



Observer staff win
New England Newspaper &
Press Association awards

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Better to smile than
frown
Comics by Narjis Musa

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Americans dominate Figure
Skating Championships
Our staff was there to tell the
story

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Observer

The award-winning student newspaper of Northern Essex Community College • Haverhill and Lawrence, Mass.

Spring 2025 • Volume 89 • Issue Number 7 • April 18, 2025

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Battle of the Bands returns

BY DANIELA
VALDIVIA-TERRES
Editor-in-chief

"NECC Music's Battle of the Bands never disappoints," said Dean of Liberal Arts Amy Callahan. On April 10, at the TC building in Haverhill campus the Battle of the Bands was held, a music competition that gathers NECC community and the love of music.

Dean Callahan was one of the judges, along with Music Professor Jared Holaday and professional musician in the area, Michael Ruggelo. The judges had a hard time to place the three top bands because all the musicians on stage were so talented, engaged the audience and gave their best.

"I love the opportunity to see all the amazing talent that our students have and their connections to the community. This is an event that really brings the community onto our



Photo by Caden Roberge

Members of the band Dog 8 Dog having fun playing guitars.

campus to celebrate our students talent. It's collaborative, it's exciting and it's uplifting. It's fun! It's also connected very deeply to our academic program in the music associate's degree. Each band to be eligible to perform in the Battle of the Bands, it must have

one current music student or one music alum of the college, so each band has very close connection to the college."

Neck Dive, who has performed for three years in a row, won first place in the first

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What's Happening?

Online Info Session:
Dental Assisting
April 22, 1 - 2 p.m.

Cyber Savvy – Protecting
Your Digital World
April 24, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.
C 203, Haverhill campus

Unlocking Innovation –
The Power of Protecting
Intellectual Property
April 29, 11 a.m. - noon
C 203, Haverhill campus

Register online at:
necc.mass.edu/event

How to find security around each campus:

Haverhill Campus
100 Elliott St., Spurr Building,
Room 110C

Lawrence Campus
45 Franklin St. main lobby

Call 978.556.3333 from a cell
phone. Extension 3333 from
any campus phone on either
campus.

Editorial

Hang in there

By **DANIELA VALDIVIA-TERRES**
Editor-in-Chief

I know we are at that time of the semester that as a student, you may feel you are overwhelmed with late

work or if you are those very well-organized peers who like to work ahead, you may feel ready to be done with this semester. Whatever your position is, hang in there. Look for help if you have late work or if your grades are not where you want them to be. Talk to your professor and/

or look for assistance to the Academic Coaching Center, Math and Writing tutoring. These are the key places you should contact for assistance in your courses. Also, bear in mind that at this point, you may realize who is the student that takes notes, participates frequently with good insights or questions, and has a high grade. This is an opportunity to ask her/him for help. Maybe

you both become everlasting friends.

Most students are happy to share what they know because it works like double learning and practicing at the same time. So, it is a win/win.

Spring will bloom eventually, if there is no more unexpected snow, so keep doing your best to proudly accomplish another semester on your academic journey.

NECC Observer

The award-winning student newspaper of Northern Essex Community College

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The NECC Observer reserves the right to edit, condense and refuse all submissions.

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CAMPUS LIFE EDITOR : Rowan Rockwell

WEB EDITOR : Daniela Valdivia-Terres

FACULTY ADVISER : Mary Jo Shafer

Have you taken Journalism I? Are you taking it now? Would you like to be on the Observer staff? Then submit your resume to observer@necc.mass.edu

Publication Schedule

Issue #	Publication Date	Ad/Copy Deadline
5	March 7	Feb. 28
6	March 28	March 21
7	April 18	April 11
8	May 2	April 25

We welcome letters and articles from our readers. You can submit via email, and must include your name and phone number for verification. Write "Letter" or "Article to Editor" in the subject line so we notice it right away.

Send your letters to observer@necc.mass.edu

We try to publish all letters we receive, but we reserve the right to edit or reject those we receive.

The NECC Observer is a member of the Associated Collegiate Press, College Media Advertisers Inc., the Colombia Scholastic Press Association, and the New England Press Association.

Observer staff win NENPA awards

Student journalists from the NECC Observer recently won awards from The New England Newspaper and Press Association in the college division of the Better Newspaper competition.

Shaun Hood of Groveland and Observer correspondents received a first place award for best arts and entertainment section and former Observer Editor-in-Chief/Opinion Editor Kim Zappala of Haverhill won a third place award for best opinion section. The awards were announced at NENPA's annual convention March 29 in Portland, Maine.

The awards honored work produced and published in the student newspaper the NECC Observer during the 2023-2024 school year. This is the second year in a row that Zappala won a NENPA award. In 2024 she won second place for best opinion section. Zappala graduated from NECC in May, 2024. She is now studying journalism at UMass Lowell. The Observer staff members were competing against students from colleges and universities throughout New England. Finalists in their categories included students from New England College, Bowdoin College, University of Southern Maine and Quinnipiac University.

"Congratulations to Shaun and Kim and the journalism students who contributed to the arts and en-



Photo by Mary Jo Shafer
Shaun Hood

tertainment section. These awards are a testament to the hard work the students put into the Observer and their dedication and commitment to the craft of journalism and to the student newspaper," said Mary Jo Shafer, NECC Journalism/Communication program coordinator and faculty adviser to the NECC Observer. "Shaun puts incredible effort, thought, planning, care and creativity into his stories and page. Kim is dedicated, passionate and diligent in digging for facts and presenting engaging and informative opinion. I am so proud of Shaun and Kim."

Shafer said she also is pleased to see the contributions from students in Journalism I and II classes hon-



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Daniela Valdivia-Terres
Kim Zappala

ored because the Observer appreciates their submissions. "I think it's a nice acknowledgement of our students who consistently write interesting, informative, engaging and relevant stories and who have lots to say and share about arts and entertainment topics," she said.

Several other student journalists from NECC also attended the annual two-day conference, attending workshops on topics including interviewing techniques, public records, media law, artificial intelligence, fact checking, writing tips podcasting, investigative reporting, gender and local news and more. Students also attended a town hall focused on the First Amendment. The March 29 keynote featured artist Alexandra Bell, who led a session on rethinking and revising news coverage to promote fairness and accuracy.

To learn more about NECC's Journalism/Communications program, visit the website or contact Shafer at mshafer@necc.mass.edu.

Opinion

Comics by Narjis Musa



Northern Essex Community College

Directed by **Brianne Beatrice**

General Admission – \$20.00
Seniors & Students – \$10.00

May 8 – 4:00 PM
May 9 – 7:00 PM
May 10 – 7:00 PM
May 11 – 2:00 PM

the

VAGINA

MONOLOGUES

BY EVE ENSLER

NECC THEATER

WARNING: Adult Content. Show not recommended for young audiences. 18+

For more information, tickets, sign language, allergies, etc. please contact Theater Coordinator Brianne Beatrice at Bbeatrice@necc.mass.edu

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CHESTER H. HAWRYLCIW THEATER

THIRD FLOOR OF SPURK BUILDING C

Poster Design by Nicole Dean

Get involved with your student newspaper

The Observer!



- Get to know your school better as you write and design four print issues per semester and post on the student newspaper's award-winning website.
- Let your voice be heard as you become part of the free press.
- Spend time with like-minded individuals as you let the student body know the latest news!!!
- If you have taken or will be taking Journalism I in the fall, we encourage you to join us. We will have staff openings in the fall as several of our current amazing staff are graduating. Join us and help continue the Observer's legacy at NECC!

Interested? Contact us!!!

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Opinion

Too close to step back

Coming of age in a crumbling technoscape

BY ROWAN ROCKWELL
Campus Life Editor

To have a more meaningful understanding about the world since the advent of the internet I believe it is helpful to create a demarcation in understanding between the initial possibilities of philanthropic utopias new tech could offer and on the other hand understanding the vice grip that government money and commercial control have over the direction of technology's expansion over the past 60 years. We must look at the internet's birth and life first as a timeline to refamiliarize ourselves with the schism between the futuristic idealization that tech once offered and the current state of tech development that seems unsympathetic to philanthropy and functionality, instead seemingly focused on forging a trajectory of useless and hypnotic gadgets that create more problems than solutions.

The beginning of the internet promised a cornucopia of utopian solutions, that offered possibilities of radical expansion in human capability and individual freedom. Like so many great inventions of the past 100 years the internet was conceived and funded under the controls of the United States government's funding and oversight. The U.S. poured over \$100,000,000 into realizing the foundations of the internet beginning with ARPANET (1969), an internet prototype created by the U.S. gov'ts Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). Like many things that the government researches, the kind of technology invented under their funding and supervision only became commercially available after years of dedi-

“ We must look at the internet's birth and life first as a timeline to refamiliarize ourselves with the schism between the futuristic idealization that tech once offered and the current state of tech development that seems unsympathetic to philanthropy and functionality, instead seemingly focused on forging a trajectory of useless and

cated study out of reach to the public.

Some internet idealists reference this level of government involvement in the internet's development as obstructing the larger utopian possibilities it could offer. In essence suggesting that an internet made BY the people could be an internet truly FOR the people, a place where individuals could be the masters of their own worlds free of authority and censorship.

If the government had not had such a large role in creating the internet the possibilities of its impact beyond today's manifestations are unimaginable for better and for worse.

Now in 2025 in the wake of the most drastic expansion of technology available to the average person, foremost being internet access, our societies are wrestling with the ethics of internet moderation and the degree to which these things should be overseen by the gov't.

Government regulation in both the public and the private sector is becoming increasingly unpopular. The more information we have access to the more we realize our government may not be trustworthy. One of the most revelatory incidents in recent years contributing to the public's lack of trust in government came in the form of classified documents leaked by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden unveiling govern-

ment programs conducting illegal global surveillance operations. For providing the American public proof that our government was not only abusing its power illegally but undermining the trust of its citizens while doing so Edward Snowden was indicted on charges of espionage and is living in Russia as a naturalized citizen.

Why has humanity's greatest leap in technology and science resulted in such an underwhelming improvement to our societies? There are arguments to be made that we have benefitted greatly, and I do not want to shrug off these accomplishments. The point I'm really trying to make is that people seem to have forgotten the extent to which our impressive leap in technology could be bettering the world and instead have become comfortable with the idea that the ripest fruits these advancements in tech have yielded are luxury products for the consumer that predominantly exist to entertain and soothe the consumer instead of focusing on truly improving human potential and minimizing global suffering.

For the last couple of decades, the public's interest in the ethics of technology's impact on our lives has been alarmingly unserious. Even prior to the life of Alan Turing, the father of modern computer science, tech thinkers discussed the insidious possibility of a

“technological singularity”, a point in time where due to the exponential acceleration inherent in the development of computer science, computers could surpass human intelligence permanently leaving human beings with no recourse or option but to bend to their will or biologically incorporate themselves with technology to survive.

Many modern-day thinkers and scientists on the cutting edge of technology have openly discussed the singularity and people like Bill Gates and Elon Musk have been talking about it for at least 10 years.

Confusingly, one of the most radically transformative events in all of Earth's history seems to go unappreciated in the spheres of public discourse where there is a concerning lack of fear, skepticism and opposition meaningfully voiced by average citizens.

More perturbing still is this lack of opposition seems scant and obscure in comparison to the status quos willingness to participate in the continuation of this trajectory by assuming the role of a mindless consumer, inevitably funding the people and places that continue to develop technology totally detached from the intention to actually offer the consumer access to technology that could improve our lives and work

Continued on Page 5

Opinion

Technoscape, contined from Page 4

on eliminating global suffering.

Further-more, people continue to buy these products not even considering that they never asked for these products to be made. Although this technology is being sold on the grounds of progress and innovation the majority of the consumer base has no input into how research and development are employed to offer realistic solutions to problems that already exist. Now we are subjected to new problems created by technology that once promised egalitarian revolution and a new plain of personal autonomy but have only entrapped us in a system that is so novel and complex that the only people who seem to have a real ability to untangle us are the ones continuing to let the genie out of the bottle.

No one asked for Sam Altman to open Pandora's Box.

If you have been alive since at least before the turn of the century you have been part of a brave new world, bombarded with a level of unwanted stimuli and consumer incentives. Although it doesn't seem as though this recent acceleration has reached a plateau, I think people who have been alive long enough to see it wind up and let loose have lived long enough to become better acquainted with the realities of this brave new world and where Transhumanism is Trojan Hosed into our societies on the guise of progress and innovation.

I believe that those of us who have seen this acceleration play out for as long as it has can finally step back from the screen of this science fiction movie we're living in. Finally stepping back to appreciate the complexity of the issues no longer blinded by the seduction of consumerism.

We don't have to joke about being the guinea pigs anymore, the first experiment is over and time has given us perspective.

There is a proven cognitive trait in all of us called the negativity bias. "The negativity bias is our tendency not only to register negative stimuli more readily but also to dwell on these events. Also known as positive-negative asymmetry, this negativity bias means that we feel the sting of a rebuke more powerfully than we feel the joy of praise."(What Is The Negativity Bias, Kendra Cherry MEd, verywellmind.com)

Although you could use the negativity bias to invalidate my subjective analysis of modern tech, I think inherent in the definition of the negativity bias lies validation of my argument. The crushing, existential weight accompanying discussions about the ethics of modern tech, the unsustainable model of energy consumption used by things like blockchain servers and the overall lack of tangible, fantasy level improvements promised by the tech of the future (just to name a few) have had legitimate and objectively harmful consequence, enough that the weight of those negative outcomes has a logical case for swaying our stance away from the seduction of technology's comforts and conveniences and back to a rational scrutiny of the pros and cons. A good faith effort is also necessary to create coalitions that give a voice to the public who have no control or desire to continue with the philosophical intentions of modern day developers who may not realize the true unpopularity of their creations due to their own ego and a misinterpretation that their innovations aren't continuing to sell

because they are improving people's lives but because they have created a black market of an unsatisfiable dopamine addiction.

This leads me to my last point. We have not only moved into a new age that is immune to the conventions and philosophies of the old world. Part of the transition into this brave new one is learning to understand the restructuring of value in today's information economy. In 2017 The Economist published an article that asserted that data had surpassed oil in value. We are in a new age of capture by socio-economic systems that function separately from the ones we've become familiar with.

Just think about it. If you had to pay to start a Facebook account would you have done it? Social media offered a way to interact with a platform or product without paying for it and we took the bait hook line and sinker. Now data is more valuable than oil and social media companies get paid in clicks not dollars. Clicks mined by our thumbs. We are only now realizing that we are keeping systems alive with what we thought was our own free will. The status quo has now begun its slow descent into the serfdom of techno-feudalism.

It's important going forward that we keep in mind how quickly this world is changing. The events that are reshaping our world are not just affecting our perception, they are also changing the rules to the game. It's like we're in a game of Quidditch when all we know is soccer and we can't imagine the game is played in the air on flying broomsticks because we've accepted the rules of gravity and refuse to break from them.

We must challenge Transhumanism and band together to meaningfully cri-

tique the world that we are being enticed into by the rich and powerful.

We must be mindful consumers.

We mustn't forget that a whole is only the sum of its parts and without the dollars or the clicks a system or corporation will cease to exist.

Last of all we can't forget what makes us human and the hopes and dreams we truly strive for. Going to Mars isn't going to save Earth it's going to let us continue to repeat the same mistake.

There is a thought experiment in philosophy known as The Ship of Theseus. The experiment is a way to examine how identity exists in relation to time. In Greek mythology there was a hero named Theseus who went on many adventures many of which were undertaken on a sailing vessel. The compounding wear of so many trips on this vessel required it to be repaired many times resulting in a slow but eventual replacement in every part of the ship. The experiment has us examine if the identity of Theseus's ship we attach to the vessel can retain its identity even when it has been completely physically transformed or renewed.

Evolution, like The Ship of Theseus, is strange. We are constantly updating our software and often question how much of a human tie we still hold with our ancestors who lived oh such different lives. I say it's okay to lose some nails and some color and maybe even the sails, but the motherboard must be salvaged and restored constantly with the utmost reverence and ritual. It is our duty to our own salvation, and it is our path to steering this ship of ambiguous wonder back onto the right course.

Opinion

Trump's tariff tumult

Attack on small businesses caused by trade policies

By QUINLAN COOKE
Opinion Editor

As new tariffs are being imposed and re-upped by the Trump administration, many small businesses are taking a hit and having to front hefty costs when it comes to manufacturing their product and having it sent to the U.S. to be distributed.

President Donald Trump has recently imposed tariffs on a countless number of countries, with the main target being China. This was done with the goal in mind of having more goods produced in the United States and to create more jobs; but this can take years to come into effect and might not end up working out. Many people are calling these tariffs and the reciprocals from other countries an all-out “trade-war”, these tariffs are not just going to affect the U.S. and countries they are directly doing trade with, but they will (at some point) affect trade across the globe.

As of April 11, 2025, the U.S. has placed a 125% tariff on Chinese goods, on top of a pre-existing 20% tariff, for a total of 145% on Chinese imports. Their tariffs have not affected goods coming into the U.S. that passed through customs before the tariffs were placed.

There are a lot of consumer concerns when it comes to these tariffs, many people fear that the cost of goods will rise astronomically, and that frequently exported goods from China like electronics and clothing will become more expensive and as a result, less accessible. Many people are anticipating a rise in inflation that they are not ready to face and likely will not be able to afford.

The people who fear the most about the effects of these tariffs are those

who own small businesses. Most small business owners who do not make their own goods have them made in factories overseas because of the level of professionalism and expertise in the fields of manufacturing. Those goods are then shipped to the U.S. for the business owners to sell, but the tariff on importing the commissioned goods will cause a large dent in profit that the business owners will have to face unless they place the burden of raising prices on their customers.

There have been complaints and concerns to be found all across social media from small business owners in the U.S. who have production based in a different country (namely, China). A good amount of small business owners have voiced that they might not be able to afford to purchase new shipments of their product because of the tariff uptick. Others have said that they won't be restocking because they would not be able to afford to do so without offsetting the cost by raising prices, and they do not want to betray customers like that.

Small businesses account for around 50% of the private-sector employment in the U.S., and if these businesses can no longer afford to restock their goods, many people are either going to lose their jobs or take a pay-cut when they are doing the same amount of work they were doing before. Small businesses will not be able to handle these tariffs without burdening either employees or customers. Larger businesses and companies have more to fall back on and will be able to more easily stomach the cost of these tariffs, which will only help grow their monopolies when some small businesses eventually tank.



Even small businesses who want to keep supplying customers and can afford to move their production to the U.S. will have to wait a long time, production can not be started immediately and there will be a competition for space from other small businesses who are trying to do the same things. Small businesses usually do not have this sort of time, even a short pause can cause a loss in sales, savings, and potentially even shrink a customer base.

Things right now are unreliable for small businesses owners, they do not know if or when they are going to get their product, they do not know how much it is going to cost to get their products into the US, and they do not know if their pricing can continue to stay the same, and if those potential changes will lessen customer base and sales (despite a potential high price).

Consumers are even more likely to be weary when it comes to their purchases because of fear of an impending recession.

If small businesses are forced to start raising prices, consumers are going to be skittish when it comes to committing to a purchase from them. Small business owners do not know what to expect when it comes to their future income and potential customers, and with Trump frequently changing the terms of his imposed tariffs, they do not know how to predict their business model and profit margins.

Tariffs are going to affect both small business owners and consumers, and not in a positive manner.

There is no way to gauge how small business owners are going to cope and if the brunt of the burden will be on the employers or consumers, or even if small business owners will be able to continue with their businesses.

Small businesses do not have the same financial liberties as larger ones and these tariffs can reasonably wipe some of these businesses out in a way that they will never recover from.

Opinion

Letter to the Editor: Latino Recognition Initiative

A national public awareness campaign

BY EDUARDO CRESPO

Lawrence, Mass., and Deerfield Beach, Florida

My name is Eduardo Crespo. I am a naturalized Latino U.S. citizen who immigrated from Guayaquil, Ecuador, to Lawrence, MA during my high school years. I graduated from Northern Essex Community College with an AA degree and was recognized as one of the 40 Most Successful Graduates during the celebration of the college's 40th anniversary.

In 2007, Eduardo founded and is the CEO of Hispanic Market Solution (HMS), a multilingual and multicultural marketing and public relations agency based in Lawrence, MA.

I am asking the Northern Essex Community College students, faculty, and administration to raise their voices



Eduardo Crespo

to amplify our Latino Recognition Initiative, LARI, a national public awareness campaign to highlight Latinos' contributions to the U.S. economy, the labor force, and society.

During these uncertain and turbulent times, we must minimize "by the will

of the people and the power of the market" the negativity and persecution that is impacting our Latino and immigrant communities. We are being denigrated by media outlets' messages portraying Latinos as a detrimental sector of the population, such as drug traffickers, rapists, cheaters, and abusing the system. It reminds me of the 2/28/12 Boston magazine article that called Lawrence, MA, with an 82% Latino population, "The City of the Damned." I believe that silence is complicity and a sign of weakness.

This nonpolitical progressive national public awareness campaign aims to create and disseminate content about the important role of Spanish-speaking people in the history of our country, plus their important contribution to its greatness.

The messaging will be through pre-

sentations, articles, TV, radio shows, digital podcasts, print media articles, and social media messages. The in-person or virtual venues are roundtables, events at chambers of commerce, professional and business associations, forums, conferences, and conventions. We must demonstrate how Latinos have become critically important to our society.

All who believe that Latinos are being unfairly targeted should join this campaign. Thus far, we have received ample support from local, regional, and national media outlets plus numerous business associations, colleges, and community groups.

For ideas, resources, interviews, and questions about the LARI national campaign, contact Eduardo Crespo at ecrespo@hispanicmarketsolution.com. I thank you for your consideration.

Title IX ruling will come at a cost

BY HARRY WAKEFIELD

News Editor

The NECC coordinators of Human Resources, Labor Relations, and Affirmative Action released a college-wide statement via email in March, detailing the intent of NECC to comply with executive orders and recent court rulings on the enforcement of Title IX in institutions of higher education nation-wide.

In the early afternoon of March 20, coordinating staff members Liz Trelegan, Maxine Rice, and Maxanne Holman Stocks notified the NECC community of updates to the institution's Title IX enforcement policy, in which the three specified that the college will be rolling back recent 2024 updates in fa-

vor of the older 2020 policy framework in light of "a recent court ruling."

When asked to further clarify the decision of the college to submit to the whims of the Trump administration, Trelegan wrote that both "the January 9, 2025 decision of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky (State of Tennessee v. Cardona) vacating the 2024 Title IX Final Rule" and the "Dear Colleague Letter from the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights" led the department to release a statement informing students and faculty of the civil protections rollbacks.

Rolling back the 2024 framework in favor of the older variation will come

at a cost to all members of the NECC community. Though Trelegan's memo fails to clarify the guidelines being revoked, returning to the 2020 Title IX regulations will remove recently amended language expanding the definition of 'Sex Discrimination' to include discrimination based upon individuals' gender identities and sexual orientation. Not only will this permit harassment, hate, and discriminatory acts against non-heterosexual, non-cisgender individuals in higher education, it will actively shield the institutions and individuals who perpetrate identity-based discrimination.

As of right now it is unclear how the NECC Administration plans to main-

tain and encourage a safe, supportive, and hospitable learning and social environment for NECC's queer population. An excerpt taken from the bottom of the memo reads "NECC remains committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment, ensuring that all members of our community are protected from discrimination." Despite its platitudes, the team in charge of coordinating the implementation of the new Title IX rollbacks has not yet announced how it plans to act on their statement.

The NECC GSA is also yet to comment on the memo as it presently faces concerns over membership, recruiting, and organizing action.

Arts & Entertainment

Battle of the Bands, continued from Page 1

year. “They are always a favorite; they are a crowd favorite and they are one of my favorites. People get up and dance,” said Callahan.

This year the first-place winner was a “wonderful band” called Dog 8 dog. “They just are very energetic, and their music is just powerful and fun,” said Callahan. Second place went to Krankewagen. They are another band that people got hyped with.

There were more bands participating this year, such as No Wave Charles and Moonlight Bandits. “I think the interest is growing. Probably the reputation of the Battle of the Bands is expanding in the community. We had five bands performing original songs for the most part, a few covers here and there which were fun, and just the goodwill and the generosity of spirit of all the musicians supporting each other. The crowd supported our students and local musicians. It’s really beautiful to see,” said Callahan.

Not only there were music students attending, Digital Photography students were assigned to take pictures of the event by their professor, Alex Bordino.

Battle of the Bands brought around

70 people together around music, and this event was organized by music professor Alisa Bucchiere.

Dean Callahan remarked on Bucchiere’s hard work, “I’m so grateful to professor Alisa Bucchiere for conceiving the idea and executing this amazing Battle of the Bands. That’s one of my favorite events of the year and it’s wonderful for the music associate’s degree program.”

Each band played between five or six songs. The members of the bands in order of appearance were:

No Wave Charles: Henry Natchamie, Vocals/Guitar.

Krankewagen: Paul Fry, vocals/guitar; Caleb Dyer, keys/vocals; Chris Drew, bass; Santino DeMonte, drums.

Neck Dive: Cade Dones, vocals/guitar; Luke Waites, guitar/vocals; Soph Madera, bass/vocals; Jackson Page, drums.

Dog 8 Dog: Meg Collins, vocals/guitar; Brad DiPalma, guitar; Sarah Bird, keys/vocals; Chris Drew, bass; Santino DeMonte, drums.

Moonlight Bandits: Sandy Lincoln, vocals/guitar; James Higgins, keys/vocals; Chris Drew, bass; Santino DeMonte drums.



Photo by Caden Roberge

Guitarist of the first place band Dog 8 Dog



Photo by Caden Roberge

Second place winner band Krankewagen



Photo by Caden Roberge

Musicians, judges and faculty posing at the end of the event

Arts and Entertainment

Battle of the Bands



Photo by Amaely Hussein

Henry Nachamie vocals/guitar from No Wave Charles



Photo by Amaely Hussein

Members of Moonlight Bandits



Photo by Elis Keogh

Keyboard and vocals/guitar players of Krankewagen



Photo by Amaely Hussein

Vocalist and guitarist of Neck Dive

Features

NECC's budding cannabis courses

College offers certificates focused on jobs in the industry

By BAILEY ORIO
Features Editor

Since its legalization in 2016, following the decriminalization of cannabis in 2008, Massachusetts has emerged as a leader in the recreational cannabis sector, becoming the 18th state in the nation to embrace this progressive change.

The legalization has not only reshaped public perceptions of cannabis but has also ushered in numerous benefits for residents, particularly in terms of job creation and economic growth.

A recent study from the Leafly Jobs Report highlights a remarkable 27% increase in cannabis job growth across states where cannabis has been legalized.

As of February 2023, Massachusetts reported approximately 28,000 cannabis-related jobs, underscoring the industry's rapid expansion.

This burgeoning market presents a wealth of career opportunities, making it an exciting time for those looking to enter the field.

Recognizing the need for skilled professionals, Northern Essex Community College (NECC) has stepped up by offering three specialized certificate programs aimed at equipping aspiring cannabis industry workers with the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

These online programs cater to various aspects of the cannabis supply chain, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the diverse roles within the industry.

One of the flagship offerings is the Cultivation Specialist Certificate Taught by industry experts, this program provides a comprehensive under-

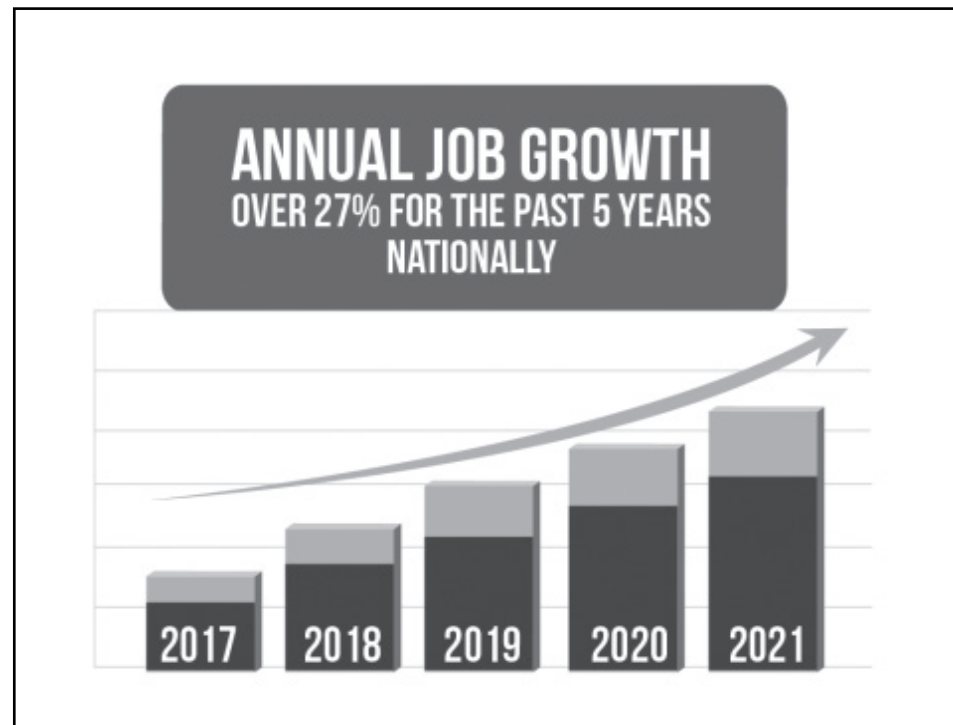


Photo courtesy of cannabis.necc.edu

A graph shows the annual job growth in the cannabis industry.

standing of cannabis cultivation, covering essential skills for both indoor and outdoor growing operations.

Graduates earn an official Cannabis Cultivation Specialist Certificate backed by the GF Institute, a recognition that opens doors to employment opportunities within the thriving cannabis market.

The GF Institute Employer Network connects graduates with an array of cannabis companies eager to hire individuals with this specialized education.

Andrew M., a recent graduate, shared, "Not even two weeks after starting the courses, I already had a job lined up because I was taking courses and showing the initiative."

According to the NECC website

Such testimonials reflect the program's effectiveness in facilitating swift job placements.

NECC also offers a Cannabis Retail Specialist Certificate, designed to equip students with the skills needed to thrive in the retail cannabis environment.

This course emphasizes product knowledge and customer engagement, essential for providing top-notch service in a competitive landscape.

Graduates receive a Cannabis Retail Specialist Certificate, also backed by the GF Institute, ensuring they are recognized as qualified professionals in the field.

For those interested in the production side, the Cannabis Extraction and Product Development Specialist Program

offers in-depth training on developing and manufacturing cannabis products.

Students learn safe and effective extraction methods and gain insights into various cannabis-infused product types and business models within the cannabis manufacturing sector.

This program also culminates in a certificate recognized by the GF Institute, further enhancing graduates' employability in a rapidly evolving industry.

The cannabis industry's growth in Massachusetts has not only transformed the job market but has also provided individuals with access to credible cannabis education that was previously lacking.

As Brittany N., another satisfied student, remarked, "Taking this program has changed my life."

"I've always known cannabis is my calling; I just didn't have access to credible cannabis education." According to the NECC website

In conclusion, the recreational cannabis industry in Massachusetts is not only a vibrant sector of the economy but also a catalyst for personal and professional growth for many residents. With educational institutions like

Northern Essex Community College is leading the way in providing relevant training and resources, the future looks promising for those eager to embark on a career in this dynamic field.

The ripple effects of cannabis legalization continue to benefit the community, creating opportunities for economic advancement and individual empowerment.

For more information about these offered courses

<https://cannabis.necc.edu/>

News

Students share views at open forum

By HARRY WAKEFIELD
News Editor

Monday afternoon proved fruitful for members of the Student Affairs Committee, as they held an open student forum where members of both campuses shared their experiences, questions, and concerns with the current state of Northern Essex Community College in

a town-hall style online meeting.

Hosted on the afternoon of April 7 via Zoom by Professor Meredith Gunning and Mary Hopwood, who are the Chair and Student Representative of the NECC Student Affairs Committee, the forum covered topics such as students' suggestions for the usage of underutilized spaces and struggles with

information transparency and financial aid, along with revelations about the future of NECC's student advising programs that could have an impact on the workload and efficacy of advisors.

The forum began at 2:30, with Gunning opening the floor to students to share their complaints and ideas for improvement to NECC as an institution.

"We try to act as a conduit for student voices," said Gunning, referencing her role in the Student Affairs Committee and framing their objective as being the 'messenger' between students and the administration.

A student member of the Global Politics Club took the opportunity to comment on the lack of student-exclusive spaces on both campuses. "I would like to see a student lounge... a place to be with other students and community."

When asked to elaborate by Gunning, the student mentioned their dissatisfaction with the current third spaces provided on campus.

"We have a student center, but I feel that there's no place for me to be a student there. I think they should rename it the Student Resource Center."

Pedro Rentas, the current President of NECC's Student Government Association followed with anecdotes about his experiences dealing with retrieving information over the phone. "I have had experience with impatient or difficult service over the phone trying to get information... with financial aid, I had mistaken some information and I was not treated well. If there was another community college closer [to me], I would rather go to that community college."

Rentas' qualms with financial aid services were vindicated by another

student present. "I got a scholarship for \$1,500 for photography, and financial aid took it away... I believe every facet of transparency should be reexamined."

The student spoke on condition of anonymity, mentioning they had been retaliated against in the past for raising similar issues.

On a higher note, student appreciation for NECC's many educators could not have been stressed in a more thorough fashion.

"There's a lot of involvement from the educators, it really feels like they want to help students," said Hopwood, who's praise was echoed by Rentas, saying "I would like to see educators and professors see more recognition for the help and support they provide."

The final question asked attending students to provide insight into their experiences with NECC's student portal software, known as Blackboard.

While Blackboard would see praise for its ease of use, Hopwood said "It would be really beneficial if faculty could all use it (Blackboard) the same way... If there was more uniformity in the way Blackboard was used it would be really beneficial to the student body."

The student forum was wrapped up by an announcement regarding changes to the student advising programs on both the Lawrence and Haverhill campuses.

"Student advising will be concentrated into one location on each campus... these changes will be starting around the end of the current spring semester," said Gunning.

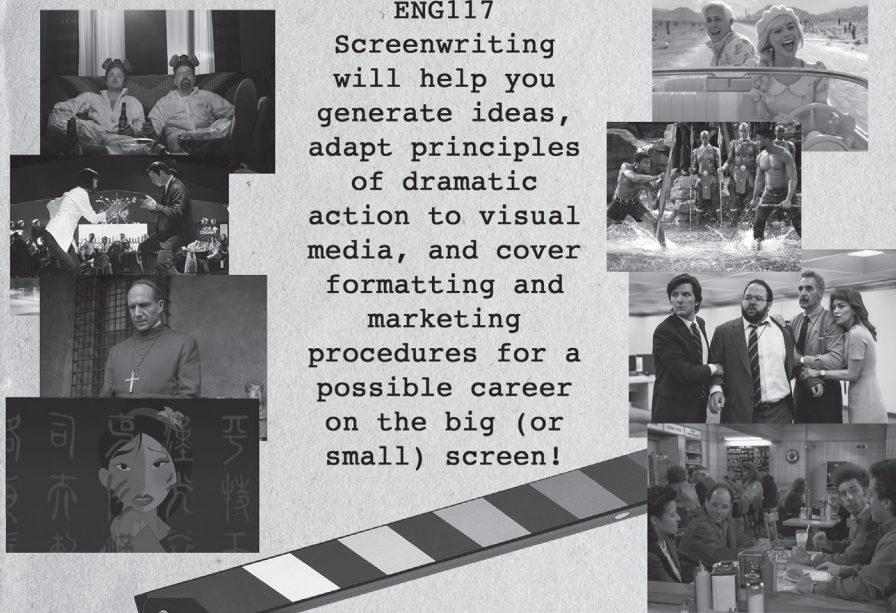
Not much else is known aside from the Haverhill campus' centralized advising location, which will be the second floor of the student center.

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Professor Ginger Hurajt
Fall 2025

APPROVED
By NECC
Student Life

Campus Life Friends and foes

Connecting on a commuter campus post-pandemic

By **ROWAN ROCKWELL**
Campus Life Editor

To write stories about Campus Life at Northern Essex is like writing about what's going on in your neighbors' houses from the perspective of the street.

You've got to peek into windows and behind closed doors where quiet conversations connect through cups on invisible strings.

There's an elephant on campus with an Achilles Heel, crouching on the school's left shoulder, whispering through empty hallways, student lounges and faculty boardrooms, bouncing off the concrete crevices of unoccupied enclaves of the campus's perimeter saying, "Dooo weee actuallyyy have a Campus Lifeeeee?"

"When I came here, I was like, 'Theres not a lot happening,'" said Rhea Clarke a 21-year-old Electrical Engineering major at Northern Essex Community College. Rhea, who came to NECC from Worcester Polytechnic Institute the year before, emphasized the contrast in social bustle between the two campuses.

Although the connections you can

find at a four-year school with dorms simply doesn't compare with the social landscape of NECC Rhea claims it's not completely barren. Rhea explained she's found friendships in unlikely places, one of them being the tutoring center.

"I didn't know it even existed!" she said of the tutoring center. "It's not really a social location, but I've hung out there some. I met some people and that's been cool, which I was really surprised by."

Jordan Marcelin a 19-year-old Business major at NECC echoed much of what Clarke had to say about the change in pace he experienced coming to NECC from a larger, more active school -- in his case UMass Boston.

"It's kind of weird over here, not in a bad way but I'm just used to UMass Boston being so much bigger. Over here it just feels distant."

Location is one thing, but I wanted to know more about how Jordan felt about socializing on campus and in turn how it relates to his own social life.

Although I often see Jordan hanging out in the hallways of Building C, often chatting with other students, when I asked him about his friends he said

"I'm kind of the person who doesn't talk much, I just do school and head home."

A common thread between Rhea and Jordan's thoughts about social life both on and off campus had to do with the ripple many people their age still feel about the COVID-19 Pandemic along with the level of exposure to social media and digital entertainment that accompanied it.

"To me ever since COVID [it] was kind of hard to make friends. There's still a little mix of that 'pandemic syndrome' in there. Some people are still kind of quiet cuz they're used to having their mask on and being behind a screen. When you're outdoors you're still a little nervous," said Jordan. "It still lingers around."

He continued, expressing unease with how often his time was consumed by being on his phone.

"I think about how life used to be 'back then'[when people were on their phones less]. I remember I saw a couple videos of a high school class from 2010 or 2015, everybody was fun, having fun, fun without phones. It was different. Now everybody's on their phone, you walk everywhere people are just

looking down at their phone. You kind of feel like you're trapped in a system."

People who have lived half their lives before the pandemic occurred may not even consider the social/emotional impact waged on late members of Gen Z and incoming Gen Alpha. They are forming their connections, building their hopes and dreams in a much lonelier world.

I asked Rhea if she thought things felt lonelier after the pandemic, to which she replied, "Oh yeah."

"I don't do well online," she continued. Not just doing school online but maintaining friendships online. "When I see people and meet people in person it's a lot easier to connect."

Rhea touches on a prominent and paradoxical effect that social media can have. Although it was supposedly created with the intention of connecting more people than ever before, in many ways has done the opposite.

A hopeful note arose when Rhea looked up at someone passing by in the hall.

"Hey," she said to the student in passing.

"Friend?" I asked.

"Friend."

Speechapalooza returns soon

By **PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CLASS**

The Principles of Public Relations class is proud to announce Speechapalooza 2025. Speechapalooza is a Northern Essex event celebrating free speech, where student participants will have an opportunity to present speeches on whatever topics they want.

The event will take place on April 24th

from 12:30 PM, until 2:30 PM in Lecture Hall A in the C Building on the Haverhill campus.

Speechapalooza started in 2015. It is always planned and run by the students in the Principles of Public Relations Class.

The beauty of this event is that it allows students to express themselves and their interests freely. We are fostering community, connection, and conversation.

"This is a great event because it allows us to celebrate student voices. It can be thought-provoking and inspiring to hear students' perspectives. Speechapalooza is also a wonderful hands-on learning opportunity for the Public Relations students, who get to organize, promote, and host the event," says Professor Mary Jo Shafer, who currently teaches the Principles of Public Relations class.

Free pizza will be provided to all participants and attendees.

There will also be prizes for stand-out participants.

For more information, please contact the Public Relations class at speechnecc@gmail.com or Professor Shafer at mshafer@necc.mass.edu.

Sports

Americans dominate Figure Skating Championships

By **TRISTAN TAYLOR**
Features Editor

The 2025 World Figure Skating Championships were held at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts from March 26 through March 30. The event, sanctioned by the International Skating Union (ISU) determined the entry quotas for the 2026 Championships (in which the location has not been announced) and the 2026 Winter Olympics (to be held in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy).

The event was held in Boston at a time when the sport needed something to focus on. Just under two months prior, American Airlines Flight 5342 collided with a United States Army helicopter over the Potomac River, leaving no survivors on either aircraft. Among those on the American Airlines flight were eleven upcoming skaters, some of whom who were considered hopeful competitors for the 2030 Olympics, as well as four coaches. Two of the coaches (Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov), were the parents of skater Maxim Naumov, who stayed behind in Wichita and missed the flight. The victims were part of the Skating Club of Boston and had been preparing to land in D.C.

The men's event was highly contested, with upcoming American superstar Ilia Malinin, known for his backflips on ice, beating 38 other skaters to win his second gold medal, including upcoming skating phenom Mikhail Shaidorov (of Kazakhstan), two time Olympic silver medalist Yuma Kagiyama (of Japan), and reigning bronze medalist Adam Siao Him Fa (of France). Cha Jun-hwan became the highest placing South Korean skater of all time with a seventh place finish, while two time Olympian Jason Brown finished eighth.

The women's event was also fierce,

with American skater Alysa Liu winning the gold medal, making a dramatic comeback to the sport after two seasons off the ice, unseating reigning gold medalist Kaori Sakamoto (of Japan) while also beating upcoming star Mone Chiba (also of Japan), reigning silver medalist Isabeau Levito (of the United States), and social media favorite Amber Glenn (also of the United States). Reigning bronze medalist Kim Chae-yeon (of South Korea) placed tenth in the event.

While the fan favorites Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara (of Japan) won the pair skating event, they had to beat reigning champions Deanna Stellato-Dudek and Maxime Deschamps (of Canada) to do so. A difference of 20.03 points was able to prevent the Canadian pair from taking the gold again, and they ended up in fifth place. Miura and Kihara narrowly beat out reigning bronze medalists Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin (of Germany) for the gold.

The ice dancing event had two of the three medaling pairs from last year's championships on the podium again this year, with American pair Madison Chock and Evan Bates retaining the gold medal position, while Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier (of Canada) were able to move up from bronze to silver. The British pair consisting of Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson took home the bronze, while the reigning silver medalists Charlene Guignard and Marco Fabbri (of Italy) finished in fourth.

After the competition came the Exhibition event, where notable skaters showed off their talents in a non-competitive situation. Maxim Naumov, who did not compete in the tournament, participated in the exhibition, earning a standing ovation from the crowd at TD Garden. Mikhail Shaidorov performed

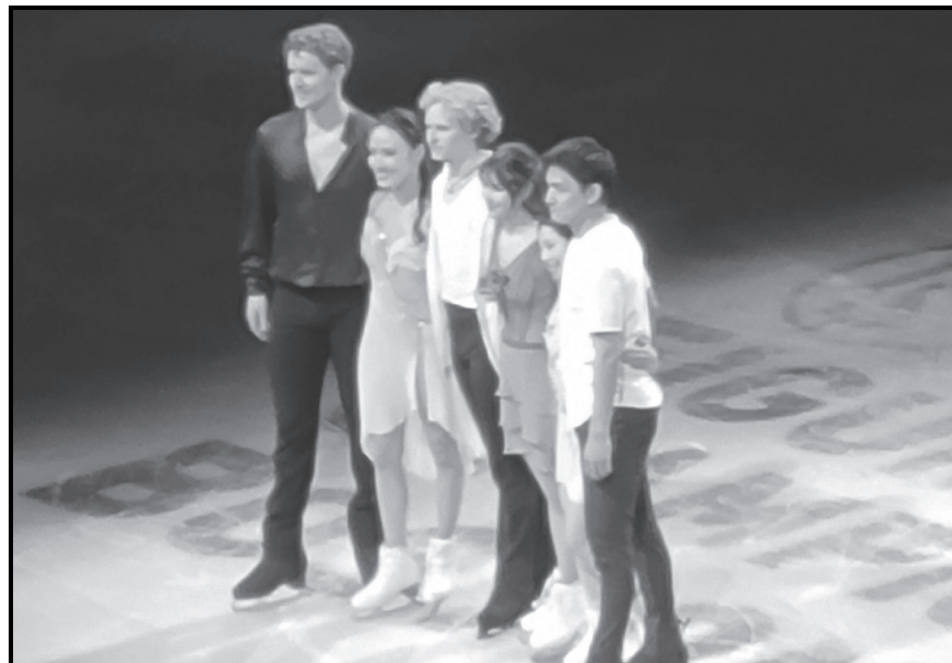


Photo by Lindsey Dionne

From left to right: Evan Bates, Madison Chock, Ilia Malinin, Alysa Liu, Riku Miura, and Ryuichi Kihara.

a program inspired by Kung Fu Panda, while Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson performed a Rocky-themed program. With help from other skaters, Estonian skater Niina Petrokina skated to "Cell Block Tango", which also earned a standing ovation. Amber Glenn's program to "Hot To Go" by Chappell Roan included the viral dance performed many times on the social media platform TikTok, while Ilia Malinin's program, dedicated to the victims of American Airlines Flight 5342, was filled with emotion. At the end of the exhibition, Malinin and Adam Siao Him Fa did backflips on the ice at the same time, prompting cheers from the audience.

In all, the 2025 World Figure Skating Championships showcased the stars of the sport. While the sport's veterans were able to continue making names for themselves, it allowed newer stars to break into the scene as well.

Editor's Note: Tristan Taylor attended the Championships in Boston so was able to observe the competition firsthand.



Photo by Lindsey Dionne

Adam Siao Him Fa.

Sports

Catching up on NECC basketball

How did our teams do?

By **MARTHY MARTINEZ**
Sports Editor

As the Spring semester keeps flying by (we're already in April?!), there has been one thing keeping me in deep thoughts: March Madness (Walter Clayton might be the greatest college basketball player of all time), but more or less basketball teams in the spring (NBA, college, etc). Due to the intensity of the tournament and its successes, hardships, and inspiring stories, it has made me think about how our college's basketball teams have been doing in this "contested" environment (Get it?).

My favorite sport: basketball. In my previous article, I detailed the successes of both the men's and women's basketball teams here at Northern Es-

sex, mainly discussing pivotal players such as Rhaelyn Gutierrez (women's) and Alejandro Delgado (men's). However, this was prior to their postseason results.

In terms of the men's team, detailed with various articles by their page on the NECC Athletics website, it looks to be that they had nothing but success after success. In their region, they managed to "three-peat" (win three of something in a row) and received the #8 seed in the NJCAA DIII national tournament. However, in their first game against #9-seeded Dallas-Richland, they unfortunately bit the bullet, losing a close game at 73-68. After that, they played one more game against Dallas-Mountain View, winning the contest and cap-

ping off their season with a phenomenal record of 29-4. The aforementioned Delgado managed to secure an All-Region 21 first-team selection, while Javien Kirmil, another player I mentioned in my previous article, received a second-team selection.

On the women's side, they capped off their season with only a record of 10-12, highlighted by multiple cancelled games and a catastrophic loss in the Region 21 semifinals against Community College of Rhode Island by a score of 94-52. On the bright side, though, the aforementioned Rhaelyn Gutierrez, who I like to comment on as a "freshman phenom", was recognized with an All-Region 21 first-team selection, ending her freshman year campaign aver-

aging 27.9 points-per-game, which was **SECOND** in the **NATION**. To be able to accomplish a feat that large while just being a freshman is insane, and I can definitely assume that there are some four-year colleges and universities that may want to have Gutierrez on their team. Mirelys Morales, who I also previously talked about, was also recognized with a second-team selection, completing her season while averaging a double-double.

Although there may be no 2024-25 championship banner plastered on the walls of the Northern Essex basketball court, what this season established for the men's and women's teams can be thought of in one, singular word: **determination**.

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Mary Jo Shafer

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Dean, Liberal Arts Division
acallahan@necc.mass.edu



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Sports

Patriots: Water under the bridge

BY COREY HARDING
Sports Editor

Following an already electrifying free agency period, the Patriots front office made one more big signing, a move many did not see coming. The Patriots signed wide receiver, Stefon Diggs to a three-year deal worth sixty-nine-million-dollar contract. The reason why this deal was a shock to most fans around the league was because of two factors, Stefon Diggs had previously played for New England's rival, the Buffalo Bills. Twice a season, Diggs would put up big numbers against New England's defense, and he would often playfully taunt the opposing fans or oppos-

ing players. Secondly, last season, Diggs tore his ACL in late October while playing for the Houston Texans- requesting a trade out of Buffalo the previous spring. The deal from New England does pose a big risk, but if New England can get even a fraction of Stefon Diggs at his best, the deal would be worth it tenfold. Despite the seemingly mutual hatred between New England and Stefon Diggs, it seems like everything is patched up, the fans welcomed Stefon in with open arms, and everybody is ready to get to work, contribute to big things next season, and most importantly, everybody gets a clean slate- including Stefon Diggs.

The question on everyone's mind is which jersey number will Stefon Diggs choose? His previous numbers, 1, & 14 are taken by wide receiver, Ja'Lynn Polk, and newly signed linebacker, Robert Spillane. After longtime defensive captain, Ja'Whaun Bentley was released, the number 8 became available. Regardless of which number Diggs chooses, fans of New England should be excited and ready for a highly anticipated season in September!

Most recently on April 1st, Owner Robert Kraft announced that legendary head coach, Bill Parcells will be joining the Patriots hall of fame this summer.

This announcement came as a surprise to many as for years, the Kraft family & Parcells had a big falling out in 1996 following Super Bowl 31, in a losing effort against the Green Bay Packers. The rift between Kraft & Parcells had been building for a long time, and in the buildup to Super Bowl 31, it became clear that the two would part ways following the Super Bowl, regardless of the outcome. Ultimately it appears that no matter what happened in the past, be it between Kraft & Parcells, or Stefon Diggs & the Patriots, every side has made amends and are looking ahead to the future and beyond.



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Haverhill Campus TC-103

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NECC's Principles of Public Relations Class Presents

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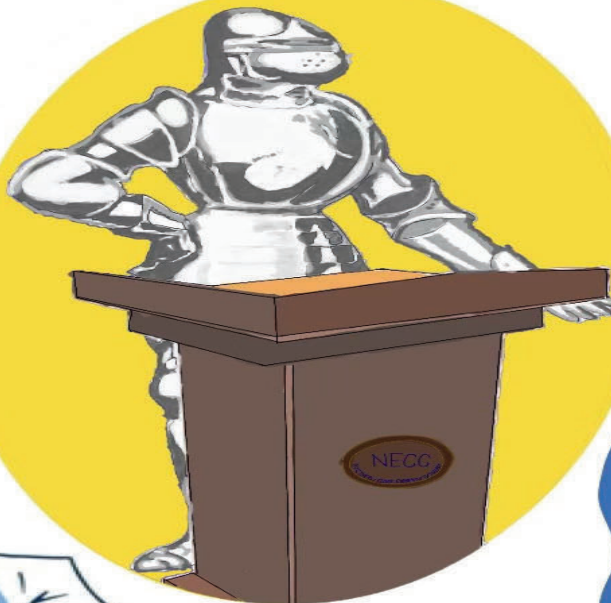
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