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# Observer

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

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## PACE TRIO visits SNHU

BY LIDIA RAMIREZ  
Editor-in-Chief

On March 20, Northern Essex Community PACE TRIO program staff took some of their students on a double trip with the first visit at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, and then the second visit to the local Van Otis Chocolate store and factory.

The Graduate and Transfer Admissions Specialist of Southern New Hampshire University, Timothy Camerato had hosted the NECC PACE TRIO group.

The students were received with welcoming greetings and then given an informative walkthrough speech about the four-year colleges' background, tuition, degrees and much more along with a power point presentation.

"To be frank, I've always found that Northern Essex students are incredibly thoughtful



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

PACE TRIO staff and students at the Van Otis Chocolate Factory in Manchester, New Hampshire.

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## What's Happening?

NECC's 30th Choral and Music Carabet \$5 admission fee, March 31 @ 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Haverhill campus, Technology Center TC 103.

Science Café with The UMass Boston-Dana Farber/Harvard Cancer Center Partnership, April 6 @ 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Lawrence campus, El Helfni LC-301.

Check calendar events: [necc.mass.edu/event](http://necc.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

## The need for better NECC backup plans

BY LIDIA RAMIREZ  
Editor-in-Chief

Should school introduce a new way to keep classes going during any kind of event or unexpected weather that

forces the institution to close, should teachers start resorting to “zoom classes” especially during snow days?

Like the time of the Covid 19 pandemic, all classes were online?

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Some teachers allow students to join the in-person class through zoom if they can't make it or have a good reason for not being there in person.

Since the snow storms began back in January this spring semester, Northern Essex Community College has had their full share in postponing classes, programs activities, meetings, events, and so much more.

This doesn't always mean a break for students as some professors won't extend due dates even if class

was cancelled for a longer than usual period of time.

Complications do result from the stressed time and “classroom lag”, as it is important for in-person to meet every single time since not all courses use blackboard or bright space as a learning station but it is used for students to just turn in assignments.

While many students can relate that it is a struggle when in-person learning and interactions with their teachers and other peers does impact their overall grade and performance.

Nobody comes in a school already knowing what to do, rather they come prepared especially with the necessary materials if they have them.

Another problem that's impacted many students is they lack the resources they need such as enough money to buy proper durable course materials including a reliable laptop.

What's the point in receiving around three to four hundred dollars in financial aid and maybe a scholarship just to buy a refurbished laptop under two hundred fifty dollars that won't last two even semesters but instead last six months or even less?

Then the burden of the not so expen-

sive carry on computer becomes double when the device stops functioning.

Even visiting BOTH of the college campus libraries in Haverhill and Lawrence, all laptops that are for students to borrow are taken.

As things change throughout the semesters, it seems students are now allowed to take out laptops for the entire semester.

While it use to be that all borrowing students had to return the laptop within two to five days, this new plan does affect so many students like those who have emergencies.

This futility is seen as a depression where neither the money the student is receiving is going to a purpose that will help them and neither the school can help them when all other plans fail.

So then by the time the student may be very affected academically, it is a strive against the wind because it can be less likely that they will keep receiving financial aid or scholarships to help them receive money that they need.

Even the number of classes they take and programs they participate in can be limited.

### Publication Schedule

Issue #	Publication Date	Ad/Copy Deadline
1	March 5	Feb. 27
2	March 26	March 20
3	April 16	April 10
4	April 30	April 24

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](mailto:observer@necc.mass.edu)

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

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We want to see what you have to say.

... ooo ...

You can reach us at:

978-556-3633  
[observer@necc.mass.edu](mailto:observer@necc.mass.edu)

# Opinion

## Why you need an elevator pitch (or two...)

BY **KATIE YEATON-HROMADA**  
*Coordinator for Career Services*

Hi! I'm Katie, and I'm the Coordinator for Career Services at NECC. I spend most of my days helping students explore career paths, navigate career changes, and build the career skills they need to succeed after graduation. One tool I've seen make a surprising difference is an elevator pitch. Wheth-

er you're networking, interviewing, or just figuring out how to talk about yourself, an elevator pitch can be a simple and powerful approach.

What is it and how does it work? Imagine you step into an elevator and you meet someone who could change the course of your career: a potential employer or a mentor. You only have 30 seconds before you reach the next floor—what do you say?

An elevator pitch is someone's 30-second introduction that can be used when meeting someone or interviewing. It is the trailer to the movie. It's a quick intro for anyone who need to tell a story, leave an impression, or sell something as quickly and succinctly as possible.

You'll want to prepare a description of yourself that's easy-to-understand and concisely explains who you are and what you're working toward (like a degree from NECC). You may want to have a few versions ready to go for different situations – the way you introduce yourself to a professor might sound different from how you would answer "Tell me about yourself" in a job interview. Practicing your pitch ahead of time helps you build confidence and flesh out any awkward pauses or filler words, like ummm.

### Ready to build your pitch?

Start with your career-oriented pitch and consider:

- Who you are, and your education, volunteer and work experience.
- Your career goals and interests.
- What is unique about you.
- What type of assistance you would like.
- Try to keep it to 150 – 225 words (about 30 seconds to speak).

Now write it out, proofread, and make it your own. Feel free to curate multiple elevator pitches to prepare for different scenarios.

### TEMPLATE EXAMPLE:

Name: Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (Shake hands, look the person in the eye and smile.)

Academic Status: I will be graduating in \_\_\_\_\_, with a major

in \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Career Goals: I am most interested in the field of \_\_\_\_\_ and hope to learn more about it.

Experience: I have worked as a (type of job) \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

(type or name of business) \_\_\_\_\_

I get excited about (skills that you want to use) \_\_\_\_\_

My particular area of skill is: \_\_\_\_\_

(Give an example): \_\_\_\_\_

I can offer an employer (characteristics, such as hard working, able to work independently, problem solver, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and for listening.

(Ask for a business card, referral to a job or company or person, or informational interview.)

Want to practice interviewing? Schedule an individual appointment through Navigate.

Looking for more career resources? Check out our website and start exploring opportunities on Handshake.

Website: <https://necc.edu/workforce/career-services/>

Email: [careerservices@necc.mass.edu](mailto:careerservices@necc.mass.edu)

Handshake: [www.necc.joinhandshake.com](http://www.necc.joinhandshake.com)

# Opinion

## The president of the United States believes people with learning disabilities should not be president

By BAILEY ORIO  
*Opinion Editor*

The President of the United States believes people with learning disabilities should not be president.

“Honestly, I am all for people with learning disabilities, but not for my president. I don’t think a president should have a learning disability.” said Donald Trump in a recent comment made to reporters.

This comment was directed at California’s governors Gavin Newsom. Newsom is a potential 2028 Democratic candidate for the president.

This sparked outrage among those with learning disabilities, The National Center for Learning disabilities says it was “disturbed by and strongly condemns” the Republican president’s remarks.”

“In fact, people with learning disabilities have risen to the upper echelon of every public office in the United States, including former Presidents,” said Jackie Rodriguez, CEO, National Center for Learning Disabilities in a written statement. “Leaders must uphold personal and professional standards of integrity, good judgment, and a commitment to public service. These are characteristics we should expect,

and none of them are related to learning disabilities.”

“For decades, students with learning disabilities have been told, directly or indirectly, that they should lower their expectations about what they can achieve. Many people still do not disclose a learning disability due to fear of negative reactions, such as the ones made by the President today. They perpetuate the very same stigma that families, educators, and advocates have been working tirelessly to dismantle,” said Rodriguez.

As someone who has learning disabilities myself, I found the president’s remarks and name-calling deeply inap-

propriate and disappointing.

Hearing a public leader mock something that affects so many people feels not only unprofessional, but genuinely hurtful.

I’m honestly troubled that someone in such an influential position would choose to use their platform in a way that comes across as bullying rather than leadership.

I feel continued comments like this that President Trump makes add fuel to our country that is already divided on so many levels.

<https://nclld.org/nclld-statement-responding-to-administration-remarks-about-learning-disabilities/>

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Haverhill Commons – Room C-201

## Opinion

# A whirlwind of unwanted life changes

BY CHAD GORHAM-SOFFRON

NECC alumnus

Former Observer staff editor

The 2026 Spring Commencement will mark 10 years since I graduated from NECC and stood upon the stage to present the 2016 Student Senate Gift to the school as the Student Senate President. Ten years is a long time, and a lot can happen in a person's life. My life in the past year has been a whirlwind of the most unwanted life changes that take a certain kind of person to handle, someone which I did not know was me.

It all started around October 2024. My husband Jimmy started getting severe back pain. This was concerning because in 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic he was diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis, which paralyzed him from the chest down. He had to learn how to walk again, which he did so successfully that when he met new doctors, they were shocked, he had Transverse Myelitis. Jimmy did still have aftereffects but got himself off the medicine.

As October moved along Jimmy started to lose weight. We were not concerned too much because he had been eating healthy and exercising after recovering. As we moved through November of 2024 the pain in his back became worse and his appetite started to wane. Thanksgiving was a sign that something just was not right. My mom and him were getting ready to sit down for our dinner and you could just tell by looking in his face that food was not something he wanted. We, like everyone else, always look forward to our Thanksgiving meal. He barely ate anything.

The week after Thanksgiving things

started to get worse for Jimmy. Jimmy got in touch with his doctor, in which the doctor suggested going to Mass General Hospital in Boston for a test. The day of the test was December 8th, 2024, my birthday. Later that night the doctor called him to tell him they believe he had cancer. The next day I drove him into MGH in Boston to admit him.

While in the hospital they were able to diagnose exactly what type of cancer Jimmy had. It was called Germ Cell Cancer, and it was very rare in adult- They also discovered that Jimmy had a minor stroke caused from the cancer. He began his cancer treatment journey while in the hospital and remained there until Christmas Day. I do believe they wanted to keep him, but they know we wanted to celebrate with my mom for Christmas like we always had.

Jimmy and I began driving into Boston every week for his cancer treatments. They were a couple times a week along with his doctor's appointments. The drive was agonizing for him, but he began to get better. The tumor was shrinking and his appetite was coming back. The doctors even said they think it's going to be a great prognosis. We were excited of course, but then a wrench was thrown into the fight

Before he got home it was discussed with the doctors that he would need care while going through the treatment. We were all we had besides my mom who lived an hour and a half away. I decided to go out on what I thought was a paid Family Medical Leave. I found out later it was not going to be paid because although I lived in Massachusetts and worked for a company based in Massachusetts, the store I worked in was in New Hampshire. Just

five minutes over the border. I was able to get emergency food stamps as well as created a go fund me that brought in five thousand dollars. Once that was gone there was nothing.

While in Boston at one of Jimmy's chemo appointments my phone rang. I did not recognize the number, but I did answer it. It was my mom's doctor. He was calling to let me know that my mother was just diagnosed with lung cancer. He began to explain how treatment would work. I stopped him and explained what was going on with Jimmy. You could tell it broke his heart. His voice began to crack as he told me how sorry he was. I just said thank you. I called him later to discuss my mom and her treatment plans.

It was now around the end of February and Jimmy began to have severe pain that would cause him to wake up during the night. The pain was so bad he was crying in the fetal position. I was so scared I did not know what was happening or what was going on. I wanted to help him, and I was able to manage his pain with his medication and help from paramedics we called. His pain was not improving so I drove him into MGH for his chemo treatment.

When we arrived, they took his vitals like they always did. They did not like what they saw so they ran him so fast down to the emergency room as they thought he might have had a heart attack. They began sticking things all over him and drawing blood from him. I was sitting right under the box to dispose of the needles, and I couldn't believe the amounts that were passing over me. They admitted him to the hospital to figure out what was going on.

We were in the middle of March

and after more testing they realized the tumor began to stop reacting to the chemo treatment and began to grow. It was getting very close to his spine. They decided that he was going to need radiation as well as the chemo, but before that could happen, they needed to try to get some of the tumor out of him with surgery. They performed the surgery and got most of the tumor out. They thought with the radiation it would take care of it. He came home a couple of days later for me to take care of him.

Jimmy was home for about a week and a half when he woke up in severe pain again and we went through the same process of calling the paramedics to make sure he was okay and manage the pain. A few nights went by, and Jimmy woke up in the morning in agony. He had an appointment that day, so I got him ready and we headed into MGH. After seeing him they were not happy and he was admitted once again. The diagnosis was that the tumor was getting bigger in his spine and it took out hearing in his left ear. We were very scared and had no idea what this meant. I personally thought, that's okay they cured this his hearing would come back. That was not the case. The tumor was not reacting to any treatment and only getting bigger. It now took out his right arm. He no longer had any movement; it was decided that nothing was going to help Jimmy and he got a terminal diagnosis. They decided he should come home under hospice to pass away peacefully at home.

Although we had been together for twenty-five years we were not married. He wanted to marry me before he

*Continued on Page 6*

# Opinion

## *Whirlwind, continued from Page 5*

passed. So, while dealing with the worst reality of my life I ran around and planned a wedding for the day he got home from the hospital, April 6, 2025. Jimmy did not remain conscious much after that day and he passed away on April 15, 2025.

While grieving the loss of my husband and trying to figure out life my mom began her cancer treatment planning. This was around the end of July. As she began her journey with cancer, she had a reaction to medicine and ended up in the hospital. The reaction made her delirious. She did not know where she was or why some of us were there. She was saying very off the wall things that were making the nurses giggle. That's how I figured out she was going to be fine. They said sometimes this happens to senior citizens when they end up in the hospital. She ended up receiving her first treatment while in the hospital.

My mom lived in North Attleboro so getting there for emergencies was not easy as I had to drive an hour and a half to get there. I wanted my mom to have her independence, but we all started talking about her possible move-in with me temporarily, and I would take her to all her treatments and appointments. This meant work had to be put on hold yet again.

It was decided she should spend some time in a skilled nursing rehab. This made me nervous because the longer she spent in the hospital the more delirious she would get. I agreed and she was sent there. She was there for a little more than 12 hours before I arrived. The hospital setting did not seem clean to me and smelled horrible of feces. I demanded that my mother was to be released to me. I promised her I would never send her to a place like that again.

When I got my mom home it took

a couple weeks to get her out of the delirium. Luckily, they did brain scans and nothing was wrong with her brain. My mom began cleaning and doing laundry, which was her favorite past time. She is becoming her old self again. It was great.

For the most part during my mom's treatments she did well. Until one point when we went to her treatment and her breathing test came back and they were very low. Although she seemed fine, she had pneumonia and ended up in the hospital again and, you guessed it, ended up with delirium.

One day I woke her up to go to her treatment and she was not feeling well at all. I forced her to go to the treatment because they couldn't be missed. She was extremely drowsy and could not keep her eyes open and I noticed drool coming out of her mouth. I wiped it as we were driving down 128 a little too fast but I was nervous. I drove an hour and a half all the way to her treatment. When we got there, they checked her vitals and did not like her breathing. They sent her down to the emergency room and decided to admit her. She had had a heart attack during the night, and this was the result. They admitted her to the ICU for just one day thankfully then admitted her to a room where she spent about a week in the hospital. She ended up delirious again.

She finally finished her chemo treatments and was receiving immune building medications as well as bone building medications. This meant we only had to go there once every three weeks with exception of doctors' appointments. We were able to get a CT scan and see that the cancer was shrinking. As mom's treatments began to change it meant I could start to look for a job again. I ended up finding a part time job in October that I was so

grateful for. My bills were piling; I had two major plumbing issues; my front stairs were falling apart and my dryer's motor burnt out. I considered it a test from heaven to show how strong I actually am. My mom was doing well during the month of November, but never truly felt like herself. She was doing better, except for a little pain. We even had a nice family birthday party for her. She was treated like a queen and was so happy. It was great to see her smile. We came upon Thanksgiving and I began having trouble with the loss of my husband. I was scared. Scared of my emotions, scared of the thoughts in my head, and scared of the pain I was going to feel. I did not want to do a thing for Christmas, but I knew I had to show my mom a good Christmas. So Thanksgiving I put up two Christmas Trees and my mom decorated them with photos of all three of us made by a friend. It turned out beautiful. As December came in, we were approaching my birthday and the one-year anniversary of Jimmy being diagnosed with cancer. My anxiety was high; my sadness was high. I really didn't know how I was going to make it through the next few weeks.

It was now Dec. 10 and my phone rang while I was at work. It was my brother. He let me know my dad died the day after my birthday. He was also battling with cancer. I hadn't seen him in a long time, but it still broke my heart, especially with everything I had already gone through.

My mom had a treatment scheduled for Christmas Eve. I was going to cook a nice meal when we got home. When she woke up she was not feeling well at all. We got to her appointment, and they did all the testing needed before treatment. Her platelets were extremely low, and she needed another blood transfusion before she could get her

treatment. This slowed us down a lot and our Christmas Eve dinner was McDonalds. The plus side of that my mom felt wonderful on Christmas morning and she had a great Christmas and right through New Years. About a week after the new year my mom began going downhill. She was falling and spilling her food. She was having trouble holding her bowels. She woke up one night in severe pain begging me to please help her. This broke my heart as there wasn't much I could do. We had to call an ambulance and have her brought to Anna Jacques hospital. I had to call out of work for the second time because of this and subsequently was fired with the excuse being I called out twice for an emergency.

My mom was treated for pneumonia and AFIB. She was out in a few days but ended up back in as she caught the flu while in the hospital. This time our goal was to get her into rehab and then to her oncologist so we could figure out what was going on. My mom was transferred to rehab and that same night ended up back in the emergency room. My mom deteriorated more every day and came home to my house for Hospice on Jan. 28, until she passed on Jan. 29, 2026.

Now with my two best friends gone I am trying to figure out life. I have applied for over 100 jobs on indeed as well as reaching out to people for help to no avail. I have applied for unemployment and was denied because I did not make enough last year. I received a six-thousand-dollar bill for the rest of my mom's funeral expenses with zero way of paying it. All I want to do is work to keep my home and pay my bills. Life was great after graduating from NECC in 2016, but now I am literally fighting to survive. Please hug your loved ones every day and tell them how much you love them.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Tarot Talk Part 2: Facing all academic pressures without feeling the need to sacrifice one's self

BY J.T. MELANSON

*Arts & Entertainment Editor*

As the calendar turns toward late March/early April, Northern Essex Community College (NECC) students have reached a critical juncture. The initial momentum of the spring semester is now being tested by an influx of mid-term exams, final project deadlines, and the fatigue that naturally accompanies this brutal, mid-semester grind.

While students often rely on campus support systems for structural guidance, some are turning to symbolic frameworks and cultural mythology to help categorize and navigate the shifting pressures of the term. In this edition of Tarot Talk, we examine the “Mid-Semester Crossroads,” utilizing three classic archetypes and a cautionary look at the “Sacrifice Mythos” to help students sustain academic momentum.

### The Mid-Semester Compass: Archetypes of Resilience

The following three archetypes reflect the transition from early-term planning to high-pressure academic execution.

#### 1. Strength (VIII): The Psychology of Endurance

In historical tarot, “Strength” is characterized by “quiet fortitude” rather than physical force.



Photos by J.T. Melanson

Depicted as a figure taming a lion, this archetype emphasizes patience and self-control. For students facing the intensity of mid-term examinations, the lesson is clear: resilience is found in maintaining composure under pressure. Approaching demanding tasks with a steady, calculated pace is more effective than reacting impulsively to stressors.

#### 2. The Chariot (VII): Maintaining Academic Momentum

The Chariot symbolizes victory through disciplined willpower and singular focus. With two opposing forces pulling the vessel, the charioteer must exert absolute control to remain on course. This serves as an analogy for the modern student balancing multiple responsibilities, including coursework, professional employment, and personal commitments. Success in March is defined by the ability to prioritize and drive toward specific, measurable goals.



#### 3. Two of Pentacles: The Mechanics of Multitasking

As one of the most resonant archetypes for the community college experi-

ence, the “Two of Pentacles” depicts a figure managing two rotating coins. It is a symbol of the constant balancing act required in higher education. This archetype acknowledges that for many students, academics are one of several competing priorities. The lesson is that equilibrium is a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a static state.

#### A Cultural Parallel: The Myth of the “Unbalanced Burden”

In the spirit of exploring the concept of mid-semester pressure, I decided to take a different approach. Instead of quoting a famous person, I want to look into the folklore of the video game Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly—specifically the legends surrounding Minakami Village, a fictional village located in Japan where the game takes place. In the backstory of the village, their survival was said to depend on many rituals of extreme sacrifice. However, the history of this “Lost Village” serves as a grim reminder that whenever a burden becomes too great or the “sacrifice” becomes barbaric? It leads not to salvation, but to a state of “Repentance”—a total collapse of the community in a figurative and literal sense.

For the modern student? This myth is an apt metaphor for academic burnout. We often feel that to in order to succeed, we must sacrifice our sleep, mental health, and personal connections. But the lesson of this “unbalanced burden” is that a path built on unsustainable sacrifice is a path towards a personal “Lost Village.” True academic success does not require the loss of the self; it requires the Strength to set boundaries and the Chariot’s focus to navigate the term without losing one’s way.



### Institutional Resources for Academic Continuity

As the semester enters its high-intensity phase, the following NECC resources remain available to assist students in managing their workload and maintaining academic standing:

**Academic Coaching & Tutoring:** For students facing mid-term evaluations, Tutoring Centers offer targeted subject-matter assistance.

Contact: 978-556-3411 | tutoring-center@necc.mass.edu

**Counseling Services:** Professional support is available to discuss stress management and mental health when workloads feel unsustainable.

Contact: 978-556-3730 | counseling@necc.mass.edu

**Academic Advising & Financial Aid:** Advisors are available to help students realign their degree trajectory or address financial concerns.

Contact: 978-556-3700 | advising@necc.mass.edu | financialaid@necc.mass.edu

Remember that as we approach the midterms, this mid-semester period remains a defining moment for student success. By utilizing available campus tools and applying a disciplined approach to their schedules, students can ensure that this “crossroads” serves as a bridge to, rather than a barrier to, their academic goals.

# News

## Field trip, continued from Page 1

and ask some of the best questions. The information session I give is actually built around questions I've received from Northern Essex students in past years. I also chatted with our tour guides after you left, and they had the nicest things to say. I personally think they enjoy talking with students who have some college background and are going through some of the same experiences — stressing over midterms, looking forward to spring break,” he said in an email interview with The Observer.

NECC PACE students enjoyed the tour of the over 300 acre university and some shared their thoughts about the school.

“I would apply to go here. I like the facility, the dorms, the athletic center and facility that the athletic department has. I also like the fact that everything is close to each other. I like that the university includes a kitchen for students to use as much as they want.”

Said NECC PACE student Cristian Moscat.

During the visit to the Van Otis chocolate factory, NECC PACE staff and students got a behind the scenes tour, demonstrations, and the experience of making a treat which was a rice crispy dipped in chocolate and decorated with toppings of choice.



Photos by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez  
SNHU host Timothy Camerato speaking to NECC PACE TRIO students and staff.



Robert Frost Hall on the campus of Southern New Hampshire University.



Students' hang out spot "The Living Room" at SNHU.



PACE TRIO staff on Van Otis chocolate factory tour.



One of the SNHU student study area.



PACE TRIO staff and students shopping inside Van Otis chocolate store.



PACE TRIO staff on Van Otis chocolate factory tour.



PACE TRIO staff on Van Otis chocolate factory tour.



SNHU students' projects displayed.



# News

## Spurk C building bucket burden



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

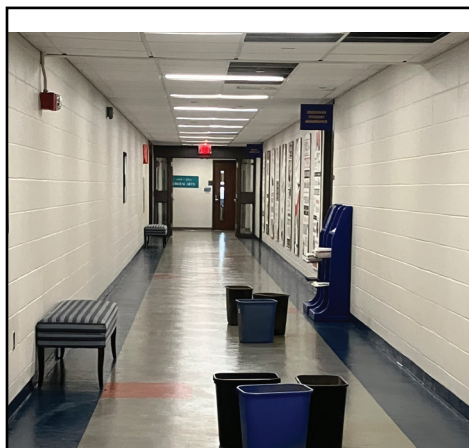


Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Faculty Adviser Mary Jo Shafer



Photo by Faculty Adviser Mary Jo Shafer



Photo by Faculty Adviser Mary Jo Shafer



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

For about a month, the ceiling inside Spurk building on the third floor has been nonstop leaking water. Buckets have been placed all over the hallways to collect the water. Staff and students are forced to walk around the buckets making it hard to navigate the hall, especially for students with disabilities. The water leak has affected the Observer news room as well which has been recently fixed by Facilities. Do you think Spurk building needs to undergo another renovation? See the next edition of the Observer for more about the college's infrascruture.

# Features

## Venezuela wins World Baseball Classic in upset victory

By **TRISTAN TAYLOR**

*Features Editor*

In the final game of the World Baseball Classic, Venezuela won their first world championship in what was an upset victory over the heavily favored United States.

With star pitchers Eduardo Rodriguez and Ranger Suarez on the roster, and position players like Salvador Perez, Willson Contreras, Wilyer Abreu, Luis Arraez, and Eugenio Suarez on the offensive side, the Venezuelans were sure to get far in the tournament, but were not expected to win at all.

The World Baseball Classic is baseball's equivalent to the FIFA World Cup, with national teams often consisting of professional players from the MLB, foreign leagues such as the NPB, KBO, and CPBL, and even minor, independent, and amateur leagues.

First held in 2006, the tournament had only seen three nations become world champions prior to Venezuela's underdog win: Japan (2006, 2009, and 2023), the Dominican Republic (2013), and the United States (2017).

With reputations as past champions, all three nations were expected to dominate the tournament, with Japan, being the reigning champions, having been expected to face off against the United States in a rematch of the 2023 finals.

However, issues in the tournament arose early on, with insurance companies tied to the MLB denying coverage to many star players who initially planned on representing their nations. In particular, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela were hit hard. Venezuela was hit harder than most, with star players Jose Altuve and



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

**The flag of Venezuela, the champions of the 2026 World Baseball Classic.**

Miguel Rojas being denied coverage.

One NECC student, Aidan Lohan, felt as though the Dominican Republic should've won the tournament, and openly criticized the MLB's insurers, stating "It's awful. Players shouldn't have to miss this tournament because of an insurance policy."

Lohan is not alone in feeling this way, with many baseball fans expressing disappointment on social media, and he specifically pointed out that players like Yainer Diaz and Elly De La Cruz would've helped the Dominican team go farther than their knockout in the semifinals.

Venezuela's path to becoming world champions was anything but easy. Facing off against the Netherlands, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Israel in the round-robin pool stage,

the Venezuelans won three of their four games and advanced to the knockout stage, only losing to the Dominican Republic.

Venezuela then knocked out Japan, the reigning champions, in the quarterfinals, before defeating Italy, another underdog team, in the semifinals.

Many on social media have expressed their belief that the Italian team likely would have advanced farther had an injury to catcher Kyle Teel not occurred.

In the finals, Venezuelan infielder Maikel Garcia's third inning sacrifice fly allowed catcher Salvador Perez to score, bringing the score to 1-0.

This was followed by a homer to center field by Venezuelan outfielder Wilyer Abreu in the fifth inning to make it a 2-0 ballgame. An eighth inning attempt

to surge from behind resulted in a two-run homer from American outfielder Bryce Harper to bring him and infielder Bobby Witt Jr. in to score, tying it up at 2-2. However, the Americans could not continue their rally into the ninth, when Venezuelan infielder Eugenio Suarez doubled to bring in pinch runner Javier Sanoja to end the game with a score of 3-2.

John Mulcahy, the Sports Editor for the Observer, stated that although he felt disappointed that the American team did not win, "it was still pretty cool to see Venezuela win."

Many expected the Americans to win, but it was simply not in the cards this time around. NECC student Shane Smith feels that the game was "a pretty close matchup until the end."

For the Venezuelans, this matchup was their magnum opus, as it was their first tournament championship in any international tournament, and it was a huge achievement for those on the team.

Venezuela has been in political and economic turmoil since 2010, with a massive crisis erupting following the death of Hugo Chavez in 2013. Many of those in Venezuela with access to social media have expressed gratitude to the baseball team, as their win was a symbol of hope.

Viewers of the World Baseball Classic may remember this year's tournament as controversial but still exciting, but for Venezuelans, this tournament marked a turning point in the history of baseball in their country, and serves as a beacon of hope for those who wish to see their nation return to stability once more.

# Features

## Math and programming are enjoyable

By PHEONIX GERMAN

Features Editor

Why math and programming is really enjoyable for some people? My story on how I really enjoy math and programming now.

In the past month or so, I've been really enjoying math and python programming. Honestly, its been kind of addicting. Its basically all I think about. I'm taking Precalculus for Business right now, and I am really enjoying it. I've been discovering how I learn when it comes to math and programming and how I like to take notes.

For example, for my Precalculus class, I realized that I really like using blank paper, like a sketchbook, which I have been using. but for programming, which I have been learning myself through projects, I realized that using my iPad to write code is amazing because I can use lined paper better to format my coding on paper better. But both of these methods are really good.

Its crazy to think of how this all started though. I first started enjoying programming before I started enjoying math. I've always wanted to start programming; I just didn't know where to start.

Then last semester I heard about VS Code, which is a programming software that is really well known and is used by a lot of people. I made one project, it took a while, but I was able to make it work. I had some help with the project, I was stuck on a specific problem that I needed to fix and someone helped me figure it out.

This was when I found out that programming has a lot of different rules that are sometimes hard to find. I don't remember everything that made me enjoy it and what made me need help, but all I know is I kept coming back to it.

```
python for everybody\Study_time_generator
1 import random
2 from datetime import datetime, timedelta
3
4 # rules
5 min_study = 60
6 max_study = 120
7
8 min_break = 50
9 max_break = 90
10 for i in range(5):
11     print(f"\n--- session {i+1}---")
12
13     #generate values
14     study_time = random.randint(min_study, max_study)
15     break_time = random.randint(min_break, max_break)
16
17     #time calculations
18     start_time = datetime.now()
19     end_time = start_time + timedelta(minutes = study_time)
20     start_break = end_time + timedelta(minutes = break_time)
21     end_break = start_break + timedelta(minutes = break_time)
22
23     #formatting
24     formatted_start = start_time.strftime("%M")
25     formatted_end = end_time.strftime('%M')
26     formatted_break_start = start_break.strftime('%M')
27     formatted_break_end = end_break.strftime("%M")
28     formatted_minutes = start_time.strftime("%M")
29
30     #output
31     print(start_time)
32     print("start time:", start_time.strftime("%M"))
33     print("study for: {study_time} minutes")
34     print("end time: {end_time.strftime('%M')}")
35     print("study duration:", study_time, "minutes")
36
37     print("\nbreak time:")
38     print("break for: {break_time} minutes")
39     print("end break:{end_break.strftime('%M')}")
40     print("start break:", start_break.strftime("%M"))
41     print("end break:", end_break.strftime("%M"))
42     print("break duration:", break_time, "minutes")
43
44     print(f"minutes: {formatted_minutes}")
```

### A picture of a python script Phoenix German created.

When it comes to the math, I remember exactly how it happened. I went to the tutoring center on a Friday, and I had to do a difficult conversion problem for my online Precalculus for business class, I didn't pass it so I had to take it again. I did one the day before with the help of one of the student tutors, that day I took a picture of it so that way I can have it for just in case. It was really handy at this moment because that was what I used to help me

solve the equation. When I was doing the equation though, I ran into an error which I needed to go back and figure out where I went wrong. I eventually did, and it made me really happy.

After that, I found myself getting excited when I seen difficult problems and wanting to know what the answer is. It really surprised me because I didn't enjoy math at the time before I solved the difficult problem.

Even now, in this semester, I've

been thinking a lot about math and programming. So much to the point that its basically been all I think about. Just in the past few days, I've finished three projects and I'm writing a few more in my notes. With math, I am able to work on math pretty much every day for most of the day without getting tired or needing a break.

I even spent pretty much all of my spring break on campus, going to tutoring, and just studying math because I have a test the week right after break, but I really like studying and learning math so it is definitely worth it for me.

It honestly amazes me how our brains can work. We can be interested in one thing, then we can lose interest in it once our brain figured out what we really like to do. For example, I used to really like science, I still do, but its computer science. I also started liking math, which I started focusing on once I started realizing I liked it. Its to the point where I've almost been late to walking to catch the bus twice in one week because of me programming in the morning.

I am currently taking three classes this semester, but it is really interesting how even though I am thinking about math, I still think about my other two classes constantly, which is really interesting and great at the same time. The thing is, it doesn't only happen with academics interests, It can happen with musical interests and just everyday things that all of a sudden changes without you even noticing until you start thinking about it. I

love math and computer science, and because of the experiences I have had which led me to this enjoyment, it really makes me think about what's next with learning more math and programming for me.

# News

## Observer staff win NENPA awards



Observer staff members who won three New England Newspaper and Press Association awards in the college division contest for work published in 2024-2025. Former Editor-in-Chief Daniela Valdivia-Terres won second place for “Good News.” This is a category for a story about something positive. She wrote about NECC first generation students on a college visit with PACE.

Staff and correspondents won second place for best arts and entertainment section. Staff includes former Arts and Entertainment Editor Anthony Sousa. This was awarded to staff and correspondents because the section had a lot of submissions, even from other staff editors. (Correspondents are any students enrolled in journalism courses.) Quinlan Cooke and correspondents won third place for best opinion section.

Other winners in these categories include Bowdoin College, University of Vermont, Bates College and Keene State University.

Valdivia-Terres, Sousa and Cooke have now all transferred to other schools. Valdivia-Terres is at Suffolk University and has been interning with the nonprofit Center for News, Technology and Innovation. Sousa is at UMass Lowell and Cooke is at Mount Holyoke, where she has been contributing to the student newspaper. Cooke joined the Observer staff as an Early College student at NECC.

Pictured is Valdivia-Terres holding the Observer awards at the NENPA awards banquet March 14 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Photo by Mary Jo Shafer

## Celebrating Women’s History month

BY STORM HERNANDEZ  
*Correspondent*

Women’s history month is a time of celebration.

Brianna Burgos a Northern Essex Community College student describes it as a way “to put a spotlight on the women that have been overlooked on their struggles, their accomplishments.”

According to the National Women’s History Museum the month started out as a week and was officially recognized in 1980 by President Jimmy Carter.

With more vocal advocates and representation, the question of who should be included and recognized during Women’s History month has been debated.

Burgos believes that “Trans women

have every right to advocate for women’s voices and protest against violence and hate crimes that target all women.”

In this spirit it is important to highlight activists like Laverne Cox, an openly transgender actress, has brought representation to the screen for many trans women in the LGBT+ community.

Trans people have struggled finding representation in media, but activists like Laverne Cox make the possibility of equity possible.

In an interview with NPR’s Noel King, Cox talked about how important representation is, and she pointed out the difference between just being seen and being represented. She said, “Trans people have always been seen, but we’ve not always been

represented, right? And in the being seen and being visible, we’ve often been misrepresented.”

This idea of being seen and being represented is important and not something that is solely reserved to the LGBT+ community. It brings to mind portrayals of Lennie from “Of Mice and Men” or Bo from “To Kill a Mockingbird.”

Just because someone sheds light on a marginalized group does not mean that they are being accurately portrayed let alone represented.

Cox continued in the interview to liken trans representation to how blackness has been portrayed.

Cox, said, “We’ve often been stereotyped and stigmatized and pathologized and

sensationalized in film. So we’ve always been there. But the way – just like depictions of blackness have always been, their depiction of folks along a gender spectrum have always existed in films. But representation that is authentic, that is about the real lived experiences of trans people have not always been there.”

This representation of minority or marginalized groups isn’t something that is important simply for those communities, but it is part of history as a society.

Cox said, “It is a story of a system that consciously and unconsciously oppressed us.” Enough in the world divides people. Burgos said, “whether transgender or cisgender, we live in a world where we share a common struggle.”

# Sports

## Building community through sports

BY BRENNAH RYAN

Correspondent

Fans are on the edge of their seats with eyes locked on the game ahead. Players giving it their all, throwing themselves at every play with their love for the game on their sleeves. A final shot – exciting the crowd as it hits the back of the net. The winning team clears the bench, rushing to celebrate with teammates and a smiling coach, together. The losing team huddling and leaving together. Fans of the winning team cheering, throwing popcorn, dancing, laughing and more. Fans of the losing team collectively upset, leaving together.

No matter the outcome of a game, one thing is sure - players and fans have created a connection through the emotions and experience. Across the globe, sports are more than a competitive activity – sports create a vast community through shared experiences and emotions between those in the stands and those on the field, court, ice, etc.

“Sports create common goals and strong emotions that connect people on a deep level,” said student-athlete Kaelie McCracken. When it comes to playing on a team, the abundant amount of time spent with teammates forms bonds and friendships. Players experience the same wins and losses, grow together, and share emotional times. This builds community by empowering the concept of teamwork. Struggles are inevitable, but having a strong group of teammates by your side makes the struggle worth it.

Teammates and coaches see all sides of each other – the good, the bad and the unintentional. The display of strength teams use to uplift each other feeds into the stands, resonating with their fans.

The community grows from the players to fans, friends, families and schools at any level, all the way to professional sports.

“Fans, players, and communities all share emotions tied to the game, which creates connection,” said student Allie Simons, a club hockey player and a Boston sports fan.

In the stands, fan bases are the core of any sports team. Showing up, dressing in team gear and colors, bringing signs, engaging with like-minded fans. Starting chants to support the home team, or having guts and starting a chant for the away team is one of the ways fans and players create a growing community. Having fun with “strangers” with the same goal, doing the same activity. Fans are families, friends, coworkers – people from all walks of life.

Athletes also enjoy other sports and are fans of other athletes. Why are we always so excited to see professional athletes enjoying a different sporting event? It is because fans can connect with athletes, and the athletes are connecting with the fans.

Sports are all one large support system.

When watching and cheering on a team, fans know they are not alone. Sports connect people on such a deep level where people throw parties and often treat championship games with the same importance as holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Regarding why fans support teams, Simons said, “it gives them a sense of belonging and identity, and fans feel loyalty and pride in representing something bigger than themselves.” Being a sports fan is beyond the wins and the losses; it is about feeling involved, included and seen in personal enjoyment. Sharing love for a team – no matter the

level – is something so intimate that strengthens a vast, diverse community.

When fans show their support, it feeds on to the players. When fans know what they do – cheering, attending games – is helping their team succeed, they cannot help but feel successful themselves.


When supporting a team, McCracken said, “it’s rarely about the sport itself, it’s about what the team represents.” Many sports teams are ambassadors and participate in charitable work. Athletes’ stories – even the sad ones – are brought to light to display

their humanity and create a stronger connection with fans. Fan bases care so deeply for athletes they may view as heroes.

Sports fans carry a team’s win or loss with them to work the next day, just as the players do heading into their next practice.

Between players and fans, their energies feed off of one another. When a team is thriving, their fans are thriving, filling the crowd with cheers. Student Sadie Yapor said, “there is a joy of seeing your team win and having the feeling you were a part of it all.”

## TWO NIGHTS OF STORYTELLING WITH MULTI-TALENTED ARTIST AL BOSTICK!



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Participants will enjoy a live storytelling performance followed by an interactive workshop exploring how stories can be used for self-expression, confidence building, and understanding culture and history.

Come listen, learn, and discover how storytelling can transform the way we see ourselves and our communities.

This event is part of the **White Fund Enlightenment Series** and is open to students, educators, and community members interested in storytelling, theater, and cultural expression.

**Visit [necc.be/bostick](http://necc.be/bostick) to register.**

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April 6 • 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

**HAVERHILL CAMPUS**  
The Chester H. Hawryciw Theater  
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Follow the wit wisdom and laughter of Africans and African-American slaves in Fabulous Fibs, Fables & Folklore? Revel in the folklore and proverbs and melodies that grew out of the misery of slavery and rose to the triumph of spiritual experience of Black life and attitude!

Al Bostick holds a bachelor's degree in theatre, acting and directing, with additional master's degree-level course credits in theatre. He has directed and performed his storytelling nationwide, including in educational settings. A Governor's Arts Award winner for his work in education, as well as a recipient of a Citation of Excellence in the State, Bostick is an accomplished storyteller, playwright, actor, and director who pursues excellence. He believes all children can learn once they remove "I can't" from their vocabulary in his work.

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**Northern Essex  
Community College**

## Sports

# Men's basketball wins national championship

By JOHN MULCAHY  
Sports Editor

The Northern Essex Community College Knights men's basketball team has won the National Junior College athletics division three National Championship. They defeated Dallas College Richland in Herkimer New York on Saturday March 14th 68-62 to win the first national championship in NECC's history.

"I don't really know how to explain it man, it's a different type of feeling," said sophomore and national tournament most valuable player Alex Johnson describing his feelings after the team's win.

"We finally did it and I would never take this moment for granted."

Johnson scored a total of 51 points through the Knights three tournament games including a 39-point performance in their semi-finale game against Salem Community College on March 13.

"I think it means a lot to the school I mean the support all year from the school was tremendous," said Head Coach Darren Stratton who's been coaching the team for 24 seasons and won his fourth straight regional coach of the year this season.

"I think it means a lot to the college, and it means a lot to everybody here."

Stratton said that next for the Knights will be recruiting and building the team for next season and the ultimate goal of many more national championships.

"Hopefully this is one stepping-stone in building the future for the



Photo by John Mulcahy

**The men's basketball team celebrates the win outside of the sport and fitness center. Sophomore Christian Sanders holds the trophy.**

next student athlete" he said, "It's a no brainer to come to Northern Essex."

"Being part of this team is never something I would find again," said sophomore Cristian Moscat speak-

ing on the team's close bonds.

"It wasn't a structure where guys were forced to be one way or another, everyone was themselves and it made us better."

NECC received the one seed placement for the national tournament giving them a by for their first game.

They took their first game of the tournament against Genesee Community College by a score of 99-78.

The semi-finale against Salem Community College was a closer matchup as they took it by a finale score 88-85.

The championship was decided in a neck and neck matchup against Dallas College Richland where the Knights took the game in a finale 68-62 victory.

The team's successful season resulted not only in a national championship but an overall record of 30-3.

Their success resulted from an offense 88.9 points per game with a field goal percentage of 43.5 and a three-point success rate of 30.8.

The Knights offense was heavily driven by region 21 player of the year and first team all-star sophomore Alejandro Delgado. He averaged 17.9 points along with 11.6 rebounds per game.

Sophomore Christian Sanders also received second team all-star recognition.

He averaged 11.8 points per game with 9.3 rebounds. Sophomores Yunosuke Matsuda and Alex Johnson also received honorable mentions.

# Sports

## Baseball is back for the spring

By JOHN MULCAHY

*Sports Editor*

The Knights baseball team is back for the 2026 season. Coming off a season where they went 30-12 the team is looking to have another successful campaign under the guidance of long-time Head Coach Jeff Mejia. He listed consistency at the plate, and overall consistently throwing strikes as the keys to success the Knights will need to have to be successful this year. “Are they gonna have that nitch where they want to win it? Do they hate losing

more than they like winning?” Said Mejia.

The Knights players have strong belief in their team this year. Sophomore Jack Kellher says “We know we can succeed; we want to succeed on a national level.” In the Knights first game on March 13 Kelleher pitched four innings striking out seven batters in a loss to Oakton Community College.

“I think we have a really really good group of guys. I think this is, in my life,



Photo by John Mulcahy

Head coach Jeff Mejia speaks with the team before their trip to Florida.

probably the best starting pitching I’ve ever had.” Said sophomore first baseman Jack Aylward who was a midseason transfer last year.

So far this season Aylward has a total of six hits with six runs batted in and one home run.

“Day in and day out, whether it’s in the Fall or in the Winter we’re getting work in at least 5 days a week, and I think this is a really close group.” Added sophomore outfielder Brooks Keefe speaking on the team’s drive to succeed this season. Keefe has collected six hits with two runs batted in so far this season.

The Knights went 0-4 to start the season but were able to quickly bounce back from these losses in their two

matchups against Genesee Community College on March 16 where they won 5-4 in the first game and dominated the second game by a score of 28-7. The Knights went on to defeat Waubonsee Community College 4-1 on March 18. Later that day they lost Hudson Valley Community College 3-2.

The day after the Knights split a double header with Westchester Community College losing the first game 8-7 and then winning the second 17-6.

On Sunday March 22nd they won both games against Suffolk Community College the first in a 3-0 shutout and the second 4-1.

Their next game is today at 3:30 p.m. when the Nights play at Community College of Rhode Island.

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