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THE
FORUM
STAFF

Hidden away in the basement of North Court, the Forum Magazine executive team, staff members and a few squatters allow their sanity to slowly wither away to bring you this publication. Proceed with caution.

BROOKE WARNER | Editor-in-Chief
Brooke is one of those coffee-drinking, puppy-loving, baseball cap-wearing types of girls who thrives on dark chocolate and adheres to a strict nap schedule. She still hasn’t gotten over the Falcons’ Super Bowl loss. A 28-3 lead, people. 28-3.

Dylan McAuley | Publisher
When he’s not in court with Richmond’s mock trial team, Dylan can probably be found arguing somewhere else. He sings the Pokemon theme and Disney songs way too loudly, and he wants Forum to be the very best, like no magazine ever was!

Sabrina Escobar | Managing Editor
As Forum’s resident Latina, Sabrina loves refried beans, pupusas and really good tacos. When she’s not scoping out the D-Hall dessert bar and avoiding the gym, she’s in her apartment doing homework (binge watching Grey’s Anatomy).

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Kevin is a senior at Richmond, and has the stealth of a fox and the dexterity of a hibernating bear. He can carry heavy loads and knows how to forage in the wild. He’s also in STC improv, and knows this description should be funnier.

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As your friendly campus southerner, Brianna is often found lifting heavy things, driving her sports car or blasting some country music. She has been compared to the likes of Leslie Knope, but really what she wants is all the bacon and eggs you have. ALL the bacon and eggs.

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Forum Magazine

Our mission at Forum Magazine is to create a revealing and balanced magazine, designed and reported with University of Richmond students in mind. Forum Magazine will be a place for conversation of all topics that leaves students with a deeper understanding of both the college world and beyond.

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PHOTO BY BRIANNA WEITZ
A tree overlooking Westhampton Lake blossoms deep pink, signaling to students that a bitter Richmond winter has finally given way to spring.
MAJOR
DISCRIMINATION

BY EMILIE ERBLAND
An article about slang terms published by the Boston Globe in 1953 said that “any snap course is ‘underwater basket weaving.’” Since that time, underwater basket weaving -- a real yet uncommon major -- has remained a joke that refers to a silly and useless course of study. Although the mocking of this supposedly ridiculous study isn’t taken seriously by most, bias against more ordinary college majors may still exist.

UR offers 62 academic majors and 50 minors for undergraduates across the School of Arts and Sciences, Jepson School of Leadership Studies and the Robins School of Business. Enrollment records from 2017 indicate that the School of Arts and Sciences has the largest student population with 2365 full-time undergraduates, Robins School of Business teaches 519 students and only 75 students study leadership at Jepson. With students spread across such a wide range of disciplines at separate schools, social groups can quickly form based on shared academic study.

The process of specialization intrinsic to choosing a major creates distinct social groups. After freshman year, when general-education courses are usually taken, students slowly separate into groups defined by their major. Once students begin taking upper-level courses in their departments, their opportunity to take classes with students from other majors dwindles. While this system allows collaboration at a higher level, perhaps students from different majors and schools are too separated from one another.

The process of specialization intrinsic to choosing a major creates distinct social groups.

An anonymous survey administered by Forum Magazine to undergraduates at the University of Richmond posed questions about the nature of academic disciplines and how students view other subjects besides their own. The survey recorded the respondent’s own major along with his or her opinions about the difficulty of their major, what makes one major more rigorous than another and stereotypes they may have heard about different majors.

One respondent of the survey commented that the “UR class schedule makes it so that once you declared your major, it’ll be hard to socialize with people outside your own major.” Without knowledge of other disciplines, misunderstanding and judgement about the perceived difficulty of majors arises. One person said “there is the blatant bias in everyone thinking what they do is the hard, but not having a true idea of how hard the classes are for each department.”

Ninety-four percent of the survey participants believe that some majors are more rigorous than others. Seventy-three percent believe that some majors are inherently harder than others depending on the subject matter. When asked what factors make one major harder than another, 87 percent said hours spent on homework and 37 percent thought labs and research made up the hardest components. Fewer than 6 percent of respondents thought that performing art or music added difficulty to a major. When asked what factor was most important when choosing a major, 51 percent chose personal fulfillment and 46 percent chose job opportunities.

Lately in popular culture, academic disciplines deemed to be more “useful” are pitted against the humanities and arts. Real Memes of UR, the popular Instagram page created to point out social conventions, has made several memes stereotyping Richmond students and their major choices. One meme, the “unfulfilling humanities class starter pack” seems to imply that students in the humanities have it easy with phrases like “someone just repeats what the professor says and passes it off as participation” and the Sparknotes logo. Another recently popular meme features a man ignoring his girlfriend and looking at another woman; in Real Memes of UR’s version, the woman is labeled “Bschool degree with added job security” and the girlfriend is labeled “an actually enjoyable area of study”.

Beyond UR, social-media posts ridiculing certain majors and praising others have gained attention. One popular tweet read “college is crazy because you can be in the library working on your 20-plus-page biochem lab report while some girl sitting next to you cuts out gingerbread men for her education class and complains about not having enough time to do it.” A simple Google search turns up dozens of memes and tweets pitting different majors against each other.

Ninety-nine percent of survey participants admitted that they had seen or heard stereotypes pertaining to particular majors, but only 25 percent believed the stereotypes were harmful. One respondent commented “some are harmful, such as those that degrade the validity of a liberal arts degree” and another wrote “who cares... just take stereotypes as a joke and embrace them if they’re true.”

Although everyone has their own opinions on the difficulty of different majors, they may not matter at all. A survey conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that “ninety-three percent of employers agree that ‘a [job] candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major.’” So whether the comment about underwater basket weaving is taken as a joke or actually offends -- the class is actually taught at Reed College -- major choice is not the biggest decision in one’s life.
BOATWRIGHT LIBRARY is usually one of the quietest places on campus. But at 4 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 17, 2016, conversation filled the air. It began on the first floor as Lucretia McCulley, head of Scholarly Communications in the Boatwright Memorial Library and Christopher Von Rueden, an anthropologist and associate professor of leadership at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, took the stairs two flights to reach the Technology Learning Center, or TLC, on the third floor. They entered audio/video room three, where two microphones, two headsets, two iMac computers and an audio mixer sat waiting to be used. They clamored into the small soundproof room as they went over the questions she would ask him. She checked the recording setup to make sure everything was functional. As quick as their volume rose, it diminished as soon as she pressed record.

The “Podcasts@Boatwright” series, as it is often stylized, has had 56 episodes as of February 2018. Four of these episodes have been with student researchers, while the rest are with professors or faculty who have published a scholarly article, book or documentary. Lucretia McCulley is the host of this series since its inception in 2009, and has held strong within the school for the eight years and four months of its existence. The podcast was an idea presented to Boatwright Library by Lucretia when the library was looking for ways to expand its use of technology. Digital initiatives in the library are becoming a focus as the school expands, because of the increase in digital technology in the average student’s life and the flexibility of technology as it translates to library services. The podcast allows Lucretia to use technology that will become more common in the future, and to give students a more accessible option to hear topics that might otherwise go unheard.

Lucretia’s office is on the first floor of Boatwright Library, where many students can see her typing away on her iMac or talking to fellow librarians. There are desk ornaments scattered about quietly, and cut-out images of the Beatles (multiple of Paul McCartney, her favorite) and Hillary Clinton campaign flyers on the fabric board wall on her back desk. “My passion is just to talk to the really interesting people on our campus, and to share that with the community,” she said as she scrolled through the catalog of podcast episodes on its blog site. Lucretia is a small and polite woman, with an impeccable hairstyle the color of cobblestone and a soft southern drawl. She flutters around topics in conversation with the expertise of someone who has been interviewing people for so many years. She said she never intended to become a podcast host, but once she had the vision for the podcast series in the library, she knew it was for her.
The influence that Lucretia had in starting this podcast comes less from the stories she hears on her morning commute on NPR. Lucretia would admit to not listening to too many podcasts herself, “My husband, who has a longer commute than me . . . he usually has more time to listen to them then I do.” The thought of sharing academic knowledge between her peers was the primary reason Lucretia began to record conversations with staff at University of Richmond. And it was Liz Massey, the managing editor of the marketing and strategic communications department of the Arizona State University Alumni Association, who was a secondary reason. Her podcast, which she has been operating since 2009, was a precursor in some ways to the Boatwright series. “The Alumni Experience” plays host to Arizona State University Alumni and discusses a wide range of ASU-related stories, from informational talks on how to have a job interview to the historical impact of past students. Although the main focus is to cover a wide array of alumni-related topics, as Massey said in an interview, “in the process of creating episodes with historical and nostalgia content, I’ve consulted with our University Archivist many times.” This coordination displays the advantage of recording a podcast in conjunction with a university, where resources can be found at every corner and content that reaches a mass, built-in audience with great detail.

The work of media giants like NPR, iTunes and even smaller local public radio have been providing the catalyst for podcasts to jump into the mainstream. In the early days of podcasting, its greatest strength was the convenience people were allowed with being able to listen to a variety of works at their own leisure, rather than follow some radio’s schedule. As of 2016, Pew Research Center released data regarding the rise of podcasting from 2008 to the present day, revealing the percentage of Americans who have listened to a podcast in the past month has increased steadily. In 2008, 9 percent of American adults had listened to a podcast in the past week. That number rose to 21 percent by 2016. More data, provided by the pew Research center, identifies that the average American is 27 percent more aware of podcasting. This spread has made works such as the “Podcasts@Boatwright” visible to the population, and in an academic field, has elevated the discussion of intellectual ideas to the digital age.

Responses are the most direct way for Lucretia to get the information she needs to continue to improve the podcast. Her peers in the library occasionally will discuss with her casually what they heard in the podcast, and how they have ideas for a new episode. “I usually keep track of what people say, and as the podcast has evolved we have upgraded some aspects, like our recording set-

“It’s a little difficult translating an entire book into a ten-minute podcast . . . But that’s a good challenge -- to force yourself to go outside of your box and make your work accessible to non-specialists and everyday folks.”
-Professor Tim Barney, rhetoric and communications
“up,” she said. Before they began to use the TLC and their audio room, Lucretia had a small USB-microphone connected to her iMac in her office, while guests sat just across from her as she recorded their audio into Garageband. Professor Tim Barney, of the Rhetoric and Communications Department, was interviewed in 2015 when he had released a book on maps and the Cold War. He had discovered through responses to his podcast that he had more readers of his book than he thought. “It’s a little difficult translating an entire book into a ten minute podcast . . . But that’s a good challenge -- to force yourself to go outside of your box and make your work accessible to non-specialists and everyday folks,” he said regarding his work with Lucretia. The back-and-forth of thoughts after hearing a podcast is the germination of a collective, ideas-driven way of thinking, and this constitutes the goal of the podcast in general.

Lucretia McCulley has a kindness to her that gives her an edge when interviewing guests. She is polite and courteous about each subject, and does intense research to make each episode well-informed. Giving faculty publishing a voice is something Lucretia has been constructing since she became the head of the scholarly communications office in Boatwright. Her position involves managing the cataloged works of faculty authors in the library stacks, as well as keeping an online database of the works that faculty publish year by year. This new-media focus, as well as being able to pull authors through the scholarly communications department and a honeysuckle-sweet accent, applies directly to her hosting abilities.

“It’s great that Lucretia is giving greater visibility to faculty work on our campus,” leadership professor Chris von Rueden said. “Increasing awareness and communication of faculty research can improve our ‘intellectual community.’” Lucretia McCulley is creating just that kind of intellectual community through the Boatwright Library and her podcast. The reach of new technology in regards to how a college library operates has yet to be seen in full, but as time evolves, the libraries cannot stay stagnant. In her office, as she discussed the future of the podcast, Lucretia said, “It’s a natural thing, to kind of progress into a new way of operating. The whole world is doing it. We just have to make it at our disposal.”
WHEN LOOKING PAST the glass holding your precious muffin or the espresso machine calling your name, a world exists that not many get to see firsthand. At Eight-Fifteen at Boatwright, there are multiple freezers and refrigerators, towering rows and columns of cups, syrups and all of the small necessities most people forget they need -- until they aren’t available. Spotless, organized and seemingly endless, this mysterious world is what keeps the parts people do see running to serve clients in the best ways possible.

Although the Heilman Dining Center has a special place in the hearts of University of Richmond students, sometimes the multi-colored plates and sprawling dessert bar just don’t cut it. Luckily for students, staff and faculty of UR, there are plenty of options sprawled across campus with delicious selections from different cafes and restaurants awaiting our arrival. There are five restaurants and cafes on campus: Eight-Fifteen at Boatwright, Lou’s, The Cellar, Passport Cafe and Tyler’s Grill.

There are many behind-the-scenes components taking place before that perfectly made dish or drink reaches your tastebuds.

Everyone may know the friendly staff, delicious food and tasteful atmospheres, but people don’t always look beyond what’s on their plates or the ambiance surrounding them. There are many behind-the-scenes components taking place before that perfectly made dish or drink reaches your tastebuds.

First, each location has different ways of obtaining and preparing their products to get the magic started. Whether it be made in-store or delivered, all locations hold royally high standards for their food quality and taste. At Lou’s, for example, they make the majority of their products in-store. “We make our sandwiches, wraps, baked goods and salads in-store,” said Conner Evans, a student employee at Lou’s. “Some items are pre-packaged, but all of Lou’s brand goods are made with fresh ingredients arriving every morning. I work the night shift, so I take care of cleaning up in preparation for the next day.”

Both Tyler’s and Passport follow a similar process of in-store creation combined with some deliveries. Passport gets its pastries from Red Cap Bakery, a local Richmond business. Eight-Fifteen, according to head manager Nia Williams, also buys from Red Cap pastries, in addition to Uptown Bakers located in Hyattsville, Maryland. At The Cellar, two head chefs collaborate with managers to present the best options for an in-house made menu.

One way these businesses support stressed students is by giving them exactly what they want. “If you want something on our menu, get everyone you know to order it and we will get it done,” said Mike “Big Mike,” Smyth, an employee at Tyler’s.

At Lou’s, Eight-Fifteen, The Cellar and Passport, there are student employees who are trained for about a month to best serve customers. The Tyler’s staff is entirely made of people hired outside of the school.

There is a preparation process the restaurants and cafes go through every day to get ready for business. Workers at each dining location said it typically took about one to two hours of preparation for every day they are open. All the locations had a slightly varying preparation process to start off each day right. However, each follow the general guidelines of restocking fresh “grab-and-go” items, brewing fresh coffees and receiving fresh orders of produce.

After getting everything ready to open their doors, workers have to be ready to engage with clients. There is always an influx of students filing in to get the food or drink on their mind -- everybody is familiar with the feeling of exasperation that comes with walking up to one of the restaurants or cafes to see a line winding out the doors.

According to each establishment, there are better and worse times to go to each location. Evans said Lou’s is busiest between 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., as well as 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The calmest time to stop by Lou’s is between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. For Passport, the two busiest times are before 9 a.m. and around 2 p.m., having a slower pace but still remaining busy at any other hour, employee Edgar Rivera said.

As for The Cellar, “the best time to beat the rush is at 5:00 p.m., right when it opens,” said Cassie Robbins, one of The Cellar’s student employees. If you’re craving Tyler’s, “Big Mike” said the best time to pay a visit would be anywhere between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. At Eight-Fifteen, Williams said the cafe is most busy from 9:45 a.m. to 11 a.m., adding that the best time to come around would be between 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The one thing all students know is the satisfaction they feel when they walk out of any of the locations. “I’m never disappointed when I stop by any of the locations for a snack or an actual meal,” freshman Nicole Bialick said. “It’s the best feeling when you just have that one thing you’ve been thinking about all day and everything just gets better.”
VOTE THEM OUT

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SABRINA ESCOBAR
GENEVIEVE MARKEE’S knitting needles clicked in time to the bus’s engine as she weaved her bright purple wool together. At the freshman’s feet lay a piece of poster board, similar to those brought onto the bus by other students. As the end of a scarf began to materialize, the bus pulled up in front of the White House Visitors Office to drop off some of the University of Richmond students who would be participating in the March For Our Lives rally on March 24. The rally was organized by a group of survivors from the Feb. 14 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, who have become the faces of the movement advocating for gun control.

“There’s a lot of political areas where I can really see both sides, but this is definitely not one,” Markee said. “The idea that we need to have at least sensible gun control -- I don’t know if I’d go as far as we need to repeal the Second Amendment -- but definitely some form of well-regulated gun control.”

That day, Markee became one of approximately 800,000 people from all around the country, according to the rally organizer estimates, who attended the rally. She and the other students from UR joined the herds of people filing into Pennsylvania Avenue, dancing to the beat of Kesha’s “Tik-Tok” as it blasted from the speakers that would later transmit the speeches prepared by the young victims of gun violence. Beneath the light-hearted, enthusiastic mood, however, there was a pervasive feeling of determination, anger and pain -- nobody who attended was taking the rally lightly.

“I’m marching because it seems like it’s obvious, but we need stricter gun laws and the government doesn’t seem to realize that,” said Jamie Katz, a UR junior who attended the rally. “We’re gonna make them realize that.”

Twenty high school, middle school and elementary school students stepped up that day. Stepped up to the lectern and demanded to be heard and refused to be ignored by lawmakers. Stepped up and delivered an ultimatum: if Congress did not instate legislation demanding universal background checks for buying weapons, banning assault rifles and high-capacity magazines, and funding research that investigates the gun violence epidemic, the teenagers would “vote them out.”

“We wake up every day, and it’s kind of like a nightmare that we’re still living through, so we try to do whatever we can to feel better about it,” said Kristen*, a mother whose son attends Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and who was at the rally with the rest of her family.

The March 24 rally was not the first protest organized by the Parkland survivors. They had also staged several protests along with supporters across the nation in the days following the February shooting, especially in their hometown. Support for gun control appears to have hit a 10-year high, according to a poll lead by Quinnipiac University. 66 percent of polltakers supported stricter gun laws, and 67 percent supported a ban on assault weapons. Following these protests, in addition to the March 24 rally, state legislators have begun to enact change.

In Rhode Island, Gov. Gina Raimondo passed an executive decree a week after the shooting, legitimizing a “red flag” law that permits gun confiscation from people who may be dangerous to themselves and others. In Florida, state legislators passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Safety Act, which raises the minimum age to buy weapons from 18 to 21, enforces a three-
day waiting period for buying a gun and bans the sale and possession of bump stocks, among other reforms. The states of Oregon, Illinois, Washington, Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, South Dakota and Texas have also passed some form of gun-control legislation.

Vermont lawmakers passed a reform bill that raises the minimum buying age, bans bumps stocks, and limits rifle magazines to 10 rounds. Anti-reform protests sprung up across the state, and protesters at the State Capitol handed out free rifle magazines capable of holding up to 30 rounds, as a taunt to the new law. Gov. Phil Scott, a Republican, said he would sign the bill after a Vermont high school student was found planning a mass shooting.

"The reality of how close we came to a devastating tragedy underscores the threat of violence that faces the entire country," Scott said, according to a New York Times article. "As a result, I've been asking myself, 'Are we doing everything we can to protect our kids?'"

The Vermont protests demonstrate how difficult it is to pass the stringent gun legislation the Parkland survivors are asking for. Second Amendment supporters are backed by the National Rifle Association, which has taken an aggressive stance against gun control reforms. Many of the Parkland protesters targeted the NRA as one of the main obstacles to passing legislation, saying that the NRA has funded many politicians to prevent legislation from passing.

For many ardent Second Amendment supporters, placing restrictions on gun ownership is not the way to solve the problem. In the Quinnipiac University poll, 60 percent of Republicans said they were opposed to stricter laws. Forty-one percent preferred adding metal detectors in schools, and 38 percent said they preferred arming teachers. Another poll conducted by ABC News and the Washington Post found that 59 percent of Republicans believed that arming teachers could have prevented the Parkland shooting.

"We cannot make America safe again until we arm our teachers," said Parkland survivor Ryan Deitsch during his speech, causing the crowd to gape in confusion. "We need to arm our teachers. We need to arm them with pencils, pens, paper and the money they need -- they need that money to support their families and to support themselves, before they can support the futures in those classrooms."

President Trump supported the idea of arming teachers in the past, saying that gun-free zones were "proven targets of killers." He also expressed staunch support of the Second Amendment on his Twitter feed. Nevertheless, he surprised many members of the NRA and ardent Second Amendment activists by speaking in favor of extensive background checks and banning bump stocks, as well as suggesting that law officials could take guns from people deemed hazardous without a court order -- thus taking the guns first and going through due process second.

Despite the president’s support to enact some sort of gun control, no federal legislation has yet been passed. Various news sources speculate that gun control will be one of the central issues in future elections, influenced partly by this new wave of activists.

"We are participating in marches, we’re going to vigils, we’re helping out the victims that are still recovering from it, so, whatever we can do, we’re stepping up and doing it," Kristen said.
IT’S BEEN six months. Six months since I suffered the longest and most stressful week of my life. It’s been approximately six months since Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico and caused the biggest humanitarian crisis my island has ever suffered. On Sept. 20, 2017, a Category 4 hurricane hit the island for the second time in a two-week span, but unlike the first time, it destroyed everything in sight. After Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico is not the same, and I still ask myself: will it ever go back to the Puerto Rico I once knew?

The morning of the hurricane, I was talking to my parents at 5 a.m. and listened in as the storm was making its landfall. The sound over the phone of the storm can only be described as standing next to an airplane engine or next to a speeding train. As I was talking to my mother, my father was trying to stop the water from coming into the house and explaining how windows were breaking and trees were falling over.

And suddenly, silence.
A silence that lasted approximately a week. For five days I did not hear from my parents, family or friends. The only news I got was from American news channels and all the heartbreaking pictures posted on Facebook of the aftermath. As the days went by, anxiety kicked in. For a week my heart and mind were not in Richmond. My heart was in Puerto Rico with my friends who lived near the coast, with my family who lived in the mountains and with all my fellow Puerto Ricans whose houses were not as strong as my family’s and whose lives I knew changed forever that day. The month after the hurricane brought a guilt that many Puerto Ricans living outside the island felt -- guilt for not being in Puerto Rico.

For weeks, no one had electricity. Few had water. My friends had to wait in line for nine hours at a time to get gasoline. My mother would tell me how there was no food in the supermarkets and they were controlling how much water and essential food people could buy. As many Puerto Ricans wanted -- and tried -- to get off the island and come to the States, all I wanted was to go back to ease the guilt of the privileges I had here in Richmond, while my island was destroyed and the people desperate for help.

As more news poured in and communication with the island was restored, guilt turned into anger. I was angry that the United States was letting Americans suffer. I was angry that our status as American citizens was being ignored. A humanitarian crisis involving 3.4 million American citizens was receiving little coverage and a lackluster federal response. The president was trying to make excuses, saying that because Puerto Rico was an island, it was difficult to send response and supplies -- but there are never difficulties sending troops and supplies to fight in a desert half a world away. Excuses, and often insults, to Puerto Rican leaders was what Puerto Ricans received from American leadership.

Before the hurricane, Puerto Rico was in a serious and decade-long economic crisis. The crisis stemmed from a complex fiscal situation and deep history of colonialism. Puerto Rico has defaulted on its $73 billion debt and subsequently 400,000 Puerto Ricans have left the island since the crisis began in 2008. Last year, Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act which created a seven-person fiscal control board to oversee Puerto Rico’s government and ensure the colony makes good on its $70 billion debt obligation. In other words, a junta in New York City has the final say on all major policy decisions or budgets in Puerto Rico.

Therefore, the anger that I have is with the root of all evils -- colonialism. American history reduces the history of Puerto Rico to a single sentence in most general history textbooks. The failure of the knowledge that we have been an U.S territory
since 1898 has always had consequences for Puerto Ricans, and the aftermath of the hurricane confirmed it.

Currently, the Puerto Rican blackout is the longest blackout in U.S. history. My parents got power back in December, three months after the hurricane. They lived off of a costly power generator, but the majority of Puerto Ricans do not have that luxury. So for months, Puerto Ricans lived in darkness, and in some places, without running water. Today, there are still 150,000 people without power.

Having said this, I acknowledge that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is currently working in Puerto Rico and the army did make it to the island to help in the crisis.

We have worked and died for imperialist powers, but when the time came for “the greatest country in the world” to help its citizens, we were ignored, resented and left to die.

But what I’m trying to say is that it was not enough. More supplies and better organization could have saved lives and eased suffering. We did not -- and have not -- received all of the FEMA money allocated after the hurricane. The official death toll attributed to hurricane Maria was 64, but in reality the deaths are up to a thousand. Many elderly people died because they lacked electricity to fuel their respiratory machines. Other causes of death included: patients that needed dialysis, starvation, heat strokes or diseases due to contaminated water. In my opinion, this would not have happened in the continental United States. No state or federal government would allow citizens of Pennsylvania or Montana to live in darkness for six months. But we have been accustomed to this treatment. We have been a colony for 500 years. Five hundred years of imperialism. Five hundred years of Puerto Ricans being second-class citizens. We have worked and died for imperialist powers, but when the time came for “the greatest country in the world” to help its citizens, we were ignored, resented and left to die. It’s been six months since one of the toughest periods of Puerto Rican history started. And we are only two months away from the start of the new hurricane season.

As I went home for winter break and looked down from my airplane window, I saw a wave of blue tarps where there used to be roofs. From the car, I saw trees cut in half. But the most striking visual of all was that of citizens cleaning months-old debris from the streets.

It’s easy to blame others for problems. I blame the United States for not doing enough, Puerto Rican leadership for playing politics during a crisis. And I can go even further and blame nature itself for creating hurricanes or global warming for intensifying such hurricanes. But blame aside, I’ve seen Puerto Rico already advancing and thriving. The strength of Puerto Ricans has astonished me and we will battle this situation as we have battled all obstacles in our history, with or without the United States’s help.
This semester, the University of Richmond Soundscapes class, taught by Dr. Andrew McGraw, had the unique opportunity of contributing to “Sound Arts Richmond,” by designing and constructing a sound structure located in Pump House Park (pictured).

BY KATHRYN OLON
This spring, the city of Richmond is home to a series of unique art exhibitions. Curated by Dr. Vaughn Whitney Garland, an independent curator and sound artist, “Sound Arts Richmond” features a series of sound exhibitions that will be displayed around the greater Richmond area through this fall. The series takes place at multiple locations and features a wide array of talent such as Virginia Commonwealth University’s Steven Vitiello and foley artist Shelley Roden, famous for her sound work in films such as “Captain America: Civil War” and “Doctor Strange.” The project is comprised of a variety of pieces and performances designed around the central theme of “sound art.”

This semester, University of Richmond’s Soundscapes class, taught by Dr. Andrew McGraw, had the unique opportunity of contributing to “Sound Arts Richmond,” by designing and constructing a sound structure located in Pump House Park. At the beginning of the spring semester, Vaughn Garland reached out to Dr. McGraw to see if the class was interested in participating in the series. Dr. McGraw pitched the idea on the first day of the course. The class expressed strong interest, and work on the project began.

In its initial stages, planning for the structure consisted mostly of the students posting sketches of potential designs for the structure. However, the future site of the structure posed a few problems. The piece will be a water feature, interacting with a loud local waterfall in the canal that runs through the park. Given that the piece in question will be a permanent sound structure intended to be heard over the natural sounds of the park, the piece had to be constructed out of materials that would both last and make a significant amount of noise. This involved discarding several first drafts with the plans undergoing several iterations before arriving at the current final version.

The class ultimately decided to create a set of water chimes to hang above the canal. Using the indents already created in the canal’s wall, the structure will consist of several metal tanks hoisted above the water via a pulley system. Each steel tank will serve as a water chime, with a clanger located inside with the intention of creating a sound when striking the chime. The clangers will be supported via a rope that will serve both to hang the water chimes and to create the sound. At the base of the rope will be an item that moves as it interacts with the water, creating the desired combination of sounds. The pulley system will be used to alter the sound by adjusting which chimes are interacting with the water.

Work on the structure has already begun, with the class spending two days of class time cutting old scuba and propane tanks to be used for the water chimes and constructing the clankers. Though there is still much work to be done, the project will be completed by the end of the semester and installed in the park. Curious students will be able to view the project beginning April 24.
GRADUATION IS WEEKS AWAY, and the University of Richmond campus knows it. For freshmen, sophomores and juniors, it’s an exciting time that marks the end of a stressful school year and the beginning of an relaxing summer. However, for seniors who are a few weeks from leaving, the approach of graduation solicits a bittersweet feeling. “At this point, I don’t want to leave,” Eve Sutton, a senior graduating in May, said. “Thinking about the friends and memories I’ve made makes me nostalgic and I’m just not ready for the real world.” Effectively, leaving the city and college that has been your home for that long is not an easy task, and our seniors’ opinions prove it.

Looking up to the seniors, underclassmen might wonder what is worth doing with their time at UR. Another senior, for example, advises younger students to gear up and go to as many events as possible: sports games, philanthropy events and even academic gatherings. In her own words, “Go to different events, branch out, meet new people, don’t be afraid to say yes.” Students often forget all that Richmond has to offer, in perspective. When asked what she would change about her years as a student here, the same senior said, “I didn’t branch out until my later years, so I’ve made incredible friends my senior year who I wish I knew earlier.”
While some seniors feel nervous to leave campus, others feel excited to move on and see what life has in store for them. George Katsiotis, a senior at UR, said that despite the fact that his student experience was “pleasant and totally worth it,” he is extremely excited for graduation. His attitude proves that seniors can be eager to see what is out in the “real world,” and that despite Richmond’s amazing opportunities, they can’t help but feel excited for what is to come.

Olympic speed skater Bonnie Blair said upon retirement: “It’s sad to know I’m done. But looking back, I’ve got a lot of great memories.” In many ways, seniors can relate. Senior Madison Farrell said: “By far my favorite memory is my semester abroad in Santiago, Chile. I am so grateful to UR for making study abroad accessible, and I will cherish my memories from that semester forever.” Study abroad programs are one of the many things UR excels at, particularly because they emphasize the idea that international engagement is an amazing way not only to connect with peers from other countries, but also with the world we live in.

We love our Seniors, and the school administration does too. Westhampton College and Richmond College deans and administrative staff plan various events to honor and celebrate graduating seniors. Among these are award ceremonies where distinguished seniors are recognized for exceptional service to the community. “These awards celebrate many different parts of student life, work, and achievements, representing our student community in its fullness,” Mia Reynoso Genoni, dean of Westhampton College, said in an email. Receptions start in late March, and continue throughout Commencement week.

Commencement is a very special time at Richmond. The university works hard to unite families and celebrate achievements. This year particularly, UR is honored to host Terry McAuliffe, the 72nd Senator of Virginia as its commencement speaker. Aside from being senator, McAuliffe has served as chairman for the Democratic National Committee and for Hillary Clinton’s 2008 presidential campaign, as well as co-chaired Bill Clinton’s 1996 re-election campaign.

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-Eve Sutton

Graduation time is bittersweet. For underclassmen, it is a time of excitement, as they finally make it to the end of the school year after two semesters of hard work. Seniors, on the other hand, have been working up to this moment for four years, and it marks the end of their time as college students. The UR community is beyond excited to see where the seniors take their knowledge, and where life takes them. We hope to see you soon, seniors. You will be missed!
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SEEDLINGS

BY ERIKA ECHTERNACH
What do the delta area of Louisiana, the urban sprawl of Detroit and the mountainous Appalachian Region of West Virginia have in common? All three were destinations for the University of Richmond’s SEEDS Project’s service-learning trips over spring break this year.

SEEDS (Students Engaging and Enacting a Dialogue on Service) is a service-learning organization run by students, whose main mission is stimulating discussion and reflection on social injustice.

Each year, the organization sends three different teams of students to unique areas to learn its history, manually serve and engage in meaningful conversations with leaders from the community.

The Louisiana and West Virginia trips this year explored environmental issues and the impact of climate change on individual communities, while the Detroit trip focused more on social justice and the effects of industrialization.

Freshman Olivia Diaz, who went on the Louisiana trip, said the purpose of service-learning was learning about the area that you were working with and understanding the hardships that the people there go through, while also seeing the resilience of that area.

“What’s important is learning about the area, understanding the issues, applying them to other areas of your world -- like Richmond -- and advocating for that area,” Diaz said.

“It really gives you a perspective that you cannot get anywhere else.”

Another member of the Louisiana trip, freshman Caroline Fernandez, agreed that education was an important part of the trip.

“One of the biggest things I learned about Louisiana and the community in general is how uninformed we are,” Fernandez said.

During the trip, Fernandez said she and the rest of her team got to learn about land loss and how climate change was affecting coastal Louisiana, as well as the Native American culture in the area.

The students got to see the effects of land loss up close when they kayaked out to observe the differences that progressively sinking land has made in the shape of the delta, Diaz said.

Megan Wiora, a sophomore member of the Louisiana team, said meeting the people of Louisiana helped her to understand the intricacies of the area’s disappearing land and environmental issues better.

“Talking with people from the communities in Louisiana was wonderful because it brought a face, a name and a story to these issues that we just kind of see on the news or see in textbooks,” Wiora said.

Junior Cassie Gilboy, who went on the Detroit trip, emphasized that human rights were the root issues of many social injustices.

“Every social justice issue is a human rights issue,” Gilboy said.

“We learned about labor unions, and I never would’ve thought about that as a social justice issue before but it’s really just because it’s human rights -- anything that helps people live a better life that they deserve to live -- everything else ties into that like education, food access and housing and stuff like that, which we learned about.”

Victoria Williams, a junior and next year’s SEEDS president, said Detroit had been left poverty stricken by big corporations that came into the city, but didn’t care for or nourish the communities.

Brooke Willemstyn, a junior from the West Virginia trip, said it could be easy to go into a service trip with the mindset that you’re going to fix everything in a week, but going on SEEDS showed the complexities of social issues.

Specifically, Willemstyn said she learned the various ways the coal industry impacted the Appalachian area.

“It’s not good for the environment,” she said. “The people in West Virginia are being poisoned by the industry that they defend so wholeheartedly. But this is their livelihood, that’s how they support themselves, that’s how they support other people’s families -- hiring them -- so it’s just such a complex thing.”

Freshman Lucy Cummins, Willemstyn’s fellow team member, added that although coal was often called a “dying industry,” it was still central to the lives of many West Virginia workers.

Along with the learning portion of the trip, the West Virginia team worked on service projects, such as building a ramp to make a house wheelchair accessible and redoing a bathroom, Cummins said.

Gilboy said the service components of the Detroit trip included packaging and delivering meals, working with AmeriCorps and painting with a kindergarten class, which she especially enjoyed.

The Louisiana group also worked with children at a charter school, helping them tend to their “edible playground” garden, Diaz said.

In between serving and learning, the team found time to spend an evening exploring New Orleans, Fernandez said.

“On our last night we got to go out into New Orleans and just hang out and have dinner,” Fernandez said. “There’s a jazz club, it’s the oldest one in New Orleans, and it was just a lot of fun.”

The West Virginia team embraced its musical side, too. The students were taught flatfooting, a style of dance popular in the mountains, by the self-proclaimed “best flatfooter in all of West Virginia,” whose nickname is “Happy Feet,” Willemstyn said.

“It was the whole group of us, and we thought it was going to
be maybe an hour – we were up until 1 a.m.,” she said. “It was like a five-hour thing of dancing with these guys.”

In Detroit, Williams said she noticed themes of hope, happiness and unity despite challenging economic situations.

“Everyone in Detroit, no matter their social class or their race or ethnicity, all had this love for Detroit,” Williams said. “That was a cool thing to see, how unified they were.”

Going on the trips helped to unite the SEEDS members as well. Williams said that it was great to see heart-to-heart conversations within her group and watch the members make connections with each other, adding that she loved coming back to Richmond with a little family.

Both Fernandez and Wiora agreed that unpacking the social issues together through daily reflection times had helped the students to form a lasting bond.

“You definitely get close,” Fernandez said. “It’s nice because you are really working together, and you do get to see a lot of deeper conversations happening.”

Wiora, who thought SEEDS was a farming club when she first heard of the organization, is glad she found out what the group was really about because SEEDS has significantly broadened both her circle of friends and perspective.

“It has been such a good way to get to know people on campus in a really genuine way,” Wiora said. “I think it’s the best thing I’ve done at Richmond.”

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-Megan Wiora
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