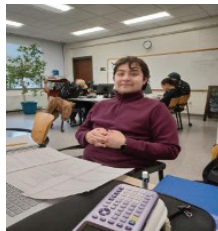




NECC Knight comic

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Students sharing traditions

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Knights soccer team excels

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Observer

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

Fall 2025 • Volume 90 • Issue Number 4 • Dec. 4, 2025

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Taste of culture

BY LIDIA RAMIREZ
Editor-in-Chief

Northern Essex Community College recently welcomed staff and students to gather for a memorable event of acknowledging and sharing different international foods and music from different cultures.

International Flag & Food Fest, was held on the second floor of El Helfni Building in Lawrence Campus on November 18 from noon to 2 p.m. The event was hosted through a collaboration of some of the NECC staff including Maria Hernandez from the International Admissions, Giselle Peguero from the Community Relations department, Allison Gagne from Auxiliary Services, and Naydeen Gonzalez-De Jesus, vice president

Continued on Page 8



Photo by Nicole D Sabando

NECC staff and students enjoying different cultural foods.

What's Happening?

Poppin' Chats with Student Life – Haverhill
Dec. 5, 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Take a break, grab some popcorn, and connect with Student Life! Poppin'

Merrimack College Campus Transfer Visits:
Dec. 8, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Lawrence Campus
El-Hefni building lobby

Haverhill Visits: Tuesday, Dec. 9, C (Spurk) Building lobby, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Check calendar events:
nec.mass.edu/event

How to find security around each campus:

Haverhill Campus
100 Elliott St., Spurk 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

Mentors would benefit students

By **LIDIA RAMIREZ**
Editor-in-Chief

Visiting tutors are on the average students to do list. Tutoring comes in handy when subjects can become diffi-

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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
1	Oct. 9	Oct. 2
2	Oct. 30	Oct. 23
3	Nov. 20	Nov. 13
4	Dec. 4	Nov. 28

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.

cult to understand or when assignments or homework that must meet specific requirements are a little more complex than expected. The NECC's tutoring centers at both campuses in Lawrence and Haverhill do provide free services for all students during the semesters.

It is a good idea for students to take advantage of the one-on-one in-person help. Also available for students on Blackboard is ThinkingStorm, an academic support program that provides free online access to live, one-on-one assistance from trained and qualified tutors.

This is an easier

service to use as it simply requires the student to submit their work and within 24 hours a tutor will review it and send it back to them.

This online tutoring service may be more convenient for many students who are taking online or hybrid classes.

The tutoring center has both staff tutors and peer tutors, being an academic support system by not just professional teachers or advisors but also encouraging student-to-student help. While many students take up the opportunity of this free service in-person or online when they can, it doesn't mean that all students have the time for in-person help.

Some students may have limited access to the 24-hour virtual service due to non-sufficient access to internet outside of campus or at home. Having a time-management list and priority list is what every student needs in order to set their main tasks aside and get to them all in time, this can be beneficial in helping students get to other important things they should do aside from

homework and studying, like stopping by the tutor center for an hour or more. A lot of times students may prioritize the wrong or less important things like hanging out with friends or watching their favorite TV show.

Studies have shown that making better decisions like substituting events or chores with homework and studying or sacrificing designated time for oneself or time for having fun with setting time to better one's academic status.

Though some students may already be helping others through tutoring, I believe that a mentorship for all programs could be a big help in getting students on track and meeting their needs.

The college only has so many counselors and there aren't enough advisors to attend to the many students that need to speak with or meet with them daily. If the college can come up with a program that allows for staff and students to pair up and mentor other students, I think it would really benefit and motivate students!

Getting ready for finals

Comic by Linda Valenzuela Guzman



Northern Essex Community College is getting ready for finals week!

It's the end of the Fall 2025 semester with students preparing for finals and checking to make sure they have turned everything in.

Opinion

On shame and guilt

BY DERMOT LUDDY

Assistant Director for Academic Support, SOAR Program

“I wouldn’t want my money to go toward perpetuation of privilege,” declared Larry Summers, speaking to students at Northern Essex Community College on October 2, 2019, less than two months after the death of his alleged “wingman,” Jeffrey Epstein.

The recent release of a trove of emails from the Epstein estate provides us with an instructive opportunity to reflect on the relationship between guilt, embarrassment, and shame.

We should be grateful to the former Harvard president for such a clear illustration.

In 1993, philosopher Bernard Williams provided a major reflection on ancient Greek ethics, and he made a number of insightful observations regarding shame.

First, while guilt is related to violations of moral rules and breaches of moral codes through specific actions, shame is concerned with a failure of the self, from the perspective of some imagined or real internal spectator.

Second, shame prompts one to want to hide or withdraw, due to a sense of unworthiness. Simultaneously, it provides an opportunity and, ideally, an aspiration to improve oneself.

Third, shame is not about society’s standards; it is self-imposed, even if learned through our upbringing and socialization.

Finally, guilt does not penetrate the self as deeply as shame. Shame asks “What sort of person am I?” and when the answer is unsavory and distasteful to the subject, a profound disconnect between how one would like to see

oneself, and the person one actually is ensues. Guilt, on the other hand, is the reaction to “What ought I to do?” and finding that one does not attain the moral standards that society or oneself has set. The response to this guilt is often just to do better in future.

The reason why Summers’ situation is illustrative is because he has engaged in actions that are embarrassing and ought to elicit guilt on his part, and as a person he ought to feel shame, but not for the same reasons. In 2006 Summers was forced to resign from the presidency of Harvard following statements that he speculated that women were innately inferior to men in the realm of science and mathematics, thereby accounting for their underrepresentation in those professions. For most people, this would have been a deeply embarrassing moment in a career, and one that might prompt some reflection and reconsideration of such views. However, the recent emails and text messages reveal a Summers who joked about women’s intelligence and complained about excessive penalties for men who hit on women in the workplace. This demonstrates that whatever social penalties Summers had experienced for voicing his views, it apparently did not rise to the level of guilt that might have prompted deep introspection and a revision of his attitudes. I speculate that

“One’s actions might prompt one to feel guilty, shame should only follow a self assessment that one is decidedly not the person that one had believed oneself to be. And shame should not need public revelation to prick the thick skin of privilege and superiority.”

the current, self-inflicted, situation that Summers finds himself in is embarrassing also. He ought to feel guilty that he was seeking “dating” advice from a notoriously convicted sex offender so that he might be able to hook up with a woman he described as his mentee. No amount of large dollar donations that he might have solicited from Epstein could erase the embarrassment that this episode causes Summers’ wife, whose name has been dragged into every news article on the subject.

Summers has declared “I have great regrets in my life. As I’ve said before, my association with Jeffrey Epstein was a major error of judgement.” This error of judgement persisted up to the day before Epstein was arrested on July 6, 2019. This week he confessed, “I am deeply ashamed of my actions and recognize the pain they have caused. I take full responsibility for my misguided decision to continue communicating with Mr Epstein.”

Summers is making a category mistake here, but obviously that is the least of his offences. One’s actions might prompt one to feel guilty, shame should only follow a self assessment that one is decidedly not the person that one had believed oneself to be. And shame should not need public revelation to prick the thick skin of privilege and superiority. A pre-condition for shame is

that internal spectator who recognizes a disconnect between who one sees oneself as, and who one actually is. At no point up to this week did anything happen to suggest that Lawrence Summers experienced shame.

If Summers were truly ashamed of his association with Epstein, he would have realized that this day of reckoning was inevitable.

He would have unwound his associations with the corporate boards and educational institutions that are now implicated in the revelations.

Unless his fellow directors and board members were aware of Summers’ entanglements with Epstein, the names of Yale University’s Budget Lab, the Center for American Progress, Harvard University, The New York Times, OpenAI and countless other entities should not arise in the week’s stories. But Summers doesn’t have the moral virtues to appreciate the effect of his actions on others, and was content to derive all the benefits that accrue to someone invited to the corporate boards of some of the most prestigious institutions in the country. He could certainly have spared the students of Northern Essex Community College the experience of listening to the hypocrisy of Epstein’s wingman pontificating on the perpetuation of privilege.

Opinion

Looking forward to theater production

By BAILEY ORIO
Opinion Editor

NECC Theater will be taking on *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner.

To say I'm excited is an understatement.

NECC is a multiple award winning theater program and I can not wait to see how

they create this production.

Angels in America is a Pulitzer Prize winning play about the 1980s AIDS crisis, in New York City.

This play explores themes of love, identity, politics and religion through the lives of several different characters.

The story focuses on a gay couple

where one of the partners has AIDS, and a Mormon couple where the husband is a closeted homosexual, all set against the social and political turmoil.

The play tackles difficult social issues with humor and drama.

I am looking forward to seeing this production take place and seeing where

NECC Theater takes it.

If there is any program that can take a production that asks difficult questions about who we are, our fears and what we hope for, I truly believe that it's going to be amazing.

Invest in your career this winter

By KATIE YEATON-HROMADA
Coordinator for Career Services

Congratulations – you made it to the end of the semester! Whether you're starting a winter class, working, prepping for spring semester, or doing a bit of everything, now's a great time to invest in your future. We've pulled together some career resources you can start using right away. Pick one that speaks to you to get started!

Career Exploration

- What Can I Do With This Major? is a website featuring 100 major profiles with info on common career paths, types of employers that hire in the field, and strategies to maximize

opportunities.

- Visit: <https://www.necc.mass.edu/academics/what-can-i-do-with-this-major/>

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – Occupational Outlook Handbook is the government's premier source of career guidance featuring information on hundreds of occupations.

- Visit: <https://www.BLS.gov/ooh/>

- O*Net OnLine is a free resource for career exploration and job analysis.

- Visit: <https://www.ONETonline.org>

Networking and Skill-Building

- LinkedIn is a career and em-

ployment-focused social media platform and a great way to network.

- Create a free account: <https://www.linkedin.com/>

- LinkedIn Learning is an online platform that provides video courses taught by industry experts in software, creative, and business skills to help you in your career development.

- Login with your NECC student email: <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/>

Job and Internship Search

- Handshake is NECC's career platform and your opportunity to connect with internships, jobs, and career events.

- Login with your NECC single

sign-on by visiting: <https://necc.join-handshake.com/>

Want to connect with Career Services?

It's never too early to connect! Our services are FREE for students and recent alumni. We help you build career development knowledge, skills, and tools that will help you now and throughout your career.

Zoom and in-person appointments are available. Schedule through Navigate or email careerservices@necc.mass.edu with questions.

Explore our website for more information: <https://necc.edu/workforce/career-services/>

This paper is your voice, too!
We want to see what you have to say.

••• ooo •••

You can reach us at:

978-556-3633

observer@necc.mass.edu

News

Students share Thanksgiving traditions

By LINDA GOSS
Correspondent

As Thanksgiving approached, many students at NECC were eagerly making plans for their Thanksgiving break.

Some were looking forward to spending quality time with family and friends, enjoying traditional meals, and participating in holiday festivities.

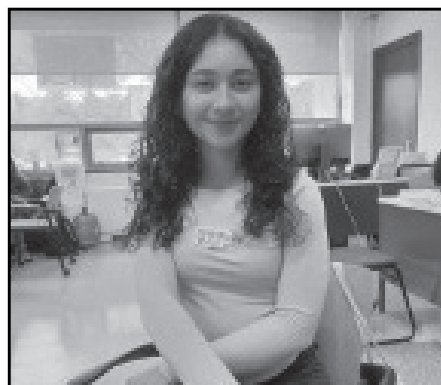
Others planned their time to catch up on schoolwork or relax and recharge before the end of the semester.

Gwenyth Zuercher had planned for her Thanksgiving to include “The Turkey Trot” in Newburyport, Massachusetts, for the running club. She has been involved in this event traditionally every year with her family, and she has been doing this since she was 12 years old.

“Run with my friends and family and even help run a hot chocolate stand for the Red Cross Club NHS,” she said.

She is also a math tutor at NECC, and she is majoring in bio-medical engineering.

Oscar Garcia had planned his



Gwenyth Zuercher

Thanksgiving this year with his whole family at the Smoke Shop Barbecue Restaurant in Methuen, Massachusetts, by the Ranger Plaza. Each year, his family does something different for Thanksgiving, like one year Garcia and his family would go to their aunt’s house, or his mother would have Thanksgiving in their home. Garcia has been at NECC for one year, and he is majoring in Environmental Science and concentration in meteorology.

“Every cloud carries a lesson. Every sunrise is a promise.”



Oscar Garcia

Serena Rechdan planned her Thanksgiving with her brother, Toufic, with their cousin in Salem, New Hampshire. Sereena is a math tutor at NECC and is majoring in Mechanical Engineering. She has been at NECC since the Spring of 2024 and will be graduating in the Spring of 2026.

Each student I had the privilege of interviewing had their own traditions of carrying with their own family.

In addition, several students are choosing to give back to their communities during the holiday. Volunteering at local food banks and shelters



Serena Rechdan

Photos by Linda Goss

has become a meaningful tradition for some, allowing them to share the spirit of Thanksgiving with others in need. These acts of service highlight the diverse ways NECC students celebrate the season, whether through cherished family customs or thoughtful community involvement.

My Thanksgiving tradition is spending it with my family and helping by donating to food banks from my church.

“Helping others in need from the heart, but someday you will never know when your heart will be in need.”



HUM 102 – LT9: Intro to Liberal Arts
Spring Semester 2026

Tuesday/Thursday, 9:30 – 10:45 AM,
Lawrence campus

Instructor: Rich Padova, M.Ed, M.A. (rpadova@necc.mass.edu)

NECC THEATER SPRING SEMESTER 2026

with Professor Brianne Beatrice

THE111
Acting:
Theory and Practice
M/W 12-1:45pm

THE113
Directing
M/W 2 - 3:45pm

COM111 Honors
Public Speaking
M/W 9:30-10:45am



News

Spring semester anticipation blooms

By SARAH MIKLINEVICH
Correspondent

NECC students' anticipation for the spring semester is blooming.

Grappling with upcoming final projects and tests, students at NECC plug away at the remaining course load, register for new classes, and ready their plans for winter break.

Even the most studious students worry about their final exams.

Joe Miller, a student at NECC, who plans to major in Geo-Informational Science after transferring, anxiously awaits the beginning of the end.

"I know I won't fail, but no, I don't feel confident," Miller said.

Some students, like Miller, plan to use their time over the winter break to take care of extra classes.

Miller cites the ice and snow on campus for the reason he wants to take his final lab online.

Other students, like Dez Kelly, plan to use their winter break otherwise.

"I decided not to do any winter intercession courses, I just need a break,"

“

Email your professors, stay on top of problems you might have. If you have those problems, then it's likely someone else is having them too.

- Dez Kelly

”

Kelly said.

Even though fall flew by, and Kelly laments their time spent in classrooms with their peers.

"I've gotten used to seeing the same faces, gotten to know a few people," they said.

Kelly looks forward to the spring semester, and expressed their interest for the next session of classes.

"It's gone so quickly, I'm kind of sad to end my classes, honestly... I'm also excited for the ones I chose in the spring," they said.

Kelly, a Liberal Arts major, got a first look at NECC's new program Brightspace during their Sociology course.

Brightspace is a new program set to roll out for the spring semester to replace Blackboard.

"I'm not super worried about it," said Kelly, on the topic of the Brightspace transition.

They went on to explain a very important facet of the Brightspace transition.

"Just because I know how to navigate it, doesn't mean the professors will," they said.

Professor Andrew Morse, a semi-retired Professor who still teaches Western Civ I, claims he knows very little about the Brightspace transition.

"I know nothing about it, except its going to replace the Blackboard system," Morse said.

To some Professors, like Morse, the transition is simply increasing the current workload.

"It's more work. Something else

that's gotta be done," he said.

As students buzz like busy little bees, working hard for a little break, Kelly leaves readers with some parting knowledge for the next semester.

"Email your professors, stay on top of problems you might have. If you have those problems, then it's likely someone else is having them too," they said.

They go on to encourage students to take the plunge into the spring semester.

"Just dive into it, you got nothing to lose," Kelly said.

With one last final reminder.

"Everyone is here to support you, professors don't want to fail you," they said.

Brightspace to replace Blackboard

By ETHAN LOWELL
Correspondent

Northern Essex Community College has started moving some courses from Blackboard to Brightspace, and many students are already noticing the change.

While most classes still use Blackboard, a growing number are testing Brightspace this semester, which has

left some students working with both systems at the same time.

Freshman business student Andrew Baker said the switch has been confusing in a few ways.

"I have one class on Brightspace and the rest on Blackboard," Baker said. "It gets a little hard to keep track of everything when I have to go back and forth."

Even with the challenges, he said he prefers the look of the new platform.

"I like the layout on Brightspace more. It feels cleaner and easier to read," he said.

Another student, Brendan Ballon, said he has used both systems before and has a clear favorite.

"Brightspace is more user friendly," Ballon said. "It does not take as long to find what you need."

The college plans to move all classes to Brightspace in the future -- by sum-

mer 2026.

Many students are still adjusting.

Some prefer to stay with what they already know, while others say they are ready for the change.

As more classes shift over, the mix of opinions will likely continue, but many students agree that the new platform has potential to make online coursework easier once everyone gets used to it.

News

Exploring artificial intelligence in the classroom

By SADIE YAPOR

Correspondent

At NECC there are professors that are starting to integrate artificial intelligence into the classrooms for the new semesters that are coming up. It is seen that they are trying to implement it in a way that is helpful instead of “cheating” your way out of college.

It’s a way of getting assistance in the right direction of what you are doing in your assignment.

A lot of people can debate that they don’t know where to start or get a lead direction of how to do their assignment. This is a form of direct of help when you don’t have the proper resources at that time.

“AI does have drawbacks when used irresponsibly, but ultimately, that falls on those who choose to use it in that way, they are only harming their own learning. On the other side of things, AI can provide near instant feedback and review work as you are doing it, it is able to provide suggestions and even show you what you are doing wrong”, wrote Kayvon Mains, a staff writer for The American River Current, the student newspaper of American River College, a community college in California.

Students at NECC wouldn’t think this would be a thing that would be

“ AI can also have a dark side and can be a way to get information that isn’t the right idea Will AI be the new teachers or is it ruining society? This is a question that a lot of people are asking because some teachers and professors are seeing the bright side of AI.

happening, but it is something as said to be helpful instead of bringing down the curriculum systems.

Some people may say their excuse is being that they have multiple jobs and still having to go home to take care of their families. Misusing it is the only problem.

“AI can support instruction when used with care. Tools that provide feedback on grammar, summarize dense texts, or generate quiz questions can save time and support learning — if the teacher stays involved. Don’t outsource lesson planning or grading wholesale. Instead, use AI to draft, then edit with your professional judgment. This keeps you in control and models critical use for students,” wrote Adam De Greein an article for Tao.

It is known that AI can mess up a lot of things and can get students in the direction of only depending on that. It can be useful to get an understanding,

so you aren’t fully wrong in your response but mis-using it is not the right move.

Some professors are using handwritten tests in other colleges in because they feel students can be abusing AI and aren’t learning as they should be.

AI can also have a dark side and can be a way to get information that isn’t the right idea. Having people ask AI to answer questions can lead to the students getting in trouble.

Will AI be the new teachers or is it ruining society?

This is a question that a lot of people are asking because some teachers and professors are seeing the bright side of AI.

This is all new for us, working together with it is what matters.

““Massachusetts has long been a global leader in both technological innovation and education,” said Gov. Mau-

ra Healey in a news release announcing Project Lead The Way (PLTW), Future Ready: AI in the Classroom.

According to the news release, this professional development pilot program will include a \$135,000 investment, to support teachers in 45 high school classrooms.

“The pilot is designed to provide high school educators with the tools, knowledge, and network to bring artificial intelligence (AI) into their classrooms,” the news release said.

“With this pilot, we are building on that success, providing our teachers with the skills and tools so they can support the next generation and ensure Massachusetts remains a global leader in applied AI,” said Healey in the news release.

Over time we will see how this takes its toll on some or if it will benefit us.

This paper is your voice, too!
We want to see what you have to say.

You can reach us at:

observer@necc.mass.edu

News

International Food and Flag Festival

Continued from Page 1

of the Lawrence campus and community relations.

Information and descriptions were set up behind every platter along with a picture of the flag for each individual culture it originates from.

Food served from different cultures were, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Turkish, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Italian, English, Moroccan, and more! What a taste of global flavors!

The evening ended with students and staff opting to give a speech on who they are and where they are from, including their culture backgrounds and how they evolved in the NECC community as students or staff.



Photo by Giselle Peguero

NECC staff treating themselves to the colorful catering.



Photo by Lidia Ramirez

There were foods from different cultures set up near different flags from different countries.



Photo by Lidia Ramirez

Winnie, NECC's comfort dog supporting international exploration.



Photo by Nicole D. Sabando

NECC Vice President of Lawrence Campus and Community Relations, Naydeen Gonzalez-De Jesus speaking to the crowd.



Photo by Nicole D. Sabando

NECC students and staff sharing a meal together.



Photo by Nicole D. Sabando

NECC students and staff helping themselves to some of the traditional food options.



Photo by Giselle Peguero

NECC students and staff trying foods from different cultures.

Arts & Entertainment

Tarot Talk Part 4: The Finale - Completion, Reflection, and the Road Ahead

BY J.T. MELANSON

Arts & Entertainment Editor

The final exam period has concluded and the last paper was submitted. The silence on the Northern Essex Community College (NECC) campus is palpable. After weeks of driving willpower and pushing boundaries, this is officially the time to transition from high-gear academic action to low-gear reflection and celebration.

For this final installment of Tarot Talk? We accept closure, reflect on our journey, and prepare for the new opportunities that this break—and the next chapter—shall bring. These three cards serve as the Final Report Card for the semester, offering symbolic guidance on how to properly wind down and look forward.

A Note on Methodology

The modern relevancy of tarot lies in the symbolism of each card, which together represents a framework for navigating life's challenges. As a seasoned tarot reader, I selected these cards for their



Photos by J.T. Melanson

direct relevance to the post-semester experience: celebrating completion, evaluating lessons learned, and embracing the new beginnings that lie ahead.

Tarot breakdown: The end of the journey and the start of a new one.

1. The World (XXI) — The Card of Completion, Achievement, and Celebration

The Lesson for NECC: This Major Arcana card is the ultimate symbol of successful closure. After traveling through all the challenges of the Major Arcana (the Fool's Journey), The World signals that a major cycle is complete. It's the card of graduation, the finished degree, and the successful end of the term.

This card tells the NECC student that it is not a time to jump straight into the next task; it is time for celebration. The hard-earned success of the semester — whether you passed a difficult class or finished a degree — deserves acknowledgment. Your job is finished, and The World grants you the right to pause, appreciate your achievement, and genuinely rest.

2. Judgment (XX) — The Card of Review, Reflection, and Final Calling

The Lesson for NECC: Despite its name, Judgment is not about being judged by others; it's about self-assessment. The card often depicts a resurrection, symbolizing a profound wake-up call and a final evaluation of the path taken. Now that the semester is over, the card prompts you to ask: What did I truly learn? Was I in the right major? What changes should I make next term?



NECC's resources support this reflection. Academic Advisors use tools like the EAB Navigate student lifecycle management system to help students "build academic plans" and "stay on track from day one through graduation". This institutionalized review process aligns perfectly with Judgment's call to assess your journey and make conscious, defining choices about your future course, such as transfer or career entry.

3. Ace of Pentacles — The Card of New Opportunity, Material Gains, and Fresh Start

The Lesson for NECC: Aces represent the purest potential of their suit. The Ace of Pentacles symbolizes a new beginning in the material world—a new job, a new course of study, or a physical opportunity like moving or starting a clean budget. This card appears when the hard work (Pentacles) of the semester has laid the groundwork for a fresh opportunity.

For graduating students, this card points directly to the next phase. NECC's Career Services can help students leverage their completion, and work with them to ensure their academic path leads to success in the job market, helping them explore major/career options and prepare for the next steps. The card is a beacon of hope, reminding you that your break is a launching pad, not a conclusion.



Conclusion: Carry Your Lessons Forward

This semester's end is both a moment of The World's victory and Judgment's sober self-review. After all, "The greatest victory is that which requires no battle." as the ancient Chinese scholar Sun Tzu (544 - 496 B.C.) once said.

As you step into the break, use it wisely. Find Temperance in your relaxation, allow yourself The World's celebration, and reflect on the powerful lessons you learned. When the new term—or the next chapter of your life—begins, you will be energized and ready to seize the new potential of The Ace of Pentacles.

In the event you need support? remember that NECC's free and confidential resources are available to all students:

- Counseling and Psychological Services: Available to all students, these services offer confidential, short-term counseling for stress management, anxiety, and personal issues. To make an appointment, call 978-556-3730 or email counseling@necc.mass.edu.

- Academic Advising/SOAR Program: This program provides personalized coaching to manage academic load, major exploration, goal setting, and plans for transferring or career entry. Contact them at academiccoaching@necc.mass.edu to schedule a meeting.

- Success Workshops: Regular workshops and coaching sessions dedicated to time management, overcoming procrastination, and building crucial life skills. Check the NECC Student Success Center homepage for the latest schedule.

Arts & Entertainment

Robert Irwin wins Mirrorball trophy on 'DWTS'

BY MICAELA PENA
Correspondent

On Tuesday night, November 25, wildlife conservationist Robert Irwin and his partner Witney Carson were crowned the new champions of Dancing with the Stars season 34.

This event followed an 11-week long competition full of pressure, perseverance, and most importantly the growing emotional attachment to dance experience throughout the season.

A few days prior to the finale, Irwin had been working on his final routines so hard that he would often feel severe pain on his ribs during final rehearsals and practices.

That however did not stop him from winning the Mirrorball trophy on finale night, which was a major accomplishment for both him and his partner.

Carson's only other occasion winning Dancing with the Stars as a professional partner was 11 years ago, when she and current DWTS host Alfonso Riberio were crowned Mirrorball champions of season 19 in November 2014.

Irwin's sister, Bindi Irwin, also won the Mirrorball trophy 10 years ago on season 21 in November 2015 with her partner Derek Hough, a current judge on the show.

This means both Irwin children are officially Mirrorball champions together, which is a great way to support their father Steve Irwin's legacy.

During a segment on the Good Morning America DWTS After Party the next day on November 26, a recording with Bindi Irwin supporting her brother's win was shown where Bindi stated she hoped Robert's trophy would make it to the Australia Zoo where it would

“

Irwin's sister, Bindi Irwin, also won the Mirrorball trophy 10 years ago on season 21 in November 2015, with her partner Derek Hough, a current judge on the show. This means both Irwin children are officially Mirrorball champions together, which is a great way to support their father Steve Irwin's legacy.

”

be placed right next to her trophy from 10 years ago.

The other finalists alongside Robert Irwin have been quite remarkable contestants as well.

Social media personality Alix Earle and her partner Valentin Chmerkovskiy finished at second place next to Irwin's placement, where they scored all 10's in her three dances for the finale. The voting for the winner was a close call between Earle and Irwin, with the gap between their votes being "one of the tightest they have ever seen in a finale", DWTS co-host Julianne Hough said while keeping the audience waiting for the winner announcement. Irwin ultimately took the win at more votes than Earle by the end.

Third place saw Olympic artistic gymnast Jordan Chiles and her partner Ezra Sosa, the latter being his first time making DWTS finals.

Chiles' freestyle dance was incredible to watch, as she showcased some of her cool flip routines into the performance, along with a guest appearance from Normani, a member of Fifth Harmony and former contestant on DWTS season 24 in 2017, where they were using her song "Motivation" as part of the

freestyle dance.

Chiles has also done flips on stage throughout several other dances from the season. She is one of several gymnasts who has ever competed on DWTS.

Reality television personality Dylan Efron and his partner Daniela Karagach took fourth place in the placement lineup.

Efron had initially struggled with his dances during early weeks due to not being used to performing, unlike his famous brother Zac Efron.

However, as weeks progressed Efron's dance skills became increasingly better over time to the point where his week 9 Argentine Tango to "Ain't No Sunshine" by Bill Withers went viral on social media, along with the couple's freestyle dance to "Something in the Heavens" by Lewis Capaldi bringing everyone to tears due to its emotional weight representing Efron's growth throughout the season. The performance abilities of each finalist were so tight, though, that Efron did not make the top three, but still made a spot into the finale at least.

Lastly, film and television actress Elaine Hendrix and her partner Alan

Bersten took fifth place in the lineup respectively.

Hendrix has enjoyed an incredible season of regaining her love for dancing, following a dance hiatus of over 30 years after a car accident where she eventually started focusing more on acting until this season.

The couple got lots of high scores in dances throughout the season, despite Hendrix already being over 50 years old, where she would often boast about her age and dancing skills comparison, often stating "I'm 54 and I just did that!"

While a rib injury forced her to miss out on competing for Halloween night on October 28, the couple came back the following week and performed their absolute best for the remainder of the season, eventually landing Hendrix a spot for the freestyle round on finale night.

The current Dancing with the Stars season wrapped up on November 25, 2025 following Irwin's win.

The five finalists attended the DWTS After Party on Good Morning America the next day, and a Christmas special for DWTS is set to air December 2 on ABC.

Campus Life

Christmas is almost here

Same holiday, but two different traditions

By PHEONIX GERMAN
Campus Life Editor

Christmas is almost here, and I am super excited about it.

For my family, from Thanksgiving to New Years is a time where we all get together and eat food that each family cooked.

The reason I wanted to write this article is because although it is a holiday, there are many different ways you can celebrate it. For this article, I will only be covering two ways to celebrate.

The first one is one that I do with my family.

What we do is we prepare any food that needs to be prepared for the day, which we do for all three holidays that I mentioned before.

Christmas Eve we start making the food that can be made in one day and doesn't need to be refrigerated.

Once everyone is ready, we all eat and have fun with each other before it is time to open presents.

Once it is time, we first start with the secret Santa gifts for the adults and then we have the little kids open theirs.

For the secret Santa tradition that we have, we all grab a name from a bag and we see who we get on Thanksgiving Day, this way, we can get the gifts early so we can have it before we wrap the gifts.

The next tradition is the more traditional Christmas, where people open presents on Christmas day.

I talked with NECC student Andrea Sanchez to find out more about how other families celebrate the holidays.

Before Christmas Eve, what do you do anything before that day?

"I normally help with buying the food for Christmas Eve."



Photo courtesy of Bret Sayles, pexels.com.

Some people are starting to decorate for this holiday season.

So, what do you do on Christmas Eve?

"I help out with cooking and setting up the table."

What time does your family stop celebrating and go to bed?

"There's not really a time that we stop celebrating, we just go to bed at whatever time we can."

Does your family open presents Christmas day in the morning or at midnight?

"We open presents on Christmas day in the morning."

There are many other ways to celebrate Christmas, but I can't put in a single article.

Christmas is memorable for everyone in their own different ways.

A good example is when I was little, they would tell my siblings and I that we would have to stay up until 12 on Christmas Eve to open our presents unless we would have to wait until ev-

eryone wakes up to open presents on Christmas Day, which can take a long time.

That was a memory I've always stuck with and looking back, it still makes me happy thinking about those moments.

I hope everyone has a great Christmas, no matter how you celebrate it, or if you don't celebrate it at all.

Features

Black Friday 2025: A recap

By **TRISTAN TAYLOR**

Features Editor

Every November, brands roll out television commercials and video advertisements for something called Black Friday. Occurring on the day after Thanksgiving every year, it is widely considered to be the start of the Christmas shopping season. While almost everybody knows about the sales and discounts of Black Friday, many feel strongly opinionated on it. But where did it come from and do NECC students participate in the phenomenon?

In its current meaning, the term “Black Friday” first appeared in The New York Times on Nov. 29, 1975 in reference to the busy day of shopping and the long lines in stores. In the 50 years since, it has grown to be a part of an American consumer culture that

is deeply rooted in the desire for lower prices on highly valued items.

Students at NECC, like everyone else, have their own habits for Black Friday.

When asked if he partook in the shopping craze, NECC student Matt Branscombe said “I do, because it is when I get the majority of my Christmas shopping done.”

However, not everybody flocks to the stores.

Another student, Jake Axford, doesn’t participate in Black Friday, as he says “the hustle and bustle of crowded stores can definitely get crazy.”

As if the crowded stores weren’t enough, some people even camp out in front of stores, just waiting for the doors to open so they can purchase their favorite products. To make matters worse, big box stores such as Tar-

get, Walmart, and Best Buy often sell out of highly-demanded products within mere minutes. To combat this, some stores place limits on how much of a product someone could buy.

According to Adobe Analytics, in the United States, Black Friday 2025 saw overall retail sales rise by 4.1%, with in-store sales rising by 1.7% and online sales making a huge climb, jumping by 10.4% over last year.

Consumers in the United States spent a record-breaking \$11.8 billion, a 9.1% increase from 2024.

Peak shopping times this Black Friday were between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., during which time an average of \$12.5 million was spent every minute, or roughly \$208,333.33 every single second during this four hour timeframe. Globally, this was also the biggest Black Friday as well, with Canada, the

United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany also breaking their domestic records.

Adding to the Black Friday craze is Cyber Monday, which originated around 2005 and is the online-exclusive equivalent.

While some may say Cyber Monday is easier to navigate, NECC student Adriel Santos claims that “the two are more or less the same.” This is a thought echoed by many others around campus.

Black Friday 2025 broke records and proved once again that American consumerism is partially driven by the desire to find good deals.

While NECC students may feel divided on the topic, one thing is certainly proven by the statistics: Black Friday will continue to grow and thrive around the world.

This paper is your voice, too!
We want to see what you have to say.

You can reach us at:

978-556-3633

observer@necc.mass.edu

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Features

Fast fashion promises style, delivers waste

By **BRIANNA BURGOS**
Correspondent

Ever since Shein and Temu grew in popularity, I've seen fast fashion take over almost every store I walk into. If you're not familiar with fast fashion, it's clothing that mimics new styles using cheap quality material to be sold at cheap prices. It sounds appealing when you hear it, but the clothing doesn't last long. After a few washes, the material starts to wear out quickly or the seams come apart after you've only worn it a few times.

Before you know it, it's clear what you really paid for.

Fast fashion is often called the "throwaway culture" because of how quickly these pieces are produced, worn, and then thrown away. According to the United Nations

Environment Programme, more than 92 million tons of unwanted clothing

end up in waste every year globally. That also includes stores that throw away clothes from previous collections to add their newest ones in. I've bought clothes from stores just for them to last me less than a year or so. That's when the realization kicks in that fast fashion means clothes need to be replaced constantly.

If you're a student like me on a budget, you know that you want to get good quality for as little as possible. Spending \$12 on a piece of clothing may seem smart at first, but the material just doesn't last long. Meanwhile, investing \$30 in one piece of clothing seems expensive upfront, but will last you longer. The truth is, we think we're saving money this way, but we keep falling into this cycle of replacing poorly made clothes all the time.

When I started noticing these types of clothes in stores, I never expected it

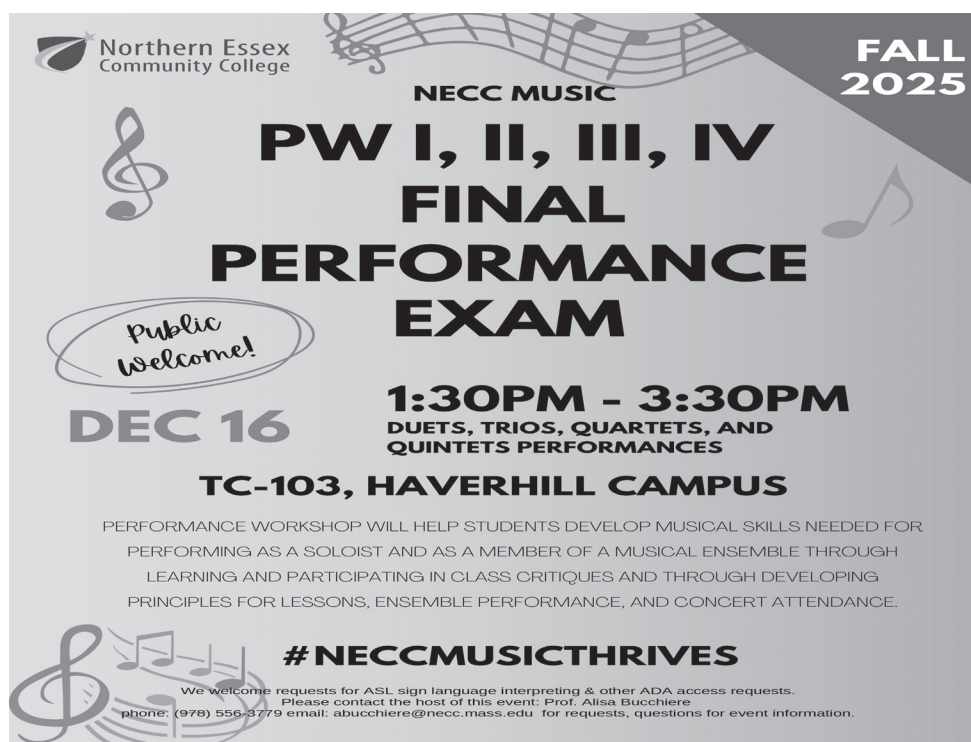
to get worse over time. Stores are now filled with mass-produced and trend-based clothing. It's getting harder to find durable and long-lasting clothing because retailers want to compete with Shein and Temu. Instead of focusing on quality, they've prioritized quick and cheap clothing that could fall apart in your hands. You walk into a store and all you see are racks of clothes that are meant to be sold fast and replaced soon. Sometimes I walk out of stores upset because I can't find one piece that's worth spending my money on, and I can't be the only one who feels this way.

But let's be honest for a minute. With trends changing constantly, we also feel like we always need something new to wear. We buy things because they're "in" right now, only to wear them a few times and then toss it into our closets when the trend dies.

These days, thrift stores feel like the smarter option because why spend money on decent quality clothing when you can spend on better quality at the same price? You can find tons of high-quality clothing that were sold in the past by high-quality stores.

Plus, it's reusing clothing instead of contributing to a landfill where most of us eventually throw away our unnecessary clothes.

Now I'm not saying you can't treat yourself to something trendy occasionally. I believe we can all have fun buying the latest clothes to express ourselves, but I am starting to think twice if something I want is worth it for the price, the durability, and if I'll ever wear it again a year from now. If the answer is simply no, then I leave it. At the end of the day, what you buy should be worth every penny.



Northern Essex Community College

FALL 2025

NECC MUSIC

PW I, II, III, IV

FINAL PERFORMANCE EXAM

Public Welcome!

DEC 16

1:30PM - 3:30PM

DUETS, TRIOS, QUARTETS, AND QUINTETS PERFORMANCES

TC-103, HAVERHILL CAMPUS

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP WILL HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP MUSICAL SKILLS NEEDED FOR PERFORMING AS A SOLOIST AND AS A MEMBER OF A MUSICAL ENSEMBLE THROUGH LEARNING AND PARTICIPATING IN CLASS CRITIQUES AND THROUGH DEVELOPING PRINCIPLES FOR LESSONS, ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE, AND CONCERT ATTENDANCE.

#NECCMUSICTHRIVES

We welcome requests for ASL sign language interpreting & other ADA access requests. Please contact the host of this event: Prof. Alisa Bucchiere phone: (978) 556-3779 email: abucchiere@necc.mass.edu for requests, questions for event information.



NECC Music Presents

FALL 2025

JAZZ ROCK CONCERT

FREE ADMISSION

MUSIC DIRECTOR:
PROF. JAKE SMITH

Dec. 11th at 6:00 PM

NECC Haverhill Campus, TC - 103
100 Elliott St. Haverhill, MA

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Sports

Patriots stunning rise

A Cinderella story season

BY JAKE AXFORD
Correspondent

In mid-November the New England Patriots — yes, the same Patriots who finished 4–13 in each of the last two seasons sat at 9–2 with the best record in football.

Let that sink in.

A franchise expected to be knee-deep in a rebuild, led by a 23-year-old quarterback, owns the top spot in the NFL with six games to play.

And the road ahead? Favorable.

Five of the remaining six opponents have losing records. The sixth is a team New England already beat on the road. So 13–4 or even 14–3 is suddenly realistic. A first-round bye is in play. A deep playoff run isn't far-fetched.

A Super Bowl appearance? It no longer sounds outrageous.

Before Nov. 13's 27–14 prime-time win over the Jets, USA Today had the Patriots at No. 3 in its weekly power rankings. The Athletic listed them among seven legitimate Lombardi Trophy contenders, one of just three in the AFC.

Yes, their schedule hasn't been brutal, and yes, they looked sluggish at times against the 2–8 Jets. But the previous week's road win over the then-6–2 Buccaneers added legitimacy.

The weekend of Nov. 23, they headed to Cincinnati riding an eight-game winning streak. They beat the Bengals 26–20.

This team has moved well beyond "emerging." These Patriots are firmly in the league's top tier right now.

The season carries echoes of 2001, when the Tom Brady–Bill Belichick Patriots rattled off nine straight victories en route to the franchise's first Super Bowl.

chick Patriots rattled off nine straight victories en route to the franchise's first Super Bowl.

That team featured Brady, a 24-year-old second-year quarterback who completed 64 percent of his passes with 18 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. This year's squad has Drake Maye, a second-year QB completing 72 percent with 20 touchdowns and just five interceptions. Comparisons to 2001 in New England are never taken lightly. That team changed everything. It sparked a dynasty, turned Boston from "Loser-ville" into "Titledown," made duck boat parades an unofficial school holiday, and turned Boylston Street into a Canyon of Heroes.

On Thursday night, Gillette Stadium felt shades of those early dynasty days. "They're loyal and knowledgeable and we've got to give 'em reason to cheer and be excited," head coach Mike Vrabel said postgame. "I think we've done that. And in return, they've given us a

great atmosphere to play in front of."

Maye soaked in "M-V-P!" chants throughout the night. "I thought the fans were awesome," he said.

"Pretty sweet for a prime-time game."

Of course, no one is booking February flights to Santa Clara — not yet.

Playoff-tested juggernauts remain in the path, and true contenders reveal themselves in January. But New England has been here before. In January 2002, the Patriots weren't supposed to beat the Raiders in the snow, or the Steelers at Heinz Field with Drew Bledsoe in relief, or the "Greatest Show on Turf" Rams in New Orleans. Yet they did on Adam Vinatieri's legendary 48-yard game-winner. What followed was a run of 17 first-place finishes in 20 seasons, 13 AFC Championship appearances, nine Super Bowls, six Lombardis, and 13 championship parades across Boston's four major sports teams.

The season carries echoes of 2001, when the Tom Brady–Bill Belichick Patriots rattled off nine straight victories en route to the franchise's first Super Bowl.

Lightning doesn't strike like that twice.

But this? This feels like a spark.

Whatever lies ahead, these Vrabel–Maye Patriots have delivered an unexpected gift as the holidays approach. A team that was supposed to be rebuilding has given New England meaningful football, surprise dominance, and a sense of magic not felt in years.

For now, Pats fans..enjoy this.

Whatever lies ahead, these Vrabel–Maye Patriots have delivered an unexpected gift as the holidays approach. A team that was supposed to be rebuilding has given New England meaningful football, surprise dominance, and a sense of magic not felt in years.

For now, Pats fans, enjoy this.

Editor's Note: This edition of the Observer went to press on Dec. 1, before the Patriots faced the New York Giants, so at press time those scores/game result was not available.

Sports

Men's soccer places 5th nationally

By JOHN MULCAHY
Sports Editor

The NECC men's soccer team put on a show this season and made some waves in the championship race.

NECC soccer fans witnessed something special this year as their team played a top-notch campaign.

The team made it all the way to the men's NJCAA championship quarter-finals after an impressive season and according to the NECC Knights home page they finished in fifth place nationally for NJCAA men's soccer.

Stats from Presto Sports show them having a record of 13 wins 4 losses and 1 tie.

Their most impressive stretch of the season came when they won 7 straight games from Sept. 6 to Oct. 7. This month-long win streak was capped off by a crushing 9-0 victory over MassBay Community College.

The team's success can be contributed to the strength of their offense.

According to Presto Sports in the 17 games they played this year they scored a total of 53 goals averaging 3.12 per game.

NECC's ability to maintain stellar offense while playing at home or away was exemplary.

They scored 26 goals in 8 games at home and 22 in 7 games on the road. This consistency was key for a successful season. The team also averaged 2.12 assists per game to further bolster the offense.

The team was strong and full of belief this season. As they grew closer as a team they grew in success as well.

"In the beginning it was tough with a lot of new players trying to build chemistry," Head coach Eusebio Marote

said. "But as the season went on things started to click."

This strong team dynamic boosted the squad to major success this year, eventually culminating in a fifth-place national finish.

Coach Marote attributes the team's success this year to their talent and size "We were a very talented group this year," Marote said "The talent was above and beyond. It's the biggest roster we've ever had."



Photo from the NECC Knights website
Team captain Christian Colem.

Team captain, MVP all region, and exercise science major Christian Colem described the team moral as "A brotherhood."

"We were really a family since the start," he said.

Colem says that building chemistry over the offseason and putting in the work every day is what made them so close.

"Practice every day, that's what makes us different than everyone



Photo from the NECC Knights website

NECC men's soccer team celebrates a 5th place national finish.

else," he said.

This determination and skill would eventually lead the team into the play-offs.

They would take the Northeast district championship over Bristol Community College in a close 4-3 game.

This would qualify them for the division three championship round.

They would fall to Bergen Community College in the quarter finals before going on to secure a fifth place national finish in a win against Raritan Valley Community College.

NECC took down Raritan CC in a decisive 4-0 victory on a cold night in New York.

"They wanted this and this is the highest we've ever placed." Coach Marote said, referring to the team's drive for success "Fifth is the number to beat going forward." T

he team hopes to build on this successful season and continue to be a winning program in the future.



Photo from the NECC Knights website

Head coach Eusebio Marote.

NECC Music

In Collaboration with NECC Theater in the Liberal Arts Division presents

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

BY CHARLES DICKENS

Director
John Budzyna

Producer/Music Director
Alisa Bucchiere



DEC 12

7:00PM

DEC 13

3:00PM & 7:00 PM

DEC 14

3:00PM

General Admission - \$20 | Students & Seniors - \$10 | Children 5 and Under - Free
Tickets are also available at the door.

Purchase Tickets



Chester W. Hawrylcw Theater, Spurr Building 3rd Floor
NECC Haverhill Campus - 100 Elliott Street, Haverhill, MA

We welcome requests for ASL interpreting and other ADA accessibility accommodations.

For requests, questions, or event information, please contact the host:

Prof. Alisa Bucchiere

Phone: (978) 556-3779

Email: abucchiere@necc.mass.edu



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Poster Design by Emi Sisco