day-to-day experience of student organizations' members, current Executive Treasurer and senior Ian Mandt said in an interview.

Mandt, in his second year as executive treasurer, said the position focuses primarily on student organizations and the paperwork regarding annual budget requests, appeals, and reimbursements. He said it took him two years to learn how to effectively manage the position's responsibilities.

"I would like to see candidates focus on their qualifications on that front, first and foremost," he said. "If [Baca] does have a full understanding of the position, I don't know that I would say he has the skill level to execute the position."

Mandt said his opinion of the candidates does not reflect his views on the individuals running the campaigns. Instead, he wants students to have an executive treasurer who serves their needs. Mandt said he worries about the ability of any candidate to learn the responsibilities of the position within a month before they fill the role.

*See treasury, page 2*



## Junior competes on 'Wheel of Fortune'

By Anissa Gardizy • p. 6

Junior Hannah Cairo represented the college on "Wheel of Fortune" spring break college week. Xinyi Tu / *Beacon Correspondent*

## First recreational cannabis shop to open in greater Boston area

Hanna Marchesseault, *Beacon Staff*

New England Treatment Access Brookline location will open on March 23 as the first dispensary to offer non-medicinal cannabis in the greater Boston area.

Director of Compliance for NETA Amanda Rositano said the company received their final license for recreational retail from the Cannabis Control Commission in early March. NETA opened in Brookline in November 2016 for medicinal use for adults 21 and over.

The shop, at 160 Washington St. in Brookline, is a 20-minute drive from the college and located off of the E Green Line Riverway stop.

Associate Director of the Center for Health and Wellness Laura Owen said in an interview that she does not see the opening of the new shop causing increased cannabis use on campus.

"[The shop] is close geographically, but it's still 21 and up to buy, so most of our students are not able to purchase [cannabis]," Owen said. "We treat [cannabis] basically like alcohol as far as policy and health education go. We want people to be safe and responsible with substances. We want people to be safe doing it."

Owen said if students come into the center complaining of a headache or stomach ache, they ask students about substance use and how that might be affecting their overall health.

Students who are over the age of 21 are also not permitted to possess marijuana on campus.

*See cannabis, page 2*

## Freshman lacrosse player chooses Emerson over Division I

Lara Hill, *Beacon Staff*

Freshman Alex Hrisanthopoulos verbally committed to play lacrosse at Hofstra University, a Division I school, in fall 2016. But despite his initial plans in high school, Hrisanthopoulos started his run on the Emerson College Division III men's lacrosse team last month.

Before Hrisanthopoulos started playing lacrosse, he played Pop Warner football in Carlsbad, California throughout elementary school. The coach of his football team in fourth grade recommended that his entire team should start playing lacrosse. At the time, Hrisanthopoulos did not know what lacrosse was.

"On the West Coast, lacrosse isn't anything like how it is [on the East Coast]," Hrisanthopoulos said. "There's an established culture [on the East Coast], and on the West Coast, that culture is still developing."

When his football team took to the field as a lacrosse team for their first game, they lost 15-1.

"None of us knew what we were doing," Hrisanthopoulos said. "We were just throwing our bodies around like a bunch of football players."

After that first game, Hrisanthopoulos continued to play lacrosse throughout the football offseason.

*See freshman, page 7*



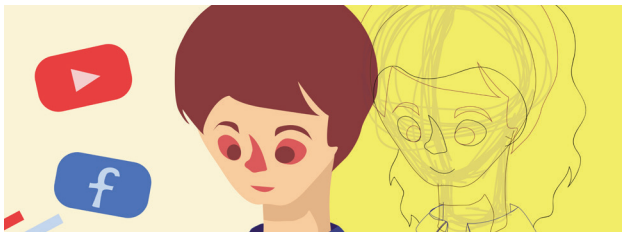
## Alumnus-directed film stars Rebel Wilson and Chris Hemsworth

By Shafaq Patel • p. 7

Todd Strauss-Schulson's '03 first feature film, *Isn't It Romantic*, stars actors Rebel Wilson and Priyanka Chopra. Courtesy of Michael Parmelee

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# news

## SGA to release partial budget reports from student organizations

Stephanie Purifoy and Diana Bravo  
*Beacon Staff*

The Student Government Association treasury team plans to release a document with limited information on SGA-funded student organization budgets in the late spring 2019 semester, an SGA official said.

Executive Vice Treasurer Rachel Levin said the treasury team wanted to explore budget transparency because students cannot see how the SGA spends the \$836 undergraduate student activities fee under current SGA laws.

“We have been asking the college to be more transparent with what they do financially,” Levin said. “We figured we want to offer that to student organizations.”

Executive Treasurer Ian Mandt said this document groups student organizations into categories listed on EmConnect, such as cultural, professional, and visual and media arts.

The treasury team listed the number of organizations in each category, the total amount of money allocated to each category, and the aver-

age budget for each organization in that category. Mandt said the SGA treasury team reached this compromise after some student organizations said they did not want their entire budgets released to the public.

Mandt said the treasury team sent a survey to all SGA-funded organization leaders at the beginning of the semester to ask how they felt about releasing their budgets publicly. About 40 people responded to the survey with an equal amount of answers in favor and against. Most of the organization leaders who voted against transparency indicated that releasing budget info would create tension among other organizations, Mandt said.

“We don’t want the numbers of a budget becoming a contention point, and we can already see that happening even without us saying that that was a possibility,” Mandt said in an interview. “We see [the document] as a solid way to expand transparency and put out more information about how much money is allocated.”

Mandt said students can find the Financial Advisory Board’s bylaws on SGA’s website if

they have questions about how organizations acquire and spend their money.

The Emerson Channel’s fall 2018 Director of Programming Jillian Anderson said she would like to see more transparency in organizations’ budgets.

“Part of the reason people are paid differently [in their jobs out of college] is that we’re trained to not disclose our payment to others, but what that really does is keep people down and contributes to inequality,” Anderson said. “That still translates here with Emerson—are certain organizations getting more special treatment than others?”

Deputy General Manager of Emerson Independent Video Nicholas Thilo-McGovern said he and the rest of the EIV executive board opposed the transparency. He said students should put more pressure on the college for transparency and not on SGA.

“I’m not saying I don’t want to share the [budget] information, I just think there’s a larger issue here,” he said in an interview. “People’s grief [with the lack of transparency] is very valid

and I share that, but it’s not with SGA and it’s not with the students.”

EIV General Manager Nuria Pellicer said releasing individual organizations’ budgets is not fair to students unless the college also releases their finances.

“If SGA didn’t trust us to spend the money properly, they wouldn’t give us the money in the first place,” she said in an interview. “Hanging us out to dry isn’t the solution here because honestly, I don’t think the average Emerson student cares about how much EIV gets.”

Pellicer said she thinks the move for transparency would take pressure off of the college because students would pay more attention to how organizations spend money instead of the college.

“I think it’s more of a ‘here’s your transparency, go look over there type of thing,” she said. “We haven’t actually solved anything, but now the student body has something to look at.”

✉ stephanie\_purifoy@emerson.edu

## Recreational cannabis shop to open a 20-minute drive from college

*Continued from page 1*

Assistant Director of Community Standards Melissa Woolsey said in an interview that the shop’s opening will not change the college’s cannabis use policy which bans its use and possession on campus as the college follows federal guidelines.

“The pros of this shop opening up is that it promotes safe use and students know what is in the cannabis they are using if they still choose to consume,” Woolsey said. “The cons can often include students [consuming] too much without consulting the dispensary, and getting themselves in uncomfortable situations.”

Rositano said in a phone interview that she realizes Boston is a big college city, and the shop will continue to have a strict policy when it comes to underage buying. Customers must be 21 and older to enter the shop and are required to present a government-issued identification which employees scan before a purchase.

Rositano said she expects opening day to be busy, and urges those attending to utilize public transit and place an order online beforehand.

NETA started selling cannabis products recreationally in Northampton, in November 2018.

The shop sells a variety of different products,

including marijuana flower, edibles, concentrates, and vaporizers, Rositano said. All of the products sold at the shop come from a cultivation facility in Franklin.

NETA’s website states that the company aims to improve the quality of patients’ lives by providing personalized care and marijuana products from Massachusetts.

Freshman Brianna Maloney, a Massachusetts native from Hopkington said in an interview that she assumed more recreational cannabis shops would open after the state legalized the substance in 2016.

“I feel like it doesn’t hurt to have a shop in Boston,” she said. “People are going to get [cannabis] one way or another, so this is just a safer way to do it.”

Rositano said the company earned a good reputation in the Brookline community as responsible neighbors for the past three years.

“Since we are now fully retail, we will continue to extend our mission as we go forward,” Rositano said. “Patients will always remain our top priority and we will continue to operate in the town in a positive way.”

✉ hanna\_marchesseault@emerson.edu



NETA will open its first recreational cannabis shop near the Riverway stop on the Green Line.  
*William Bloxham / Beacon Staff*

## Davidi leaves treasury race, grants Baca likely victory

*Continued from page 1*

Once an executive treasurer is elected, they spend the month of April learning the responsibilities and day-to-day tasks from the sitting treasurer.

Current treasury team member Davidi said he decided to drop out of the race on March 20 after considering his career and academic plans for the next six to seven months. While Davidi said he does not plan to actively campaign, his name will remain on the ballot due to SGA election technicalities.

“If [students] want to vote for me because they feel uncomfortable voting for someone else, or they just don’t know that I’m not running anymore, then that’s fine,” he said. “If for whatever reason I was picked, I’ll reassess.”

Mandt said one weakness he noticed in his time as treasurer was prioritizing the position above personal, academic, and professional goals.

“While it is disappointing to see the position no longer be contested ... I fully support [Davidi] in making the decision that he did,” he said.

Current Class of 2022 Senator Baca entered the treasurer’s race with the slogan “\$70k a year and this is what we get?” He has yet to serve on the treasury team.

Baca said he decided to run for executive treasurer to have an increased voice in SGA meetings and face-to-face time with administrators. Baca made his decision to run after he learned Vice Treasurer Rachel Levin would not

pursue an executive treasurer campaign as she plans to study abroad next year and graduate in spring 2020.

“I can seriously shift the conversation around student finances as well as the financial affordability and transparency of the institution itself,” Baca said.

Tuition and room and board total approximately \$64,000 for two semesters in a single dorm room at the Boston campus. Baca said in a phone interview that he hyperinflated the \$70,000 figure by \$6,000 to include the cost of day-to-day living in Boston.

Baca said his campaign focuses on addressing issues such as student food insecurity, financial transparency from the college and SGA, expanding on-campus services for off-campus students, and working closely with both staff and faculty unions.

Baca released a video on Facebook alleging that even with the high cost of tuition, students resort to rationing meal swipes at the Dining Center. The approximately minute-long clip also addresses the college’s real estate acquisitions. Baca did not discuss the financial management of student organizations in the video.

“I mean what the f— Emerson,” he said to the tune of “Barracuda” by the late 1970s rock band Heart. “If this administration thinks that it can continue to raise our tuition to prioritize real estate acquisition over our own academic success—while we continue to live in one of the most expensive cities to live in the country—well then they need a strong reminder of about

who the hell they’re working for.”

A USA Today article published in 2018 placed Boston 16 out of 25 for most expensive cost of living in the U.S. Baca also said the college raised tuition to prioritize real estate acquisition. According to previous Beacon reporting, the college did not use tuition money to purchase 172 Tremont or 134-136 Boylston St.

Vice President and Dean for Campus Life Jim Hoppe said in a January 2018 email to the Emerson community that the college uses money gained from tuition increases to pay new professors and increase financial aid.

Davidi said he believes Baca’s heart is in the right place in regards to policy positions, but that Baca may not completely understand the role of the executive treasurer position.

“The video this morning—it was a lot,” Davidi said. “I feel like stoking fear is easy, and there are better [campaigning] tactics.”

Baca said in an interview after the video was published that he wants to be someone students can approach with financial concerns.

“The only people that I want to make fearful are folks in the administration,” he said. “I sincerely apologize if I concerned any member of the student body because I don’t want to be someone that students feel like they can’t trust.”

Mandt said rhetoric that creates fear among voters cannot effectively address issues.

“If you are in this campaign to affect change for real, you need to know how to work with the people you’re working with,” Mandt said. “You need to at least give them goodwill at first. If

they don’t work with you effectively, if they don’t take you seriously, then you can be a little bit more aggressive.”

In regards to policy goals, Baca said he plans to create a formal relationship between SGA and the staff and faculty unions. The coalition, as he calls it, does not currently exist and he hopes SGA will draft a resolution defining the terms of the relationship.

“Does that mean we are attending every meeting, are we showing our support for contract negotiations and any other concerns that they may have, or is it just a formality?” he said. “Well, it’s not going to be [a formality] if I have anything to do with it.”

Baca said the college should make financial documentation publicly available since students pay tuition, room and board, and fees. He said SGA’s lack of access to such documentation and lack of knowledge about where students’ money flows does not make sense.

*Stephanie Purifoy and Anissa Gardizy contributed reporting and research to this article.*

*Assistant Enterprise Editor Belen Dumont did not edit this article due to a conflict of interest.*

✉ c\_vanbuskirk@emerson.edu

# High school senior accepted to Emerson after overcoming homelessness

Abigail Hadfeild, *Beacon Staff*

Sienna DiMuro moved into a homeless shelter during her freshman year of high school in January 2016. As a high school senior in December 2018, she received her acceptance letter to the visual and media arts program at Emerson College.

DiMuro, who is no longer homeless, now lives with her mother in San Diego, California and attends e3 Civic High School, a public charter school. On March 1, San Diego Downtown News ran an article chronicling her journey to college acceptance. DiMuro applied to Emerson as an early action applicant and received her acceptance letter on Dec. 14, 2018.

“I could not believe it, because college was never really a possibility or something that I ever thought of considering,” DiMuro said in a phone interview from her school in San Diego. “I was mind-blown. I still can’t believe it.”

DiMuro applied to other schools but plans to

**"College was never really a possibility or something that I ever thought of considering."**

- Sienna DiMuro

attend Emerson, her top school, if she receives enough scholarship money to cover the cost of attendance.

DiMuro filed a FAFSA and received some financial aid award money from Emerson, but not enough to cover the cost. She also received an award for \$10,000 over four years from the Horatio Alger Association, a national organization that rewards student achievement and helps students pay for college.

“[The Horatio Alger scholarship] does not cover most of the tuition, which has been making it a bit more difficult for me to come up with the rest,” DiMuro said. “If we end up covering that, then I will be attending. And if I don’t come up with the rest, then that’ll be a different story.”

Director of Undergraduate Admission Michael Lynch said in a phone interview that the

school considers a variety of academic and extracurricular factors when looking at students’ admission profiles. He said that the school considers a student’s financial profile for scholarships and financial aid, but that finances have no impact on admission to the college.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act prevents Lynch from commenting on DiMuro’s acceptance.

“Due to FERPA we are not able to share any information about any student in particular,” Lynch said.

DiMuro was adopted as a newborn in 2001 in Mexico. Her parents planned to bring her back to New York, where they lived at the time, but DiMuro said the U.S. government denied her entry because of heightened security in the wake of 9/11. DiMuro became a U.S. citizen in 2012.

DiMuro and her mother lost their house after her parents divorced in 2013. DiMuro and her mother stayed in Rosarito Beach, Mexico while she attended high school in the U.S. In 2016, they moved into a homeless shelter called Father Joe’s Villages in San Diego.

“We were living on a friend’s couch for a few months,” DiMuro said. “That made it very difficult to cross the border at like 3 or 4 a.m. to make it to school on time at 8 [a.m.]. It was a rough time. That’s another reason why I didn’t think I’d make it through high school.”

DiMuro wants to study visual and media arts at Emerson after pursuing her passion for photography from a young age.

“I was about five or six when I started using my dad’s video camera,” DiMuro said. “As I grew up, I found myself really passionate about photographing people.”

DiMuro’s interest in photography grew as she learned to use it to express herself. She now frequently posts pictures and project updates on her website.

“When I wasn’t sure how to describe what I was feeling to people, I would just show them a picture,” she said. “And then they would understand my background, or things I struggled with, and that’s how it kind of grew from there.”

DiMuro said her time at e3 Civic High School helped her in many ways, including a



Sienna DiMuro received her acceptance letter to Emerson on Dec. 14, 2018. *Courtesy of Sienna DiMuro*

school-sponsored trip to China in June 2018, where she said she was able to explore her photography in a new part of the world.

“[The school] put me in contact with a lot of people that have helped me test the waters out before,” DiMuro said. “And that’s how I knew that, throughout that journey [to China], I was passionate about art still.”

Cheryl Ward works at e3 Civic High School as the chief of academic innovation and said she and DiMuro have grown close during DiMuro’s time at the school. Ward said in a phone interview from San Diego that she would describe DiMuro as both resilient and tenacious.

“She’s an old soul, she’s quiet, she gets the job done,” Ward said. “You’d never know that there’s anything going on that might be troubling her. She just pushes through.”

DiMuro worked as an intern for Sen. Toni Atkins of California over the course of her first semester of senior year and organized a summer project called “The CommUNITY Lunchbox” to help combat gun violence by helping young children build connections with one another and combat anxiety.

Ward said going on the school trip to China helped her get to know DiMuro better, as she

watched DiMuro demonstrate her kindness by helping others and taking pictures of many of her peers on the trip.

“It was just evident to me, as it had been before, that she’s just a giver,” Ward said.

DiMuro visited the college for Picture Yourself Day at Emerson in February and said she immediately felt she had found the right place.

“It felt like home, it felt like I belonged there,” DiMuro said. “It was just a really nice environment.”

Ward said she tried to mentally prepare DiMuro before she received the acceptance letter in case she was rejected.

“When we got the information, we were all there together waiting to see what was going to happen,” Ward said. “I talked to her before, and I said, ‘Okay, no matter what happens, it’s all good—it’s meant to be. It’ll be okay.’”

Ward said she and her colleagues were just as overjoyed as DiMuro when she got the letter on a Friday afternoon.

“She started crying, and I started crying,” Ward said. “It was just a great moment.”

✉ abigail\_hadfeild@emerson.edu

# What should students do in an elevator entrapment?

Flora Li, *Beacon Staff*

Five elevator entrapments occurred in the first two and a half months of spring 2019, and nine at the end of fall 2018, according to incident journals provided by the Emerson College Police Department. No injuries resulting from the entrapments have been reported so far.

With this rise in elevator entrapments, editors at the Beacon wondered what causes elevators to malfunction and what students should do in the event of an entrapment.

**What causes an elevator entrapment?**

Director of Building Operations Joseph Knoll said in an interview that complications with the elevator doors have caused most of the entrapments. If the elevator senses something unusual, it may trigger an emergency response to stop the elevator.

Additionally, if the elevator reaches close to the maximum weight, which varies in different elevators, it may stop working normally. If someone jumps or pushes others, this can move the cables or cause a weight imbalance on one side. The elevator system can process this as a hazard, and stop functioning.

**What should students do if they experience an elevator entrapment?**

Knoll recommends students first try to press the “open door” button. If that doesn’t work, students should attempt to access other floors by pressing the corresponding button.

If neither option works, press the button

marked with a bell on the lower left side of the call panel. The call will notify ECPD to contact Facilities Management. Knoll said Facilities Management will arrive with both elevator mechanics and ECPD.

**What should students say in a phone call to ECPD if trapped?**

Individuals should state who they are, where they are, who else is in the elevator, and whether there is a medical emergency—such as claustrophobia or any other urgent issues.

“The first thing is, don’t go panic,” ECPD Deputy Chief Eric Schiazza said. “Tell us everything calmly, and clearly.”

**What if the emergency call button doesn’t work?**

Schiazza said students should try to contact people outside the elevator, either by using their phone or by shouting loudly to attract attention.

Pounding on the door is okay to get attention. The emergency call buttons rarely malfunction and are tested yearly to make sure they work properly, Schiazza said.

**On average, how long does it take to send someone to repair an elevator?**

Knoll said the response time depends on the specific case.

If the entrapment occurs on a weekday be-

tween 6 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., Knoll said Facilities Management will respond to the situation with mechanics in approximately five minutes. If an individual is trapped in an elevator outside of this time range, a Facilities Management staff member will call an elevator mechanic to the school.

The college’s contract with local elevator company Delta Beckwith Elevator states that mechanics must respond within an hour after receiving a report. Only elevator mechanics with a license have the ability to open the door or repair an elevator.

If elevator mechanics do not come within an hour, or if a medical emergency occurs in the elevator, Facilities Management will contact the Boston Fire Department or 911, Knoll and Schiazza said.

**How long should students expect to be stuck if they do get trapped in an elevator?**

Schiazza said the average wait time is between five and 15 minutes, however, each case is different depending on various factors, like if the elevator is stuck halfway between floors or if there is something jamming the doors such as coins or debris in the bottom door track.

**What shouldn’t students do if they get stuck?**

Both Knoll and Schiazza emphasized that

students should not panic.

Schiazza said he understands being stuck in an elevator is uncomfortable. However, most injuries in an entrapment happen when an individual tries to climb out or forcefully breaks something in the elevator.

“The elevators are very sensitive and have a safety [response] for everything,” Knoll said.

What are the signs an elevator may have a problem or the potential to break down?

Knoll said students may feel the elevator shaking, or the door may keep opening and closing abnormally.

“We get a lot of those calls and we respond to them right away because we don’t know what it is,” he said. “The last thing we want is an entrapment.”

**How often does the college perform maintenance on the elevators?**

A Delta Beckwith Elevator Company mechanic checks all of the elevators on campus every weekday morning, Knoll said.

Knoll said he receives a monthly report on everything the mechanic inspected. Additionally, every five years the private consultant company Lerch Bates Building Insight assesses the condition of the elevators on campus.

The consultant company last assessed the elevators during the fall 2014 semester—four and a half years ago, Knoll said. They will come back to Emerson this summer to complete another assessment.

✉ zhutao\_li@emerson.edu

Emerson Elevator Watch	Week of February 11	Week of February 18	Week of February 25	Week of March 4	Week of March 11
Editors at The Berkeley Beacon decided to catalog all elevator entrapments reported in incident journals for the 2018-19 academic year. These numbers only detail incidents where individuals reported an entrapment and do not include when an empty elevator broke down or unreported entrapments.	0	0	3	1	1

# editorial

## Nearby dispensary opening offers opportunities for reasonable consumption

### At issue: Students' cannabis use

### Our take: Cannabis can benefit students of age

Editorials are written solely by Editor-in-Chief Maya Gacina, Managing Editor Monika Davis, Opinion Editor Katie Schmidt, Deputy Opinion Editor Diti Kohli, and Assistant Opinion Editor Ziqi Wang without consultation from other staff members, and does not influence any stories. Op-Eds reflect the views of only their authors, not The Berkeley Beacon.

The closest dispensary for medical and recreational cannabis will open this Saturday in Brookline. A 20-minute drive from the Emerson campus and located off of the E Green Line Riverway stop, the dispensary will have cannabis available for purchase for individuals 21 and over with a government-issued identification.

We hope the presence of a relatively close by and legal dispensary will aid the needs of students who are of age. A Beacon article in March 2018 cited Emerson Polling Society statistics that young or college educated individuals heavily support legalization.

Research shows that cannabis can help individuals relax, ease the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Forty million people cited anxiety as the top-presented concern for college students, according to a graphic on the Anxiety and Depression Association of America's website. Cannabis has been proven to lessen the effects of chronic pain as well.

We support the safe and responsible consumption of cannabis by students over the age of 21 who choose to take advantage of the shop once it opens. But under the same avenue of thought, we hope students will continue to respect the campus policy that mandates they cannot possess or consume cannabis on campus.

Students cannot consume cannabis on campus because the college is federally funded, according to a Beacon Breakdown from

November 2018. Federal law prohibits cannabis use on government and public property, like the Boston Common. If the college changes their cannabis consumption policies, they risk losing federal funding. But students over 21 and living off-campus can safely use it in their homes.

The Beacon supports the dispensary and its use because of the immense benefits it provides to the city. Last August, the U.S. News and World Report wrote that the Massachusetts

the incarceration of sellers, who are often people of color.

According to the Marijuana Business Daily, 81 percent of cannabis industry owners and founders are white. According to an NPR article, people of color are more reluctant to open legal marijuana businesses out of fear of being targeted more often for drug-related crimes than white people. The racial profiling and lack of resources surrounding cannabis prevents people of color from growing and selling, even if they have more knowledge of growing and selling cannabis, from entering the industry. To alleviate this inequality, Massachusetts introduced equity programs to include more people from minority communities in the business.

Another concern arises from how the opening of nearby shops may affect the presence of cannabis on campus. But according to a Beacon article this week, Associate Director of the Center for Health and Wellness Laura Owen said the opening of the new dispensary likely would not cause an increase of cannabis use on campus given the age restriction on purchasing recreational marijuana. As for dealing with those who choose to use on campus, the college will handle those cases similarly to how they investigate cases of alcohol use.

We're glad to see the opening of a recreational marijuana dispensary in the greater Boston area, and also the administration's understanding of responsible student usage. But just like with alcohol, if you're going to use it, don't abuse it.

### "We support the safe and responsible consumption of cannabis by students over the age of 21."

state legislature expects \$63 million in annual tax revenue from cannabis sales. Though the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation deemed this figure unrealistic, it's undeniable legal sales are profitable. Colorado, the first state to legalize cannabis, saw millions of dollars flood into its economy since the law was passed in 2013.

Legalization in Massachusetts also helps lessen the illegal avenues through which customers previously bought their cannabis. And the hope remains that legalization lessens

## Letters

If you want to respond to, or share an opinion about, an article in the Beacon, you can write a short letter to the editor. Email it to [letters@berkeleybeacon.com](mailto:letters@berkeleybeacon.com). Please note that letters may be edited. Submissions for print must be shorter than 250 words.

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Website  
[berkeleybeacon.com](http://berkeleybeacon.com)

Phone  
(617) 824-8687

Email  
[contact@berkeleybeacon.com](mailto:contact@berkeleybeacon.com)

Office Address  
Piano Row, Rm. L-145  
150 Boylston St.  
Boston, MA 02116

Twitter  
[@BeaconUpdate](https://twitter.com/BeaconUpdate)

Editor-in-Chief  
Maya Gacina

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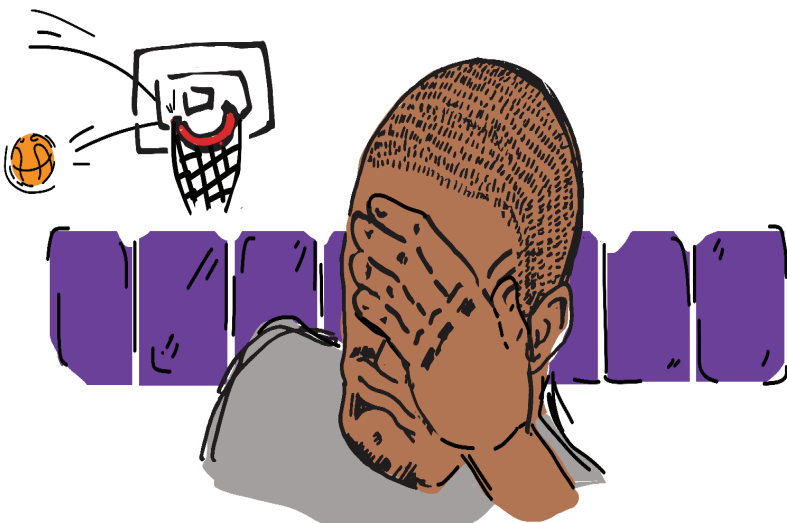
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Dylan Rossiter

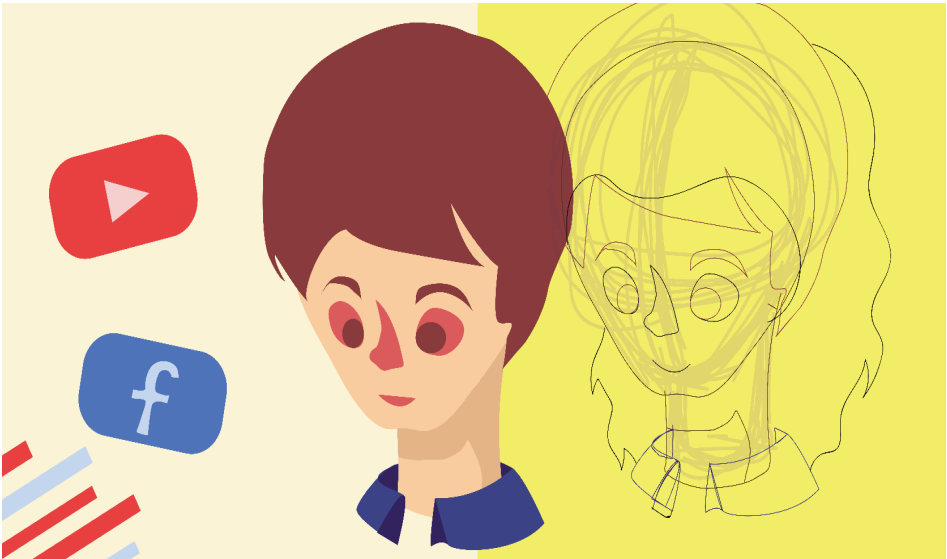
### Editorial Cartoon by the Editorial Board illustration by Ally Rzesza

Isaiah Thomas didn't get the quality pick-up game he expected at the home of the NEWMAC champs.



# opinion

## Deepfakes: A newer, more dangerous era of fake news



Our issue may not be believing what's false to be true, but believing what's true to be false.  
*Illustration by Ally Rzesza / Beacon Staff*

**Katie Schmidt**  
*Schmidt is a senior writing, literature and publishing major & the Beacon's opinion editor.*

With just over a year and a half until the 2020 presidential election, a new form of fake news is growing more prominent and dangerous than what we experienced in the months leading up to the 2016 election. Known as 'deepfakes,' these digitally manipulated and edited videos that typically appear on social media outlets depict high profile individuals saying or doing things they never actually did.

Deepfakes have been used recently in internet memes and even films. In the last scene of the latest Star Wars movie, Rogue One, a young Princess Leia speaks to a fellow resistance member even though actor Carrie Fisher died before finishing the movie. In the

1994 film *Forrest Gump*, producers digitally manipulated footage of former President John F. Kennedy speaking directly to Forrest Gump in the Oval Office.

But as we've learned time and time again, when a new technology elicits positive breakthroughs and usefulness, people will attempt to exploit it through detrimental means.

There is no doubt in my mind that deepfakes will arise as an issue in the 2020 election. Creating a video that seamlessly shows a candidate doing or saying something they never did—to the point where its validity or invalidity appears indistinguishable to the human eye—seems like any internet troll's dream.

According to an article in *The Guardian*, the Belgian social-democratic party Socialistische Parij Anders posted a deepfake of President Trump offering advice to the people of Belgium on Twitter and Facebook in May 2018. In the

video, the president states directly into the camera, "as you know, I had the balls to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, and so should you." The video received approximately 92,000 views and 525 reactions—78 being "angry" reacts—on Facebook.

While the video clearly looks fake and "Trump" even states at the end of the video, "we all know climate change is fake, just like this video," many still believed in its message and wrote hundreds of comments expressing their anger and outrage toward the president.

One of the most concerning aspects regarding deepfakes in the 2020 election is how accessible the software is, especially to the wrong people. Until late 2017, the artificial intelligence research community primarily used deepfake technology. But now any internet troll with computer science knowledge can create deepfakes thanks to a Reddit user under the moniker "Deepfake" who used TensorFlow, Google's free, open source, machine-learning software, to post digitally altered pornographic videos of celebrities online, thus opening the floodgates of deepfakes to the general public.

While deepfakes remain out of sight in the 2020 campaign trail thus far, it is only a matter of time until we see one surface of Kamala Harris or Beto O'Rourke spouting offensive nonsense, or even engaging in an incriminating act that they never did.

Many are wondering how to educate the public on deepfakes. According to a CNN article published this year, deepfake technology is on the U.S. government's radar. The Pentagon started working with some of the country's biggest research institutions such as the University of Colorado in Denver and SRI International—an American nonprofit scientific research institute—through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to figure out, and ultimately combat, deepfake technology. However, the technology is quickly progressing, with some deepfake examples

included in the CNN article that look almost indistinguishable from the real video it digitally manipulated.

In the twentieth century, photos and videos served as prime, factual evidence for some of the biggest news stories. But what happens if we enter a period where we can no longer trust our eyes and ears? What happens when we are forced to doubt every video we come across on our social media feeds? More importantly—what happens if we begin to dismiss real videos as fake?

What if people used deepfake technology during Watergate, 9/11, and other historical events in American history? What if the public—under suspicion of the knowledge of deepfakes—wrote off the Nixon tapes as mere manipulated audio files in an attempt to sabotage the president? Our issue may not be believing what's false to be true, but believing what's true to be false.

The only advice I can offer, before deepfakes inevitably become a serious issue in the 2020 election, is the same advice journalists have given the public since the rise of fake news in the 2016 election. Always consider your news source: Do they have a political bias? Are they reputable? Check the date the information was published. And most importantly, please make sure it's not intended for humor.

In the near future, our eyes may not seem trustworthy enough for consuming media. Technology often provides us with solutions, yet unfortunate repercussions typically follow this resource. There's no telling if deepfakes will cause a lasting damage on our political climate and democracy, but we can at least increase our awareness of the dangerous and changing environment on the internet as we enter this next election.

✉ [kathryn\\_schmidt@emerson.edu](mailto:kathryn_schmidt@emerson.edu)

## Risking financial security for a coveted college education

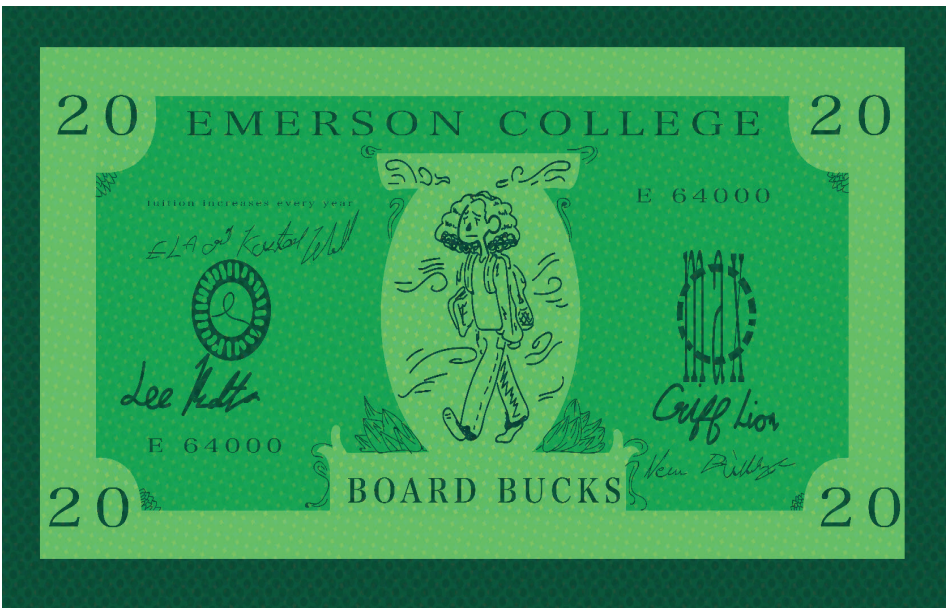
**Emily Cardona**  
*Cardona is a freshman journalism major & Beacon correspondent.*

Low-income students, like myself, frequently get put in a position where we must put aside our basic necessities, including toiletries and food, to attend Emerson. Low-income students, or those coming from households that make under \$65,000 annually, across the country struggle to attain a college education and incorporate themselves into a community that may open doors for a better future.

While I do agree that college presents more possibilities for success, it only offers opportunities to those who can afford it. Low-income students see college as a stepping stone from poverty to a degree that will hopefully lead to financial success. But the only real way to afford this education is to submit to the inevitability of debt to cover tuition and miscellaneous fees required to attend a college. My parents have to prioritize paying their mortgage over sending me money. If I am lucky, they will send me \$20 to last me a month or two.

It took a lot of financial saving to even pay for the \$65 application fee. When I found out Emerson has one of the best undergraduate journalism programs in the country, I had to apply. My parents pushed me to follow my ambitions, despite the cost of my dream. And in the pursuit of happiness, I took the risk to come here. After I received my acceptance letter to Emerson in December 2017, I worked for months as a restaurant hostess to pay for the housing deposit, my plane ticket and baggage, new winter clothes, and dorm room essentials, all totaling around \$1,500.

But now that I'm at Emerson as a first-year student, I worry if I can afford my next meal. Food is expensive in Boston—the cheapest items at restaurants usually cost \$10–\$12, so eating out or buying groceries fails to be an option for me and most low-income students. Emerson's Semel Plan, the default meal plan included in room and board fees, only includes 101 swipes per semester. In addition, the plan only includes 650 board bucks, and there's only so much you can buy at the Max Cafe. The Office



But now that I'm at Emerson as a first-year student, I worry if I can afford my next meal.  
*Illustration by Ally Rzesza / Beacon Staff*

of Student Success runs a Food Pantry program which does relieve some stress, but I don't often use it out of fear that I am taking food away from someone who needs it even more than me. I have a credit card for food, but I also feel guilty using it since it's just another bill my parents will have to pay.

Another huge stressor for low-income students is coming up with the money for books and other class materials. For the past two semesters, I charged over \$300 to my credit card because I didn't have enough money for textbooks, a required external hard drive, and school supplies such as reporters' notebooks and pens.

Emerson does have the Student Assistance Fund, a program that aims to help students afford "indirect costs of attendance" such as books, printing and copying costs, film, developing, personal items, and transportation. According to Emerson's website, these awards usually range from \$10 to a few hundred dollars. But the online application is open to any

student who needs aid for school materials and other related projects, and it is not dependent on one's financial standing. I filled out an online application for the fund but never heard back—I assumed since the online application said someone would contact me if they could help me, and that no one contacted me, they were unable to help. This means that low-income students in need may sometimes get overlooked. For example, I reached out for \$75 to pay for an external hard drive for my Digital Journalist class, but they never got back to me, and I ended up paying for it on my credit card.

When the weekend rolls around, I spend the majority of my time in my room because going out with friends requires extra money. In addition, I personally struggle with finding a way to transport myself. Uber and Lyft services are too expensive, and public transportation only goes so far and stops service at 12:30 a.m.

Even finding a job to help my financial burdens proved difficult. I applied to various jobs on campus at the beginning of the fall

semester—I assumed I would get hired because I qualified for federal work study, a federally funded program intended to help students with the costs of college.

But after applying to six jobs and only interviewing for three—all of which I did not receive an offer for—I went to the Student Financial Services office to confirm that my work study money was not going to be revoked. My work study money was secure, but I inexplicably never landed an on-campus job to help my finances. I currently work as a dog walker through an app called Wag! This job doesn't give me a stable income, and I still find myself struggling to cover major costs such as plane tickets home to North Carolina and school supplies.

While I primarily worry about paying for my college education for the next three years, fixing all of the problems low-income students face at Emerson should not be a responsibility of mine. Low-income students already have to figure out how to provide basic necessities for themselves during the school year—we simply cannot be burdened with solving a national, institutional problem.

Currently, Emerson isn't bringing full awareness to this problem. The college's efforts do not lessen the significant burdens of this institutional problem. Personally, I received a merit scholarship that covers less than half of my tuition, but I am already \$43,000 in debt as a first-year, second semester student.

The first step to solving this problem is to talk to the students affected by it. Let them tell their stories and express potential solutions—I am just one voice out of many low-income student voices Emerson needs to hear. If Emerson and other private institutions want to have an economically diverse student body, they must make their institutions more accessible for every student, specifically those of lower economic backgrounds. Most low-income students who wish to attend Emerson may have no option but to enroll at a more affordable institution, which would not benefit the college or the student.

✉ [emily\\_cardona@emerson.edu](mailto:emily_cardona@emerson.edu)

# living arts

## Junior waits two years to be on ‘Wheel of Fortune’

Anissa Gardizy, Beacon Staff

Junior Hannah Cairo admitted that she did not have the most successful performance on the “Wheel of Fortune” game show—she walked away with the minimum amount of money awarded.

“The answer to the puzzle was ‘Requesting my Transcripts’—it was missing the ‘Q’ and the ‘U,’” Cairo said. “For some reason, that did not click in my brain. When Pat [Sajak] asked me to shout out a letter, I squinted my eyes and I said ‘B.’”

Cairo hosted a watch party in the Walker Building on Tuesday night for the airing of her “Wheel of Fortune” debut on March 19. Her episode premiered during the show’s College Spring Break Week.

“About 15 of my friends showed up—more than I thought since it was such short notice,” Cairo said. “I also had my entire extended family in Key West watching and texting me updates. Everyone’s grandparents were watching, my friends’ moms were texting me.”

Cairo traveled to Faneuil Hall during her freshman year to see the “Wheelmobile,” a yellow, 36-foot bus searching for contestants to compete on television game show “Wheel of Fortune.” Cairo entered a lottery for the chance to play. When randomly chosen for the first round, she won the puzzle.

“I didn’t even know you were supposed to be super hyper and energetic,” Cairo said. “I guessed the [phrase] ice-cream parlor, and they were like, ‘Cool, we will contact you for your actual audition.’”

The “Wheel of Fortune” features contestants playing a game where they guess letters to spell out a hidden phrase. Co-hosts Pat Sajak and Vanna White continue to anchor the longest-running syndicated game show in the United States after 36 years on air.

Cairo said she heard about the “Wheelmobile” for the first time after receiving a call from her uncle who lives in New Hampshire.

“He calls me and he’s like, ‘Hey, they’re doing this ‘Wheelmobile’ thing, it’s like the traveling ‘Wheel of Fortune’—you have to come down right now,’” Cairo said. “I was like, ‘Okay fine, whatever.’”

The “Wheel of Fortune” website states that millions of people fill out applications for the show every year, and more than 10,000 people get selected for further auditions. Of the 10,000 auditions, only 600 contestants compete in the show annually.

Cairo’s audition for the game show took place at the W Hotel in Boston about a month after she visited the “Wheelmobile,” Cairo said. She and other adults shouted out letters, took a timed word puzzle test, and filled out a more

detailed application form as part of the audition.

“The form said they would contact us sometime in our lifetime, or never,” Cairo said. “I checked off a box for [interest in] special weeks like ‘Pet Lovers’ and ‘College Spring Break.’”

Cairo said after an audition contestants usually hear back within a few months about whether or not they would have a spot on the show. After not hearing back for two years, she assumed she would never make it onto the show.

However, in early February 2019, Cairo received an email from the official “Wheel of Fortune” account.

“They emailed me saying ‘Hey, welcome to the ‘Wheel of Fortune,’ in two weeks we would love for you to come down and take the show,’” Cairo said.

Cairo immediately texted her father, Edward Cairo, asking him to call her.

“Of course, I thought it was something bad,” he said in a phone interview from Florida.

When the two connected on the phone, Cairo told her father the news and asked if he thought she should go on the game show.

“I said, ‘Absolutely, no question, you are going,’” he said.

Her father then booked plane tickets to Los Angeles, where the “Wheel of Fortune” set is located and a room in a hotel where Sony offered contestants and guests a discounted rate. The two traveled to California a day before the filming—on Valentine’s Day—to visit Emerson’s LA campus and spend the day in California. They will not be reimbursed for their travel or accommodation costs.

“It was unbelievable to spend Valentine’s Day with my daughter,” he said.

Despite her excitement leading up to playing in the game show, Cairo admitted that she did not watch the show growing up.

“I truly did not watch ‘Wheel of Fortune,’” Cairo said. “I knew vaguely what it was—I knew you spun a wheel and solved puzzles. A lot of kids were like, ‘I watched this [show] every week with my grandmother, it’s been my dream to make it on here.’”

Cairo said she downloaded the “Wheel of Fortune” application on her phone to make up for her rookie knowledge of the show and prepare for her debut.

On the day of filming, the contestants took a shuttle to the studio at 7 a.m.

“We were ready early, so we went downstairs to the lobby around 6:30 a.m. to get something to eat,” Edward Cairo said. “All of a sudden, we saw sweatshirts from other colleges.”

Cairo filmed her episode as a part of “College Spring Break Week”—she and other contestants were instructed to wear their college’s apparel on the show. Cairo said she regretted not attempting to get a free sweatshirt from the



Junior Hannah Cairo’s episode of “Wheel of Fortune” aired March 19 on CBS.  
Xinyi Tu / Beacon Correspondent

college bookstore.

“They said we couldn’t wear hoodies or zip-pers, so I had to buy a [crewneck sweatshirt] from the bookstore,” Cairo said. “When I got to Los Angeles, some kids told the workers at their bookstore that they were going to be on the Wheel of Fortune, and they gave them [apparel] for free. I paid \$60 for mine.”

Cairo said contestants could not post on social media about their spot on the show until the weeks leading up to when the show would air on March 19.

Contestants received hair and makeup assistance and participated in a spring break-themed photo shoot while on set. Co-host White visited the students before filming began.

“She came in early with no makeup on in a hoodie, it was really cool,” Cairo said. “Her purse said her name on it in ‘Wheel of Fortune’ letters, but some were missing, or not revealed yet. It was really cute that she lives this life.”

While Cairo was getting ready to film the show, her father learned how to clap and laugh for television with the rest of the audience.

When the filming actually began, Cairo said time passed quickly.

“They said it would be the fastest 22 minutes of my life, and I thought, ‘Yeah right,’” Cairo said. “But it truly flew past.”

She also noted that she now understands why contestants on the show seem to have a difficult time spinning the wheel during the game.

“It’s so heavy,” Cairo said. “When you watch, you wonder why contestants are struggling and assume they are weak, but you have to follow

this whole method of pushing the wheel—the follow-through is very important.”

Cairo stood on the end of the wheel next to “Wheel of Fortune” host Sajak and conversed with him during the game.

“He and I had a fun little banter at one point,” Cairo said. “It was also freaky to be that close to him because I had to look into his eyes and guess a letter.”

Edward Cairo was impressed with the way his daughter carried herself throughout the show.

“She did great—I’m not sure that she was intimidated at all,” he said. “I don’t feel like it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for her because I think she has a lot of things coming ahead of her.”

Some viewers on the show took to Twitter to poke fun at Cairo’s performance, but the comedic arts major took the jabs with a grain of salt.

“The #WheelofFortune [on] Twitter was going crazy,” Cairo said. “People said they couldn’t believe I got into college. One woman said, ‘Remind me not to send my children to Emerson College.’”

Cairo still walked away with \$1,000. If contestants earn nothing during the show, \$1,000 is the house minimum they can walk away with. Cairo said she and her dad paid more than \$1,000 to stay in Los Angeles for the show.

✉ anissa\_gardizy@emerson.edu

## Person of Color Column: There is no right way to look like a person of color



**Taina Millsap**  
*Millsap is a freshman journalism major, a Beacon correspondent and this week’s POC columnist.*

For the first 13 years of my life, as I grew up in Fortaleza, Brazil, I never heard the term “white-passing.” No one ever questioned my ethnicity because I “looked white” until I moved to the U.S.

The centuries of immigration and racial integration within the Brazilian community from Asia, Europe, Africa, and other parts of South America have resulted in a blend of races and cultures that form what it means to be Brazilian, according to the Migration Policy Institute. This migration has created an extremely diverse mix of people from many continents, so being Brazilian cannot be limited to one race.

Once I moved to America in 2013, people would either ask me where I was from or say I looked “too white” once I revealed I was Brazilian. They assumed my identity wasn’t as valid as people who looked more stereotypically Brazilian, which proved the complexity of ethnicity and the many forms it comes in.

Both comments always seemed strange to me—to focus on what I look like and to use that as an indicator to determine what country I’m from or what ethnicity I am. Somehow, once

I moved countries, my ethnicity and race became a widely discussed topic. Even enrolling in school or taking a standardized test meant I had to disclose that information.

As a mixed Latina woman with dual citizenship in the U.S and Brazil, I feel as though I’ve been living in between cultures—a feeling I never had until I moved to the U.S. I had to find a way to somehow fit into American society while also coming home to a Portuguese-speaking household. The balance of keeping myself true to both sides seems impossible at times, especially when people disregard one side based on my skin color.

During a conversation with classmates in my first semester at Emerson, I revealed my Brazilian heritage and another student, also a non-white person, said to me, “But you look super white.” She may not have realized it, but the view that only people who look like the stereotype can be Brazilian offends those who look different.

Another instance, I had someone say to me and my Brazilian roommate, “I can tell you’re Brazilian, but definitely not her,” disregarding my roommate’s ethnicity due to her light skin

and blue eyes. This ignores a large part of Brazil that descends from European immigrants. People seem to feel a need to look at someone and be able to say where they’re from.

The stereotypical Brazilian has dark curly hair and a darker skin tone, but according to the 2010 Brazilian census done by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 48 per-

**“They assumed my identity wasn’t as valid as people who looked more stereotypically Brazilian.”**

cent of the Brazilian population is white and 43 percent is mixed-race. All are still considered Latinx; they just may not look the part to the rest of the world.

Microaggressions like the ones I have experienced make me and other biracial people question what it truly means

to be a valid part of a certain culture. I identify most with the side of me that lies within the Latinx community of Brazil, and that should be enough reason as to why I don’t consider myself a white person, despite what others may think of me.

Ever since I moved to America, it seems like I’m either too white or not white enough. But I always seem to be marginalized for both. There is no right way to look “not white.” By definition,

white people are from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa, and the color of one’s skin does not always reflect this. Even though I am a quarter white, I identify as a Latina woman. However, my light skin color seems to be a reason for some people to disregard how I, and many other light-skinned Latinos, identify.

People who are biracial should have the freedom to feel just as connected to their roots as others and to not be afraid to disclose their ethnicity. Diversity doesn’t work unless all aspects and possibilities of it are addressed and understood. I have encountered too many people that aren’t educated enough to understand that a person of color doesn’t always look how they’re “supposed” to look.

People of color with darker skin live through different experiences, and their struggles are just as important. “White-passing” privilege exists, but it should not devalue “white-passing” people of color’s experiences as well.

It’s important that “white-passing” people of color understand the differences and privileges they experience. However, in no way does that justify people believing one’s ethnicity isn’t valid enough because they have a lighter skin tone.

It’s ultimately a matter of education, of learning that there’s no right way to belong to a certain community and it’s not all about looking the part.

✉ taina\_millsap@emerson.edu

# Senior’s abstract paintings bring color to Iwasaki Library

Soleil Easton, *Beacon Correspondent*

Senior Shelby Grebbin, a former Beacon managing editor and self-taught artist, began painting during her freshman year to impress a long-distance significant other. When the relationship did not work out, she decided to continue exploring her artistic endeavors and create new paintings with themes such as order, transformation, and disorder.

Three years later, 10 of her paintings now hang in the Iwasaki Library, turning the white, blank walls vibrant and full of color. The paintings were installed over spring break.

“I like to use a lot of bright colors in my paintings because I feel like they draw out strong feelings and memories, different feelings, and ideas from different people,” Grebbin said.

Grebbin, a journalism major, said architecture and landscapes inspire her work, along with people she knows and objects she sees. Senior Karin Hoelzl and Grebbin have been friends since their freshman year. Grebbin said she often draws inspiration from Hoelzl.

After four years of friendship, Hoelzl said she saw Grebbin develop a distinct style since she began painting. She also recognized the change of purpose in Grebbin’s artwork—it began as an outlet to express Grebbin’s emotions in private, and now she continues to share her art with the Boston community.

Other than the Iwasaki Library, Grebbin has displayed her work at a pop-up art show in Malden, Massachusetts and the Hidden Lantern Festival, an Emerson event that highlights students’ work with a focus on mental health awareness.

Hoelzl said she believes Grebbin incorporates themes of mental illness into her pieces. While Grebbin’s pieces feature colorful, enticing, and inviting elements, and one can easily start interpreting the dark themes they give off, Hoelzl said.

“I think her art is political—it’s dark, and it’s poignant,” Hoelzl said. “It definitely speaks to emotions that she is going through or themes that she is affected by in the news.”

Grebbin said that, when she paints, she uses similar techniques she would use when writing an article—she looks for a story, sketches it out,

and tries to show it in its most complete form. Grebbin said she also uses different technical skills and intellectual facets, too.

“Painting is different compared to journalism—it uses a very different kind of intelligence than maybe asking people questions and writing,” Grebbin said. “I find that in terms of doing freelancing, internships, and painting, it certainly is not easy to balance, but I find that the two complement each other really well.”

Grebbin said she enjoys hearing feedback from different people about her paintings. Tim Riley, an associate professor for the Journalism Department, advised Grebbin to reach out to Iwasaki Library Director Robert Fleming.

Grebbin met with Fleming back in early

February and showed him two pieces of her artwork. She explained to Fleming how the two paintings represented the concepts of language and thought, and how it becomes a powerful message when those two concepts connect.

Grebbin said Fleming fell in love with the two pieces and told her that she could display 10 paintings in the library. She said she picked the displayed paintings based on how they would look together and how they portrayed her overall message.

“[Her paintings are] vibrant, colorful, and kind of abstract, so there is nothing that could be potentially upsetting or controversial about [them],” Fleming said. “I like how her art reads well from a distance, but it rewards you if you

get up and take a closer look.”

Fleming said Grebbin’s work exemplifies what he wants to see on the library walls in the future. He said he likes how her paintings include different layers and textures, so one could have a richer experience if look at it closely.

Grebbin met with Fleming in February and had less than a month to install the paintings over spring break. Grebbin picked her top 10 paintings out of her collection and considered how they all portray her overall message. Her artwork does not typically have names attached to them, but she composes them similarly. Grebbin said she paints in an abstract way with bright colors to spark emotion in the viewer.

“I like how something that is really structured can draw the eye, and having disorder within structure is really interesting,” Grebbin said.

While some students might see the library as a place solely to study and to conduct research, Fleming said he hopes Grebbin’s art can encourage and inspire other Emerson artists—including students, staff, and professors—to get involved and put their art on the walls.

“I am always happy when students approach me,” Fleming said. “Sometimes the work is not always what we want to put up on the library walls, but I am always happy to talk with students and look at their work to see if it is a good fit.”

Grebbin said she never had 10 pieces of her art displayed publicly together. She said she enjoys knowing that many people see her work every day. All 10 paintings are for sale and range from \$50 to \$700, depending on size. Those interested in purchasing a painting may reach out to Grebbin via email or in person.

“To me, the greatest support to make art is to see all sorts of people and people I don’t know look at my art and enjoy it—that’s what keeps me going,” Grebbin said.

*Copy Managing Editor Monika Davis did not edit this article due to a conflict of interest.*

✉ soleil\_easton@emerson.edu



Senior Shelby Grebbin said her main inspirations come from architecture, landscapes, and people. *Madison Goldberg / Beacon Correspondent*

# Alumnus debunks rom-com clichés in 'Isn't It Romantic'

Shafaq Patel, *Beacon Correspondent*

Before Todd Strauss-Schulson ’03 directed his first feature-length romantic comedy, he binge-watched all of the romantic comedies he could get his hands on that were released from 1988 to 2007. He said he watched six movies a day for about 10 days back-to-back and compiled a 500-page visual document while taking notes on what he saw.

“It was insane,” Strauss-Schulson said in a phone interview during a press junket in Los

Angeles. “I did it because I wanted to deconstruct the genre and figure out all the patterns that would constantly repeat so I could figure out the DNA of these movies.”

He did all of this for *Isn’t It Romantic*, a film he directed where Rebel Wilson plays a woman who doesn’t believe in love but then finds herself stuck in a cliché romantic comedy.

The film was released in theaters on Feb. 13 and stars Wilson, Priyanka Chopra, Liam Hemsworth, and Adam DeVine. Rated positively by 69 percent of Rotten Tomatoes’ critics, the

film is currently still showing in theaters across the country over a month after the release date.

Strauss-Schulson also directed the 2011 comedy *A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas* and the 2015 horror comedy *The Final Girls*. Before directing feature films, Strauss-Schulson created music videos, short films, and the third season of MTV *Whatever Things*. But *Isn’t It Romantic* was the first time he filmed on the streets of New York City, where he grew up.

“It was very exciting but it was also a bit challenging,” Strauss-Schulson said. “There would be paparazzi and fans all over the place, snapping photos. While we were shooting shots, double-decker tour buses would come by and people screaming ‘We love you Liam’ in the middle of takes.”

He also filmed in places he enjoyed when he was younger—like Eddie’s Sweet Shop, the ice cream shop Wilson and Hemsworth burglarize in the movie.

“I remember being like 11 years old and saying, ‘One of these days, I’m going to shoot a movie in this space,’ and I got to do that like 20 years later, and so there was a lot of that feeling happening on set, for me at least,” Strauss-Schulson said.

Despite the 16-hour sets, Strauss-Schulson said he wanted to create a goofy, fun, and loving environment for everyone on set.

“The couple that introduced my parents to each other is in the movie. And three couples fell in love on-set that were part of the crew,” Strauss-Schulson said. “So just trying to create a sense that love is out there—even with all the bad things in life, there are also a lot of good things. And I hoped that that might be contagious, and like end up coming off the screen when the movie would be complete.”

He said he learned a lot of his film skills from when he directed short films in the Little Build-

ing. During his time at Emerson, he collaborated with David Lebensfeld ’04—his longtime friend of over 20 years.

Lebensfeld created effects like butterflies, rain, and helicopters for *Isn’t It Romantic* as the visual effects supervisor.

“Working with [Strauss-Schulson] is always an adventure. It’s always really great to be able to do all of this with your friends, this is a pretty crazy business,” Lebensfeld said. “So maintaining friendships, and especially ones that are significant in your life is really nice.”

Junior Erin Kaswan watched *Isn’t It Romantic* during an early screening at the AMC Boston Common theater and said she loved it.

“I thought it was honestly so amazing. I think it’s one of the best movies I’ve seen in like a long time and it genuinely made me laugh so much,” Kaswan said. “While the concept wasn’t the most original, what they did with it was really fresh and fun. And they just had so many genuinely funny jokes, and I think the performances are really good.”

While she didn’t know an Emerson alumnus directed the movie when she saw it, she said the humor of the film matched an Emerson student’s type of humor.

“I think everyone secretly worries that they will never be successful, like they’re wasting their college years. But it feels good to hear that someone that went to Emerson has gone on to be very successful,” Kaswan said.

Strauss-Schulson said it was very exciting to make the kind of movie that he saw people make on the streets when he was a kid.

“It was kind of a dream come true,” he said.

✉ shafaq\_patel@emerson.edu



Todd Strauss-Schulson ’03 directed his first feature film, *Isn’t It Romantic*, starring actor Liam Hemsworth. • *Courtesy of Michael Parmelee*

# sports

## RECENT RESULTS

MEN’S VOLLEYBALL : Emerson 3— Lesley 0, March 20  
MEN’S LACROSSE : U. New England 7 — Emerson 6, March 20  
BASEBALL : Emerson 4 — Lasell 3, March 19  
WOMEN’S LACROSSE : Lasell 15 — Emerson 6, March 18

## Women’s lacrosse team looks to avenge winless season

Aaron J. Miller and Arturo Ruiz, *Beacon Staff*

The women’s lacrosse team added a new coaching staff and seven freshmen to the roster after not qualifying for conference playoffs last year and finishing with a record of 0-14. In a post-game interview after the Lions’ first home game against Becker College on Saturday, head coach Jessie Koffman said the team struggled to have a full team this season.

“There was a point when we were going between 10 and 11 [players], and you obviously need 11 players on the field and a goalie at a time,” Koffman said. “We scooped up a couple soccer players and then we got a basketball player as well. A girl from [Massachusetts College of Art and Design] and another girl who’s never played before came and they’ve been working hard and my assistant and I have been working hard with them—they fit in nicely.”

Koffman joined the Lions after resigning from her position as the head coach of the Wentworth Institute of Technology women’s lacrosse team in 2018. In her fourth and last year with Wentworth, Koffman led the team to its best season ever with a conference record of 2-6 in the Commonwealth Coast Conference and an overall record of 7-9.

Assistant coach Jessica Angerman also started her first season on the Lions coaching staff this spring. Angerman played Division I lacrosse from 2014 until 2017 at the University of Michigan, where she holds an all-time points record of 166 points—111 goals and 55 assists.

Senior defender Jen Litchfield, the only senior on the roster, said she looks forward to the team proving itself to the other teams in



The women’s lacrosse team lost its first and second games of the season.  
*Abbey Finn / Beacon Correspondent*

the New England Women’s and Men’s Athletic Conference this year. “We want to have fun. We had a tough season last year,” Litchfield said. “We want to get some

wins under our belt. We were ranked ninth in preseason, so hopefully, we can show some of the NEWMAC teams wrong.” In a women’s lacrosse game, 12 people stay

on the field at all times. The Lions only have 14 players which leaves them with just two substitutes for the entire season. Litchfield, a captain on the team, said the roster is small so she wants to focus on improving the team’s endurance, along with defense, and stick-handling.

“We have so few numbers, so we are trying to make sure that we can keep up with Springfield College and other teams,” Litchfield said. “Conditioning and working on zone defense will be one of the biggest things along with stick work.”

Freshman midfielder Julia Burns said the coaches put a vital emphasis on fitness.

“We want to be fast, we want to be in shape, and we don’t want to be outrun by other teams,” Burns said.

Despite the Lions losing their season opener to Becker College 13-6, Koffman said she is proud of the team and what they accomplished with their lack of experience.

“For them to come out with no fear—it was tough because in practice we’re going over most of the rules, but we’re not able to play full field because we don’t have enough to play 11 on 11, so I was really impressed with them,” Koffman said.

The team started the season with two non-conference losses against Becker College and Lasell College. The team will travel to the United States Coast Guard Academy for a conference matchup on Saturday, March 30 at 1 p.m.

✉ aaron\_miller@emerson.edu  
✉ arturo\_ruiz@emerson.edu

## Freshman lacrosse player turns down Division I offer to study film at Emerson

*Continued from Page 1*

He stopped playing football in 2012 because he suffered multiple head injuries during games.

In the same year, Hrisanthopoulos developed a passion for film in his broadcasting class at Carlsbad High School.

“Ever since I was a young kid, I have always loved movies,” Hrisanthopoulos said. “When I joined the broadcasting club at my middle school, I fell in love with making short videos. I would always be the kid with a camera in his hands filming everything.”

Hrisanthopoulos said he felt pressured to get recruited as a Division I athlete when he started high school after several other students began committing to schools. Hrisanthopoulos decided to look for a Division I school that offered a degree in sports broadcasting, even though he knew he wanted to go into film production.

“You’re pressured to put in a lot of work because everybody wants to play on a Division I team,” Hrisanthopoulos said.

He talked with the head coach at Hofstra University during his junior year and verbally committed to the school as a journalism major.

Hrisanthopoulos then joined the Carlsbad High School Film Academy and realized he wanted to pursue film production instead of sports broadcasting.

“I produced many films throughout this

time. Each film I made was better than the last because I fell more in love with the medium,” Hrisanthopoulos said. “Even after I graduated, I have been working on projects in my own time. These classes are where I grew my love for making narrative films.”

After deciding to pursue a degree in film, Hrisanthopoulos started looking for schools where he could play lacrosse and study film.

While Hrisanthopoulos played at a summer tournament in 2017, his father noticed that Emerson men’s lacrosse head coach Matthew Colombini attended the tournament to scout players. He chased down Colombini and discussed Hrisanthopoulos’ interest in film and playing lacrosse.

Two weeks later, Hrisanthopoulos flew to Emerson to get an in-depth tour of the campus with an alum from the lacrosse team.

“They showed me all of the film facilities and answered every question I could possibly have,” Hrisanthopoulos said. “I didn’t get anything like this at Hofstra.”

Colombini said Emerson checked off all of the boxes for Hrisanthopoulos.

“He loved it right away,” Colombini said. “Academically, it was the perfect fit.”

Hrisanthopoulos said he believes he made the right choice to attend Emerson.

“I’m really happy to be studying film,” Hrisanthopoulos said. “Since I have gotten



Freshman Alex Hrisanthopoulos (No. 18) scored his first career goal in a game against St. Joseph’s on March 16. • Photo by Aaron J. Miller / Beacon Staff

[to Emerson], my passion for film has grown even stronger. If I was at Hofstra, I would be spending all my time playing lacrosse because it is a Division I school. I would not have nearly as much time for my studies. Doing what I love as opposed to being miserable in New York and spending all my time playing lacrosse is night and day for me.”

Hrisanthopoulos expressed his appreciation and respect for the lacrosse team at Emerson and what they have given him.

“The team [at Emerson] is closer than any team I have ever played for,” Hrisanthopoulos said. “Everybody on the team has each other’s back. It’s really beautiful to have so many people there for you.”

Hrisanthopoulos shared how this experience can be a lesson for athletes who want to play lacrosse, or any sport, at a Division I school.

“You might think right now that lacrosse is the only thing that matters,” Hrisanthopoulos said. “I’ve been there, but you will get past this point eventually. You have to realize that lacrosse isn’t your whole life, and there’s more to your career than lacrosse. Figure out what you really want to do and find a school that allows you to pursue it. Go for it—shoot your shot.”

✉ lara\_hill@emerson.edu

### Upcoming action:

<b>Baseball</b> Emerson @ Mass. Meritime Hendy Field Today, March 21 at 3:30 p.m.	<b>Softball</b> Lesley @ Emerson Rotch Field Today, March 21 at 3:30 p.m.	<b>Men’s Tennis</b> Emerson @ Suffolk Buckingham, Browne & Nichols Friday, March 22 at 5 p.m.	<b>Women’s Tennis</b> Emerson @ Regis Winchester Indoor Tennis Center Saturday, March 23 at 4 p.m.
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