VOLUME 123 | ISSUE 10

THE VERMILION

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette Student Newspaper | November 19, 2026

# Hodge Podge's annual event to close out its fourth fall in a row

**Gabrielle Mouton**
NEWS WRITER

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette's fourth annual Hodge Podge concert is something for all students to look forward to. Happening on Nov. 19, it is a completely student-run event featuring four artists from different genres hosted at Blue Moon Saloon in Lafayette. A part of the music business program curriculum, it is an opportunity for students in the course to learn hands-on skills about organizing, marketing and running a large scale event.

After being recognized as one of the nation's top music business schools according to Billboard, the program expects this Hodge Podge event to be a marker for bigger things to come.

It began in 2023 with associate professor and Coordinator of the Music Business program Scott Durbin alongside entrepreneurship professor Jonathan Shirley, who both were looking for ways to incorporate something unique and entrepreneurial into their coursework. Then came the idea of a class that was completely focused on students working together on a large-scale project for the entire semester.

"Like what if you did something that wasn't in a class? That wasn't a presentation? That wasn't a paper?" said Shirley. "It's gonna be real, it's gonna be scary and we took it from there."

Working at the University of Houston which has one of the most prestigious entrepreneurship programs in the country, Shirley had seen events created completely by students. "If they can do that, we can do a concert," he said.

Durbin wanted to offer something that he felt students were missing out on. "I think one of the things that, especially for undergraduates, is the desire to apply their learned concepts and precepts into something that's real-world, that means something. I think this had the opportunity to do that." said Durbin.

Every year, students taking the music business entrepreneurship class have to work together to build the Hodge Podge event. Students vote for the bands, make the bookings, plan the marketing, all while Shirley and Durbin survey and give guidance. "Hodge Podge one kicked the whole thing off," said Shirley. "They came up with the notion of Hodge Podge, just the idea of three bands, three different genres, same night. It had to start from somewhere."

Senior recording arts major Mitch Reed is not only a part of the class, but was one of the artists voted to be in this year's lineup. "There was a band vote, and somebody said my name and I was shocked because I didn't think I'd be chosen, but I'm super excited for it," Reed said. He shared the workload and dedication put in by the class during the semester.

"We have designated teams for everything, it's a big team effort, and we've been rolling. It takes a lot of communication and a lot of discipline." he said. "And we're anticipating a really high turnout."

Durbin and Shirley strongly believe in letting the students take charge of the decision making process and not being afraid to fail. "I always appreciate the fact that there's an unpredictable nature to it all," said Durbin. "That students sort of live in the gray of success and the failure, and really what you experience on the day is the culmination of their collective work and working internally as well as externally."

This year, the music business school was nationally recognized thanks to the efforts of Durbin and the work that he has done alongside Shirley with Hodge Podge and making the student experience as worthwhile and beneficial as possible. What they hope most from this recognition is for it to open doors for students who are not only down this path, but for those interested to be apart.

"If you look at it from a sort of long scope it's like 'lets go get more students who want to follow this path' because now they know it's a path, and it's a viable one. This is a really good school to go do that," said Shirley.

Durbin's son Brewster Durbin is one of the featured artists who was voted in for the fourth Hodge Podge, and has seen the growth of the event over time up to now. "I think it's good for the students to help them get their music degree and also learn how to put all of the pieces together," Brewster said. "It's awesome to see that he's [Scott] has been able to grow it to the point it is now and get recognition from official music sources."

There are many things that Durbin and Shirley hope for the future of Hodge Podge, but the most important aspect they want students to gain is understanding of community. "You struggle. You get angry. You have to figure stuff out. And that's what community is," said Shirley.

"That's what a piece of this class is, I think just as vital as everything else we do. We just don't tell them about it until later."

With Hodge Podge growing as large as it is and inspiring other courses to be community facing, the students who are a part of it want to continue their growth. "I'm excited to have fun with all my people, seeing the fruits of their labor . . . just coming to fruition," said Mitch Reed. "I have a lot of anticipation for next year's Hodge Podge, turning into something bigger. We want them to top us and so on."

Tickets are $10 at Blue Moon Saloon, and there will be raffles and food trucks alongside the performers.




Photo by Gabrielle Mouton
Poster advertising fourth annual Hodge Podge event

# What makes a Carnegie R1 school?

**Andrew Courville**
NEWS WRITER

In the past 18 months, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette has seen several challenges. As the University enters a new era recovering from their budget crisis and operating with a new University president, it's worth highlighting a key part of the University's brand. What does it mean to be classified as a Carnegie 1 Research Institution (R1), the most prestigious distinction awarded by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education?

University President Ramesh Kolluru discussed the plan for Louisiana Vision 2035 at the 2026 State of the University Address on Aug. 19. This 10-year strategic plan aims to increase student enrollment to 27,500 and research investment to $500 million by 2035. Currently, 15,702 students are enrolled for the Fall 2026 semester and research investments stand at $263 million.

The research goal aims to increase and maintain the University's reputation as an R1 institution. The Carnegie classifications have three tiers: Research 1, Research 2 and Research Colleges and Universities.

According to the Carnegie Classification website, the top tier requires an institution to "spend at least $50 million on research & development and award at least 70 research doctorates" per year. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College and Tulane University of Louisiana are the only other institutions in the state at this level.

The University is a place of historic firsts such as the Cajun Advanced Picosatellite Experiment in the Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering, which is working on sending its fourth satellite into orbit since 2007. It's also the nation's first university to establish a computer science masters program. Opportunities will continue to expand through their SpaceX partnership.

Kumer Das, interim vice president for research and innovation, said that the importance of the R1 status is "name recognition, of course, but also the faculty and student enrollment recruitment are kind of linked with it," because students and faculty are always looking for institutions with that level of commitment to research.

Das pointed to extensive research on infectious diseases at the New Iberia Research Center. Other University-affiliated entities receive more funding from external sources and the federal government, such as the Energy Institute of Louisiana, Informatics Research Institute, Institute of Material Research and the Institute for Coastal & Water Research.

Das said future increases in research investment are needed to become an SREB 1 institution, accredited by the Southern Regional Education Board, and to improve its ranking in the Association of American Universities.

That said, the University may not be holistically operating at a level representative of an R1 institution. Although Kolluru has clearly made significant progress in improving the financial position and addressing employee concerns, many problems continue, as numerous employees concurred through interviews and email correspondence.

Supporting every aspect of the University brand might require attention to some unexpected areas. William Plummer, director of choral activities, said the music ensembles in the school of music are co-research labs. He explains, "We are presented with a problem, which is the musical score, which is not music. It's a piece of paper with some ink on it. And the problem is how to realize that and to turn that into sound."

The R1 status requires ensuring graduate students have the financial security to start their careers and thus represent the University. Kayode Amusan is a graduate student from Nigeria who chose to pursue his Ph.D. in English with a concentration in linguistics at the University. He remarks that graduate students "are students at the same time we are employees of the university," and also need funding for travel, research and assistantships.

Amusan said keeping the R1 status "requires some level of sustained cooperation with graduate students." For example, conference travel is crucial for exploring the job market and networking, but "funding for graduate conferences is extremely limited." He also remarked on having to use the inter-library loan system to get literature because the University was not subscribed to certain databases.

Professor Robert McKinney, architecture department graduate coordinator, remarked on "...the reduction in the number of university graduate assistantships for the 2026–27 academic year. As a result, the number of graduate students beginning the Master of Architecture program has declined." It forces them to turn down qualified applicants, so some "made the difficult decision to enroll in another program where they received funding."

Zachary Stein, assistant university librarian of technical services and special collections, provided a nearly comprehensive list of the University's subscriptions to academic journals and databases. The University cancelled 167 journals and is continuing 404 for this fiscal year. It also cancelled 20 databases and is continuing 29.

Stein explained that to make the decisions over what to cut or keep, "We gathered usage statistics from over the last 24 months and canceled the ones with total usage less than 100. We tried to balance it so departments would not lose everything. We also sent the proposed lists to departments so they could provide feedback. If we are faced with this kind of cut again, we are planning to work directly with college deans so they can be more involved with the decisions."

If the University is to continue on its current path, it needs to constantly ensure it can maintain everything that being an R1 research university entails.




Photo by Alyus Dick
R1 banner on campus

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## News

# Mental Health Week on campus

**Gracelynn Guillory**
NEWS WRITER

As college students navigate academic pressure and uncertainty about the future, mental health can become an overlooked part of the college experience. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette's National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) On Campus chapter hopes to change that through its annual mental health awareness efforts.

The organization hosted its "Hold on to Hope: Help Us Pack Up the Stigma" event Wednesday, Nov. 11, in the University quad as part of Mental Health Week. The campus suicide awareness and prevention event encourages conversations about mental health while connecting students with available resources.

The event featured several activities, including an opportunity to memorialize loved ones through personalized backpacks. Participants could honor someone special by including a photograph or name, a brief biography, important dates, memories or a personal message. The memorialization was free, and optional donations supported NAMI On Campus' suicide prevention and mental health programming.

Asia Kelly, president of the University's NAMI chapter, said the event was originally started by the organization's former president, but current members have continued it to maintain awareness. Kelly said hosting the event in the University quad allows students to encounter the displays easily as they walk, creating an opportunity to recognize the impact of mental health challenges and suicide.

"Putting this event in the quad where everybody can see it, everybody's passing by it, it forces everyone to take a look and realize the impact that suicide has had on so many different people," Kelly said.

For Kelly, the event is about more than bringing attention to an issue. She hopes students leave knowing where they can turn to when they need support.

"I hope that at the end of this event that there's at least one student that was able to get help today," Kelly said.

Kelly identified anxiety and depression as two of the biggest mental health challenges she sees among college students. She said freshmen and graduating seniors face different types of pressure, with freshmen adjusting to independence and seniors worrying about life after graduation.

Freshmen may struggle with being away from home for the first time, while seniors face questions about what comes next. Kelly said these experiences can make it difficult for students to openly discuss what they are going through.

Trinity Ball, a junior majoring in general studies, said she believes the pressure to succeed and meet expectations is one of the biggest challenges college students face.

"I think it's just the overall pressure, trying to be somebody," Ball said.

Ball said students often arrive at college with expectations for themselves, but adjusting to a new academic environment can be overwhelming.

She also said students may hesitate to seek mental health support because of stigmas surrounding mental illness.

Despite those challenges, Ball said she believes the University provides students with several opportunities to find support. Kelly hopes students who hesitate to seek help understand that getting support does not have to feel overwhelming.

"Sometimes the first step isn't as big of a step as you think it is," Kelly said. "Sometimes it's just a phone call. Sometimes it's just a text message."

As the University continues its mental health awareness efforts, Kelly hopes students remember one message: "You're never alone."

Through events like "Hold on to Hope," NAMI On Campus hopes to make mental health conversations more visible, reduce stigma and remind students that support is available.

## Food Review

# A little pop of flavor at Chatime

**Isabelle Brumley**
BEAUCOUP EDITOR

Located at 109 Old Camp Road, Suite 106, Chatime is a bubble tea shop in Lafayette that specializes in Taiwanese-style tea drinks. The shop offers a wide variety of beverages, including milk teas, fruit teas, matcha drinks, smoothies, slushes and specialty drinks. Customers can customize their drinks, choosing their sugar and ice levels along with tapioca pearls, fruit jellies and popping pearls.

Chatime is an international tea franchise that opened in Taiwan back in 2005. Since then, the brand has expanded to several countries around the world, including the United States, with over 25 locations. The Lafayette location marks the shop's first location in Louisiana, bringing another international beverage brand to Acadiana. The atmosphere of this shop was welcoming and appealing to people of all ages. The walls were painted light purple, pink and white, adding a modern feel, with small yellow and dark colored circles that mimicked bubbles.

My colleague and I had the pleasure of visiting Chatime on Friday, Nov. 13. When we arrived, we were greeted as we walked up to the counter to order. With so many options, it was difficult to choose just one kind of drink, so we chose three: a strawberry smoothie with strawberry popping pearls, a strawberry fruity tea made with green tea and raspberry popping pearls and the Panda Supreme Milk Tea. We ordered all three drinks at their original sugar level.

The strawberry smoothie had a fresh, fruity flavor that made it feel more like a sweet treat than a drink. The strawberry fruity tea had a crisp, refreshing taste, blending green tea with fruitiness and an added touch of sweetness from the boba. The Panda Supreme Milk Tea was a nicer, creamier alternative to the other two.

Beyond the drinks we tried, their menu offers several other options, including classics such as Assam Milk Tea and Brown Sugar Boba Milk Tea, along with Honeydew Milk Tea and Matcha Latte. For those looking for something fruitier, options like Mango Slush with Mousse and the shop's selection of fruit teas provide alternatives to traditional milk tea. Caffeine-free tea options, called refreshers, are also offered. After trying all three of the delicious drinks, we had the opportunity to speak with owners Jonathan and Jasmine Hamlin about bringing Chatime to Lafayette. Jonathan explained that the couple began exploring franchise opportunities more than two years ago before traveling to California to learn about the company and sample its products. They were drawn to the Taiwanese brand and saw an opportunity to introduce something new to Louisiana.

When discussing what they hope to create, Jonathan said, "We're trying to build something together for our family, for our future and for the community." The couple also hopes to make the shop a welcoming place where customers can relax, spend time with friends and discover new drinks. "Everyone can find their tribe here and find a cup of joy."

Overall, I enjoyed my experience at Chatime. If you would like to visit, the shop is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.



Photo by Ellie Schmidt
Strawberry smoothie with popping pearls

# Police Reports

Compiled by Sadie Lynn Burrell

### Nov. 14

- At 11:02 p.m., a caller advised officers of a possible hit-and-run that occurred at Cajun Field involving a 2008 tan Nissan Titan. Officers determined that a reckless operation of a motor vehicle took place. An arrest was made.
- At 4:30 a.m., an officer was dispatched in reference to a burglary that occurred at the Legacy Park Apartments. A Hiboy S2 electric scooter and a 5th Wheel electric scooter were found to have been stolen. A 2017 black Nissan Altima was involved. No arrests were made.

### Nov. 13

- At 5:33 p.m., an officer received a walk-in report of extortion.

### Nov. 12

- At 12:21 p.m., a caller reported that their electric scooter was stolen from in front of Moody Hall.
- At 10:55 a.m., officers received a report of a theft of a grey E Ride Pro 3.0 electric dirt bike that occurred outside of Oliver Hall.
- At 2:40 a.m., a report was generated regarding a fight that occurred at Bonin Hall. No arrests were made.

### Nov. 11

- At 1:07 p.m., a City Soar electric bicycle was reported stolen from H.L. Griffin Hall.
- At 11:30 a.m., an officer received a report of a stolen gray Niu Kqi 300X electric scooter at H.L. Griffin Hall.

### Nov. 9

- At 4:45 p.m., officers were dispatched in reference to the theft of a G-Shock watch at Bonin Hall.
- At 1:36 p.m., officers responded to a disturbance in Baker Hall. The suspect was arrested and issued a misdemeanor summons for cyberstalking.

### Nov. 8

- At 8:40 p.m., officers received a report about a verbal altercation occurring at Baker Hall. A warning was issued and no arrests were made.

# WHERE'S ALLAN?




It's getting colder now, it finally feels like fall. I can hear holiday music when I walk past this hall.

Where am I?



Last week's winner was **Kody Alvarez**! He is a freshman majoring in music education from Plaquemine, Louisiana. He plays the alto saxophone in the Pride of Acadiana and often holds his own mini music concerts near Cypress Lake.

**Win a free sandwich from Roly Poly**

The first UL student to recognize where The Vermilion's mascot, Allan the Alligator, was photographed on campus, and email the correct location of Allan to **TheVermilion@louisiana.edu** will receive the prize. The Vermilion will continue this contest each week until the end of the semester. Participants cannot win more than once a semester, and must be attentive to their emails.

## Weather

| Thursday 11/19 | Friday 11/20 | Saturday 11/21 | Sunday 11/22 | Monday 11/23 | Tuesday 11/24 | Wednesday 11/25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High: 76°F Low: 57°F | High: 77°F Low: 59°F | High: 78°F Low: 58°F | High: 77°F Low: 56°F | High: 74°F Low: 57°F | High: 69°F Low: 51°F | High: 65°F Low: 49°F |

**Caitlyn Comeaux**
MANAGING EDITOR

- The intensifying El Niño could reshape the end of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season.
- Several inches of early-season snow have begun to pile up in parts of the Northeast.
- Heavy California rainfall is slowing down harvests and causing a nationwide strawberry shortage.

# Sports

## How will college football change with new 24-team playoff field?

**Alyus Dick**
PHOTOGRAPHY COORDINATOR

On Nov. 9, the College Football Playoff (CFP) Management Committee unanimously approved a Playoff expansion to 24 teams. The change is set to start in the 2027-28 college football season.

This marks the second playoff expansion in two years, with the playoff expanding to 12 teams in 2024. The days of a four-team playoff now feels like a far cry away from the soon-to-be 24-team format. But what does this actually mean for the landscape of college football?

It's important to start with why this is happening, which is primarily for financial reasons. However, the idea for a 24-team CFP format was originally proposed by the Big 10 conference and had eventually garnered support from the Big 12, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the University of Notre Dame.

Additionally, according to ESPN, the average additional payment from ESPN to remain the sole rights holder of the playoffs through the 2031 season is $345 million annually thanks to the expanded playoffs. The biggest priority for the expanded playoffs is revenue.

Now, how does this change the regular season for college football? To start, the regular season will now begin from what was week zero, formerly a partial week of games at the end of August, to Thanksgiving weekend. The CFP Management Committee also adopted new scheduling standards that will incentivise programs to schedule additional competitive non-conference games.

As stated by the CFP committee, the 24-team CFP format will consist of the conference champions from each Power Four conference (ACC, Big 10, Big 12 and SEC), the highest ranked in the Group of Six conference (Pac-12, American, Conference USA, Mountain West, Mid American or Sun Belt) and the 19 highest-ranked remaining teams in the CFP Selection Committee's final rankings.

When it comes to the playoffs itself, there will be a total of 16 on-campus CFP games. The first eight seeds in the playoff bracket will get a first-round bye and will instead host a second-round playoff game on their respective campuses.

Seeds nine through 16 will each host a first-round game on their campuses against the remaining eight seeded teams.

With the expansion, each conference will make a decision on the future of their respective championship game, whether to keep it or eliminate it outright. The SEC for instance, already announced that the 2026 SEC Football Championship game will be the last.

Conference Championship games won't be the only aspect of college football to take a hit. With the 24-team CFP format, there will be less teams available for non-CFP bowl games. With more teams and conferences likely to opt out of bowl agreements, the games are going to feel quite diluted in quality.

With the expansion also comes timing changes and conflicts. The Army-Navy game is set to move from Dec. 11, 2027 to Dec. 4, 2027. The Heisman Trophy weekend in 2027 will be moved a week earlier as well. There will also be a good chance coaches in the lower CFP brackets will be on the move during playoff time. The transfer portal window will be set to open once the CFP gets to its final four.

It's important to note the discourse around the topic of the CFP expansion is fairly diverse. On one hand, the decision is being praised for not only allowing more ranked teams into the bracket, but also giving more programs the ability to host playoff games on their campuses.

For instance, teams like the 2020 and 2021 Ragin' Cajuns, who were ranked No. 19 and No. 23 respectively, would've earned a playoff berth if this expansion would've come sooner. Other Sun Belt teams like No. 12 Coastal Carolina in 2020 and No. 20 Appalachian State in 2019 would've gotten a spot in the CFP under the 24-team format.

On the other hand, the argument is that the regular season losses matter less now than ever before, eliminating any stakes come mid-November. There's also questions about the quality of the first few rounds of games in the CFP and the potential lack of competitiveness. The argument is that not every team to be in the 24-team CFP field deserves to compete for a national title.

The first CFP National Championship game adopting the 24-team playoff format will be hosted in New Orleans on Jan. 24, 2028.



Graphic by Ray Bardales

# Allons

## Are screen adaptations doing their source material justice?

**Maggie Jordan**
ALLONS WRITER

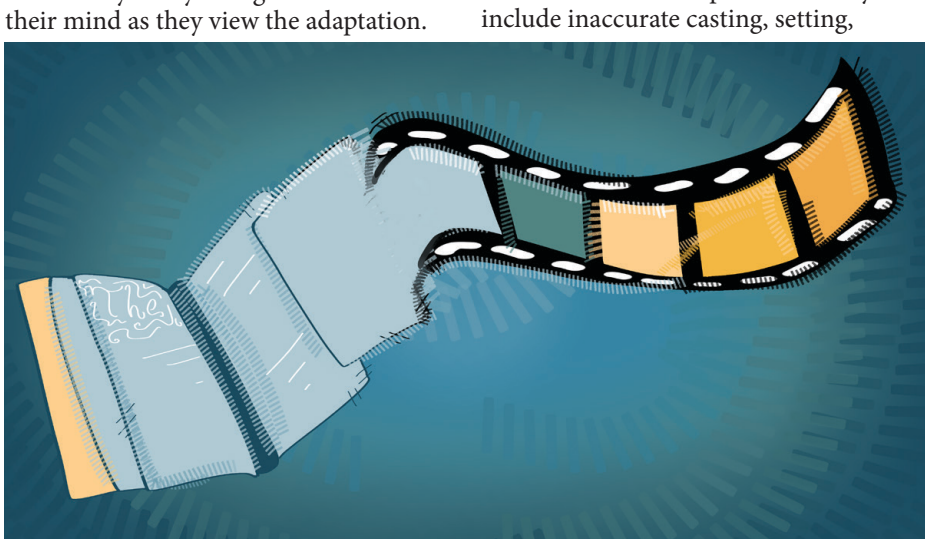
Have you ever seen an advertisement for a new show or movie and heard it begin with "based on the best-selling novel?" Books are being adapted onto screens more and more, which often causes some issues. When fans discover a book they love is being adapted, accuracy is at the forefront of their thoughts. When a book is beloved by someone, they want to see it interpreted faithfully.

Many fandoms are no strangers to their books being adapted. "Game of Thrones," "The Summer I Turned Pretty," "Harry Potter," "The Lord of the Rings" and roughly 75% of Stephen King's wide collection of works make up just a small margin of literature that has been adapted onto screens, one way or another. While this is an exciting opportunity for book fans, the question of accuracy always hangs in the back of their mind as they view the adaptation.

Nov. 20 will see the release of two book-to-screen adaptations; "Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Titan's Curse" and "The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping." "The Titan's Curse" will be adapted for the very first time, releasing as an eight-episode third season on Disney+. "Sunrise on the Reaping" succeeds five previous "Hunger Games" movies based on four books by Suzanne Collins. Of course, readers worry about accuracy, casting decisions and whether the adaptations will hold up.

Adaptations allow for a unique relationship to develop between readers and filmmakers. While readers already have an understanding of the story, it is the responsibility of the filmmakers to translate that into a completely new medium.

Though an audience may go into an adaptation with sizable expectations, the reality is that those are not always met. These missed expectations may include inaccurate casting, setting, storyline, emotional weight and many other things. While engaging with a book, readers develop their own interpretations of characters and settings. Some will visualize a character differently than how they get adapted, or even differently than described in the book.


Graphic by Ray Bardales

Casting is a huge factor in any show or movie that is watched, but the pressure to cast appropriately rises when that show or movie is an adaptation of a book. Fans want to see a book character brought to life accurately. An example of inaccurate casting would be every time "Carrie" by Stephen King has been adapted. Carrie is meant to be a slightly overweight girl who is acne ridden and a "frog among swans." However, every time the book has been brought to life, Carrie was cast as a perfect, beautiful, slim girl.

Casting, while important, is not the only change that is frequently made when bringing a book to screen. Often, little details within the plot that only fans from the book would notice are excluded. Directors may want to appeal to a wider audience, especially those unfamiliar with the book, so adding a few miniscule details is not at the top of their list of priorities.

Changes are not always made because a director or executive didn't like the way things played out in a book. Time constraints, budgets and practicality are all reasons why an adaptation may have to alter details from a novel. Episode runtimes and budget restraints may be a point of concern among audiences, but these things are usually decided on by the network instead of showrunners or filmmakers.

Changes, however, can also improve the storyline. More plot points may be added or expanded on so that they can contribute to the story, minor characters could be given more screen time or certain storylines may be edited to fit the adapted story. It is important to remember that adaptations are the creative interpretations of the directors, but that does not mean it will be innately unfaithful or unsuccessful.

This begs the question: should an adaptation and its source material be treated as separate media? If you were to ask me, I would say they should. Of course, they're interconnected; it's impossible for them to not be. However, knowing that there are bound to be inaccuracies and disappointment, I believe that readers should go into an adaptation with the ability to treat them as separate, individual works of art.

Reading and watching are two fundamentally different ways of absorbing media. A book allows readers to create their own mental images, control the pacing in a way and spend time with the character's internal monologue. A screen adaptation makes those creative decisions for the audience. In my opinion, reading a book first is always more important to me, because it allows me to develop an interpretation of the material before seeing someone else's.

A book-to-screen adaptation will never be wholly accurate. Even if it were not live action and was instead animated, there is no way for an adaptation to hold completely true to its source material. Of course, fans should be able to criticize poor writing, mischaracterization and other creative decisions, but an adaptation should not automatically be considered unsuccessful just because some things changed.

# The disappearance of our private moments and finding enjoyment

**Ja'lyn Braud**
ALLONS WRITER

When did it all start to change? People would sit, drink a coffee with their friends and never once pick up their phone. Instead, they enjoyed each waking moment with those in front of them.

"Enjoyed" is an interesting word, one lost in the chaos of media. To be able to take delight in something is to enjoy it. Yet I must question if society today has reached a point where we're incapable of enjoying something unless other people also know we are experiencing it.

In our time, the media influences the way we live and function. So much so that I don't think we know what it's like anymore to sit in the moments of our lives, but instead we feel this need to parade everything we do to the whole world.

Our real lives have now been contorted into an online persona as we all try to live out some sort of influencer lifestyle.

Now in most moments people find themselves experiencing their life solely through a camera rather than their own eyes.

We've become so worried about catching the perfect picture or having the most aesthetic video than catching the moment itself.

What is it about this need, this craving, to have some sort of evidence of our enjoyment? Why do we feel the need to prove to others that we had a good time, that we are happy?

The atmosphere of enjoyment once encompassed a serene peace and has now shifted into a competitive pride.

In this natural instinct to engage in such behavior, this forcefulness of media into our everyday lives has molded us into a behavior of constant performance. An ongoing feeding of media has subconsciously placed an act of comparison within our lives, which then further feeds into this pressure to make our ordinary lives look extraordinary to the public world.

And here we are met with this question again: Why? Why do we care so much?

With our new found lives within this digital age, we are met with a type of validation when posting. We have to check how many likes we got or how many people viewed our story, and our emotions match those numbers, high or low.

It has gotten to the point where we let people's reactions determine how we feel about ourselves and about our own personal experiences. Their likes and comments dictate whether or not we are experiencing enjoyment.

With this trapping mindset, we as a society have begun to struggle to enjoy private moments. We no longer remember what it's like to live in intimacy with others. This audience we have curated for ourselves over the internet now has the authority to dictate what our lives should look like.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not telling you that you should never post again. I enjoy being able to share my life to those who might not get to see it everyday. However, there is a line and sometimes we're not willing to draw it.

This underlying need to be some sort of influencer can become really detrimental to how we live this life out. And, if we become too busy trying to document every moment then somewhere along the way we are going to forget what the memory even felt like in the first place.

Believe it or not, it is okay if your regular Tuesday isn't as cool as someone's trip to London. That doesn't mean your Tuesday can't be enjoyable; soak the day in, find the good around you and be grateful for the experience you've just been given.

Even more shockingly, in that experience, it's okay if only you know about it. That's what makes memories so special—when it's shared only with specific individuals, even if it's just you.

This is how we get to the fruit of enjoyment. We don't owe the media our good times. We do, however, owe it to ourselves to enjoy life.

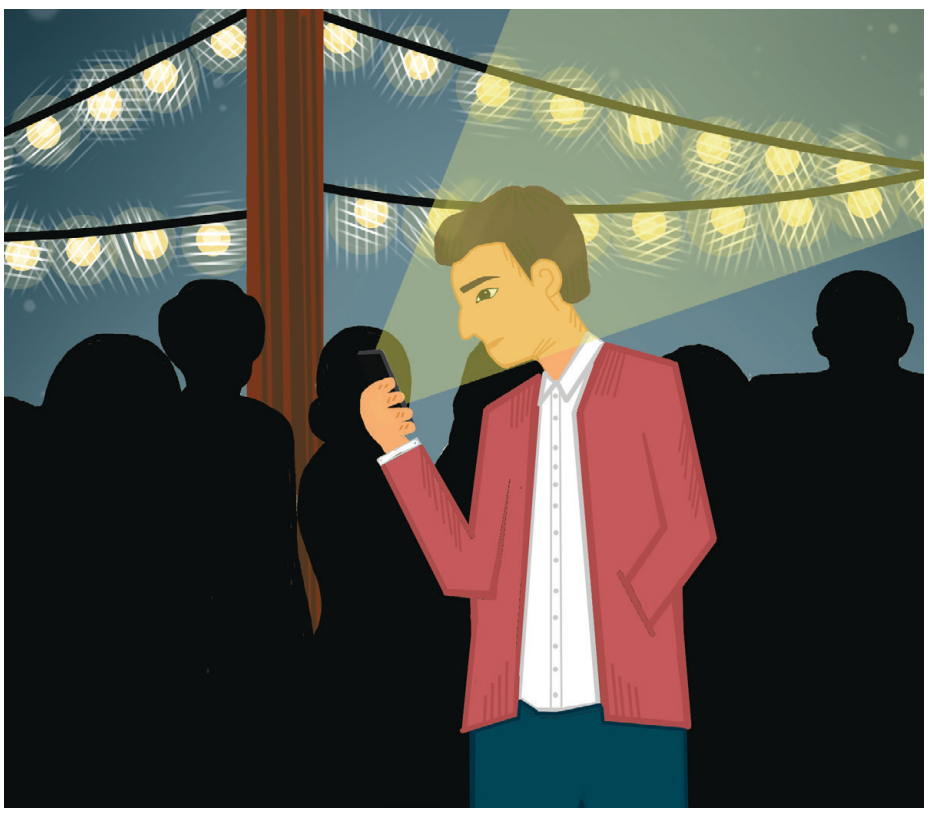
We should actively live in the mindset that we are doing things simply for the enjoyment of them, not because we want others to enjoy us. There's no need to be a performer; there can be content in your life. We just need to be willing to sacrifice the opinion of media in order to find it.

With this increasing need to showcase our lives to the world, we ourselves become part of that audience. No longer living the life we're in, but simply viewing it.

If we are being honest, there's not much enjoyment in just being the viewer. So go out and experience the world. Be present with the people around you and allow yourself to just be in a moment.

Give yourself the chance to be private. To become intimate with your own life and leave this life of performance.

Let your own actions dictate your happiness, not the opinions of others online.



Graphic by Caitlyn Comeaux

# Are dopamine detoxes worth it?

**Kinsey Waits**
ALLONS EDITOR

If you've spent any time on the internet in the past few years, you have probably stumbled upon this corner of the internet that is actively giving you advice on how to get off of the internet.

While I agree with the message, it's the packaging that I, and many scientists, have a problem with.

Many of these creators place a heavy emphasis on mental and physical health from behind the screen, while benefiting from people interacting with their content online. The irony has always intrigued me.

The dopamine detox trend seemed to peak during the same time the "Clean Girl" fashion was taking over the internet around 2022-23. During this period, the goal was to be just online enough to send others the message you weren't online at all.

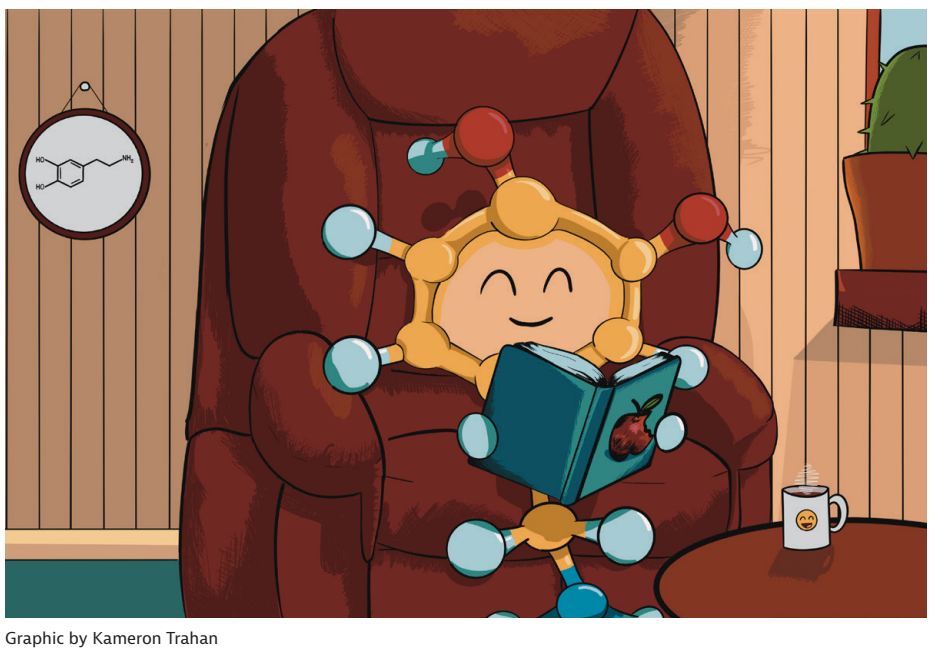
Linen sheets, fresh flowers and a gratitude journal were the armor of these individuals. This was the opposite of the maximalist trends of the years 2016-20. It felt simple, graceful and, most of all, clean.

I realize how ridiculous that might sound to generations that do not have the same relationship with the internet that mine does. The online culture of this time was fixated on health and wellness. Yoga, matcha and journaling were the stars of many "day in my life" videos.

While the emphasis on health was refreshing, as always, it went deeper than just what viewers saw on the surface. Soon a new buzzword dropped and influencers clamored to use, and consequently abuse, its scientific nature.

Dopamine. The happy chemical. The reward chemical. The feel-good hormone.

Donning many names, dopamine became a topic no health influencer could stay away from. Armed with facemasks and overnight hair curlers, these creators started naming ways people could "reset" their dopamine levels – a problem most viewers didn't even know they had.



Graphic by Kameron Trahan

So where did this fixation with dopamine come from? The hormone was discovered almost 70 years ago, why are we being told we need to get it under control now?

Artificial intelligence has given us an opportunity to rely on quick and easy information. In other words, we are surrounded by chances to experience a dopamine spike many times every day.

Dopamine hits can come from an assortment of different activities. Scrolling on social media, getting your favorite coffee, seeing that your crush texted you back or opening a gift are some common examples.

However, like all good things, too much can be harmful. Studies have shown that high levels of dopamine for extended periods of time can lead people to be more anxious, restless, irritable and even unable to sleep. You may experience this feeling after scrolling through TikTok for a little longer than you meant to.

Your brain is trying to regulate all the information it has just taken in while also dealing with a great influx of dopamine, which results in the stagnant feeling many have described.

So what is the solution? Cut it all out, obviously. Stop scrolling and only make coffee at home. Spend every morning without music and see where the boredom leads you. Set your phone to greyscale so the colorful icons on social media apps don't lure you in.

This is what some videos on the internet would have you believe, but science says that is not the best reaction.

Each of these "solutions" has value that can lead to benefits, but the methodology behind them is questionable. I believe this reasoning stems from the current diet culture in which certain food groups are seen as "bad" and, in turn, should be completely excluded from one's nourishment.

However, while it is possible for one to completely cut out carbs, there is no way to eliminate a chemical in the human brain. Furthermore, presenting this regime as a "detox" implies that dopamine is a toxin, which it isn't. Any stimulus can become toxic in abundance, but that does not mean it is inherently harmful.

Let's take a look at the science. It turns out that dopamine does not necessarily encode rewards, but reward prediction errors. This was discovered when researchers charted the brain activity of monkeys when they received treats.

Researchers rang a bell and awarded the animals with a treat. Eventually, the monkeys learned to associate the ring of the bell to receiving a treat. The scientists noticed that overtime, the dopamine in their brains spiked when they heard the bell, not when they received the treat itself.

There were three different outcomes: Dopamine could spike further, dopamine could stay at the same level or dopamine could drop further. This sheds light on human brain activity. This is why activities such as scrolling and buying your favorite treat can sometimes leave you feeling unsatisfied, even if you got exactly what you expected.

So, what should we do if not detox? A few answers can be found in some scientific articles such as "Reading for wellbeing: a realist review of evidence" from the National Library of Medicine, which supports the idea that reading books can be a very healthy way to regulate your brain's dopamine spikes.

Spending time in nature can also encourage your brain to produce "happy" chemicals. You can also call a friend or try a new craft you've saved in a Pinterest board.

Dopamine is not a toxin, but an inseparable component of your brain's chemistry. The answer to feeling better does not always lie in cutting something out, but changing your approach.

**THE VERMILION**

A weekly student publication of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The paper is distributed on Thursdays except on holidays and semester breaks. The Vermilion is supported in part by student-assessed fees. Views expressed in The Vermilion do not necessarily reflect those of UL Lafayette administrators, faculty, staff or other students.

Submissions are edited for libel and vulgarity only. Editorial and columns reflect the author's opinion and not those of The Vermilion staff.
All advertisements must be submitted by the Friday before publication at thevermilion@louisiana.edu.

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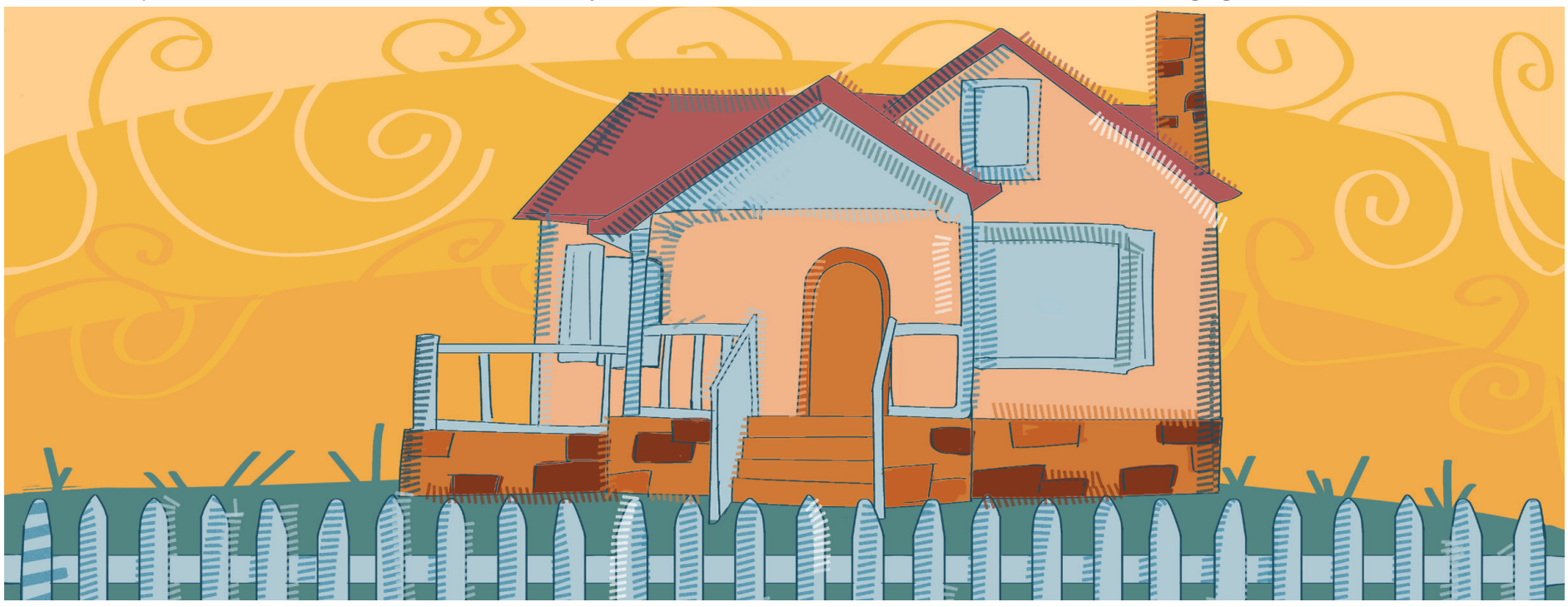
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# Beaucoup

## What's The Modern American Dream?

The Beaucoup section writes about whether or not they believe the American Dream is still achievable for college graduates.



Graphic by Ray Bardales

### Gracelynn Guillory
NEWS WRITER

I think the American Dream is still possible for college graduates today, but I believe it is becoming harder to achieve. For generations, people have been taught that earning a college degree, finding a good job and working hard will lead to financial stability and success. But, that is just not always the reality anymore.

Many graduates leave college with student loan debt, struggle to find jobs in their fields and face rising costs of living. It seems like having a degree is no longer enough to guarantee the life people work so hard for.

I believe the American Dream still exists, but it looks different than it did for previous generations.

Success today is being able to afford an apartment, pay off your debt or simply live comfortably without constantly worrying about money. Hard work still matters, but opportunities and financial circumstances matter just as much and are more difficult to achieve in today's time.

### Ja'lyn Braud
ALLONS WRITER

When it comes to reaching the American Dream, I think in some cases it is still achievable for college graduates. Compared to times in the past, there are definitely some aspects that make this goal a lot more difficult. These said aspects are our world's ongoing growth in the internet, media and even artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, the American Dream is so heavily defined by one's success. With that in mind, I think college graduates have a hard time reaching this goal because of their personal definitions of success.

In our age today, our generation has set such high expectations on themselves about what life outside of college must look like. With these daunting views, I believe a lot of people hit the American Dream without ever realizing it.

Due to setting such high standards for oneself, they are able to achieve success but never truly acknowledge it because of their own standards.

### Ray Bardales
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

The American Dream died when college put 18-year-olds into a lifetime of debt for an undergraduate degree. The price of higher education has continued to rise, and it is considered lucky to graduate with less than $50,000 in student loan debt. The American Dream is only achievable if you come from money and have connections; unfortunately most people don't have that privilege. The idea that you could go to school, then jump right into your specific field is not really an option anymore. The job market is awful, necessities continue to get more expensive and it feels like nothing is going to change. In today's world, the dream is to be able to afford both gas and groceries within the same paycheck.

So no, the American Dream is not possible, it never has been. The American Dream was never made to be accessible to the average college student.

### Kinsey Waits
ALLONS EDITOR

I think that the American Dream has changed throughout the years. I think that graduating college is no longer a necessity in order to achieve the modern American Dream of having a comfortable life. With the expansion of the internet and social media, there are now career paths that do not require higher education.

For some college graduates, there is pressure to pay off loans, find work in their fields and grapple with the higher cost of living that has now become the norm.

I believe there is still an American Dream for my generation, it just might not be as easy to attain as in past generations.

I think success can be measured in a great number of ways, and the traditional American Dream might not encompass the kinds of lives that some who graduate college are looking for.

# Cajun Crossword

Compiled by Vallen Power

No. 10

### INSTRUCTIONS

The answers can be found throughout the newspaper, so make sure to thoroughly read each story. Try to find all of them and see if you got them correct in the answers provided in the next issue's crossword search!

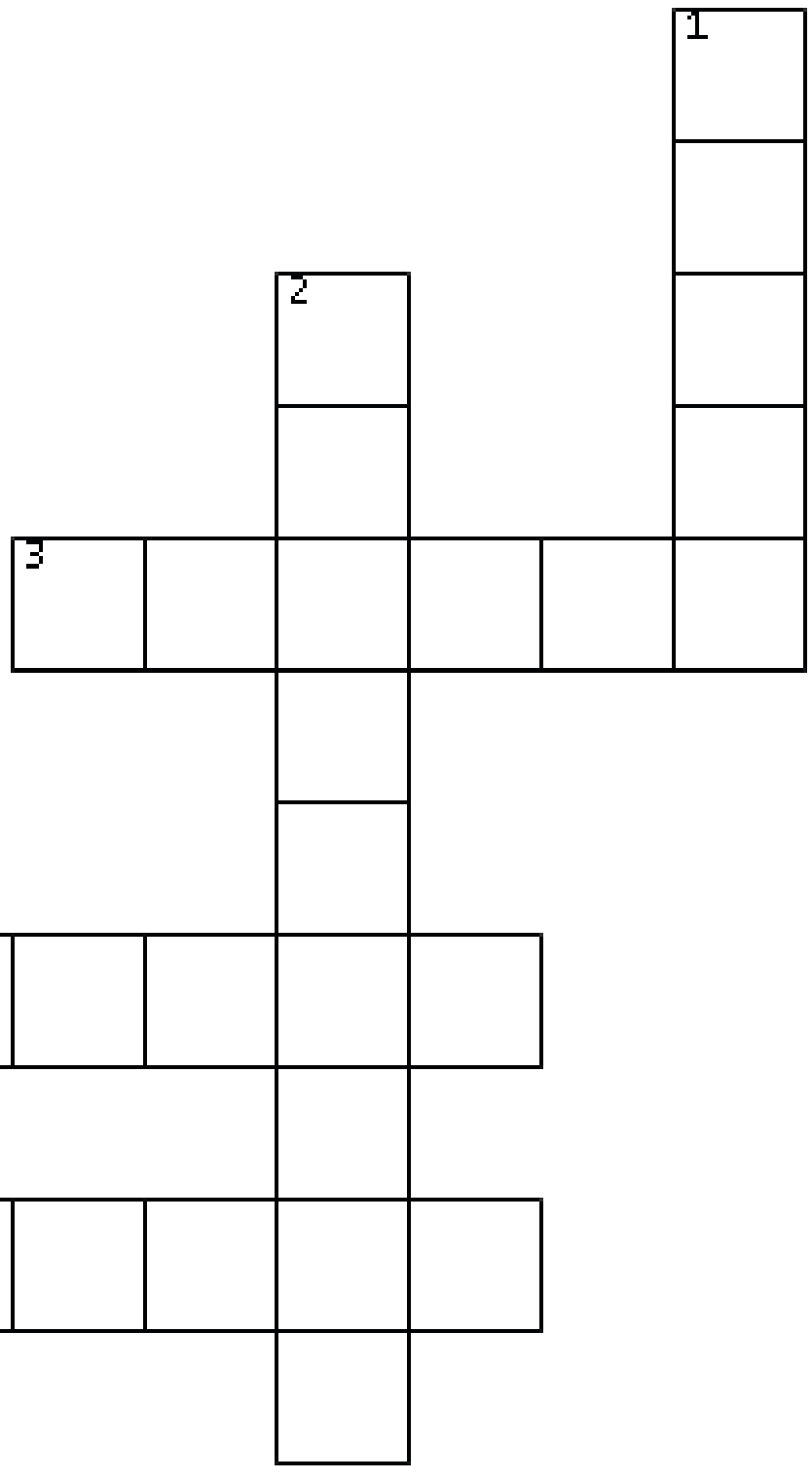
### ACROSS

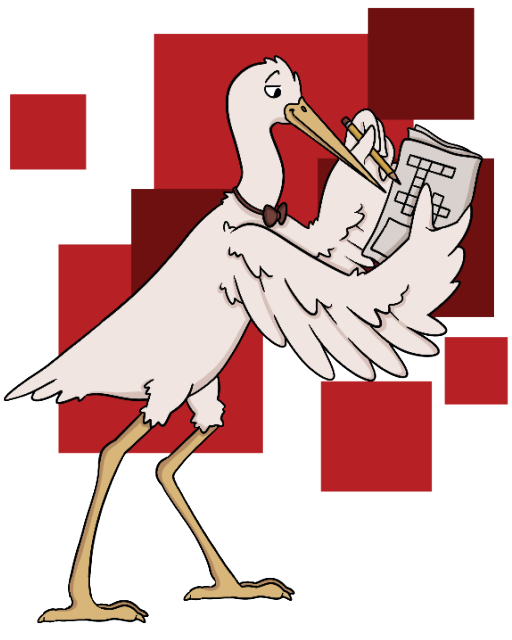
3. What is the last name of the couple who owns the Lafayette Chatime?
5. Stephen King describes the character Carrie as a "frog among ____."
6. According to Ja'lyn Braud, we deserve the chance to be _____.

### DOWN

1. Dopamine is not a _____.
2. Entrepreneurship and _____ are some of the most important takeaways from the course that sets up the Hodge Podge event.
4. Who is currently the sole rights holder of the College Football Playoffs (acronym)?

Scan the QR code for last issue's answers



# SOUNDING OFF

## "How do you protect your mental health in times of burnout and stress?"



**Halle Lake**
**GENERAL STUDIES** SENIOR

*"Through my faith in Jesus, I pray a lot, and lean on him a lot..."*



**Audrey Palombo**
**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS** JUNIOR

*"My faith, and my friends that I met through my faith..."*



**Chiraz Amani**
**FRANCOPHONE STUDIES** PH.D.

*"Yoga...I work out a lot...I just like to go walk..."*



**Abby Blair**
**FRANCOPHONE STUDIES** PH.D.

*"I go work out at Bourgeois and chat with my friends..."*



**Nawel Dgawda**
**FRANCOPHONE STUDIES** PH.D.

*"We try to handle it... go out with our friends..."*



**Aichour Nihel**
**FRANCOPHONE STUDIES** PH.D.

*"Watch a show that I love, bake something..."*

*Sounding Off is a section devoted to the voice of students.*
*Views expressed in Sounding Off do not reflect those of UL Lafayette administrators, faculty, staff or other students.*
*Watch the full Sounding Off interviews on our Instagram @thevermilion.*

*Photos and interviews by Alyus Dick and Joann Seow*

## COMIC
# Sick Day




Comic by Sadie Lynn Burrell

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