

# ‘WELCOME TO MY HOUSE’

Flo Rida headlines Student Programming Board’s annual Wake the Giant concert



TRIPP MENHALL/CHRONICLE

**By JACKLYN PELLEGRINO**  
Arts & Life Editor

Nostalgia filled M&T Bank Arena on Sunday as students waited with their friends to hear rapper Flo Rida perform popular songs from the late 2000s at the Student Programming Board’s annual Wake the Giant concert.

## PLANNING FOR THE ANNUAL CONCERT

SPB had been planning Wake the Giant since October. The organization sent out a survey to students asking them what genres they would want to see at the concert near the end of the month.

Nicole Healy, assistant director of student engagement, said that rap music ranked first in the survey, followed by pop and country. She said that more than 1,000 students responded within five days of the form being sent out.

Flo Rida’s music fit the genre that students wanted, but the rapper also met Quinnipiac’s administrative and logistical needs to make sure the event was safe, Healy said.

“We knew from our middle management company and other universities who had (Flo Rida) before that he’s very professional,” Healy said. “He’s used to the college environment because performing at Quinnipiac isn’t the same as performing at

Madison Square Garden.”

Flo Rida was supposed to come in 2020 but that concert got canceled because of COVID-19. So he has always been on SPB’s list, said Zachary Iwatsuki, a senior health science studies major and SPB president.

Iwatsuki said that college students listened to Flo Rida when they were in middle school and high school and his music is still played today in clubs, bars, spin classes and cafés.

“He has a ton of music that people would know,” Iwatsuki said. “We were like, ‘Oh, (Flo Rida) would create a great show for students where people will know the music, have a good time and get their mind off of finals and all those projects.’”

SPB wanted Flo Rida to be the focal point of the event, so they chose DJ Fire aka Tafari Turner — a graduate of Southern Connecticut State University — to open the show while students were still coming into the arena.

“(DJ Fire is) always coming up with new content,” Healy said. “He’s a little bit more of a low-key DJ, but he brings a lot of energy and a lot of knowledge. He keeps up with what college students want because that changes almost by the day.”

.....  
See **FLO RIDA** Page 6



TRIPP MENHALL/CHRONICLE

A crowd of Quinnipiac University students in M&T Bank Arena cheer on Wake the Giant headliner Flo Rida on Sunday.



AIDAN SHEEDY/CHRONICLE

Rapper Flo Rida performs in a custom Quinnipiac men’s ice hockey jersey.



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Ukrainian photographer discusses wartime images featured in new traveling exhibition

By JACK MUSCATELLO  
Digital Managing Editor

While the partial solar eclipse brought hundreds of spectators to the Mount Carmel Campus Quad on April 8, a small cohort of communications students and faculty gathered to hear Ukrainian photographer Serhii Korovayny describe his featured photographs in the “Ukraine: War and Resistance” exhibition.

The collection of photos, hanging

outside CCE 114 on the first floor of the Center for Communications, Computing and Engineering, showcases work from five photographers that have been covering the Russia-Ukraine War since February 2022. The exhibition, which has traveled to several institutions in the U.S. and Europe, is sponsored by the Fulbright Program, a government-funded student exchange program.

Korovayny, a Fulbright scholarship recipient, has documented the evolving

conditions in Ukraine for several media outlets, including the Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post. His photos selected for the exhibition include portraits of Ukrainian civilians and soldiers.

“I hope I can tell stories of these people who are doing great, very heroic and very powerful things,” Korovayny said. “The worst thing that can happen to the people and the people in those pictures is (to) forget.”



JACK MUSCATELLO/CHRONICLE

A Ukrainian soldier loads a M 777 howitzer artillery gun, as photographed by Joseph Sywenkyj on July 23, 2022. Sywenkyj’s work is joined by a collection from other photographers in the “Ukraine: War and Resistance” photo exhibition.



JACK MUSCATELLO/CHRONICLE

Prints from the photo exhibition line a hallway in the Center for Communications, Computing and Engineering.



JACK MUSCATELLO/CHRONICLE

A small crowd of School of Communications faculty and students listen to Ukrainian wartime photographer Serhii Korovayny discuss his experiences photographing the Russia-Ukraine War. Korovayny’s photos are featured in the “Ukraine: War and Resistance” photo exhibition, on display in the Center for Communications, Computing and Engineering, on April 8, 2024.



JACK MUSCATELLO/CHRONICLE

Korovayny joins the small crowd in the Mt. Carmel Auditorium via Zoom to speak about his work featured in the photo exhibition.



JACK MUSCATELLO/CHRONICLE

Gedeon Werner, Novak Family Polish chair at the Central European Institute, introduces the photo exhibition.



# More than 1,700 students vote in SGA spring election

By CAT MURPHY  
News Editor

The Quinnipiac University Student Government Association named 28 undergraduates to its 2024-25 academic year board following the body’s April 9 election.

Just over 1,700 Quinnipiac students — a little over a quarter of the undergraduate student body — cast ballots in the student government’s spring 2024 election, exceeding the organization’s five-year average voter participation rate.

For perspective, SGA’s spring 2022 and

spring 2023 elections raked in a combined 1,750 votes.

“The SGA Election Committee appreciates the extensive student participation in this election, and hopes students continue to involve themselves in the Quinnipiac community,” SGA wrote in an April 9 press release announcing the election results. “Witnessing this historic turnout, which included a 46% increase in voter participation compared to Spring 2023, has energized the entire organization.”

All but eight of SGA’s 28 newly elected

student leaders are returning representatives. Chief among these returning members is J.P. DiDonato, who received just shy of 850 votes to secure the SGA presidency.

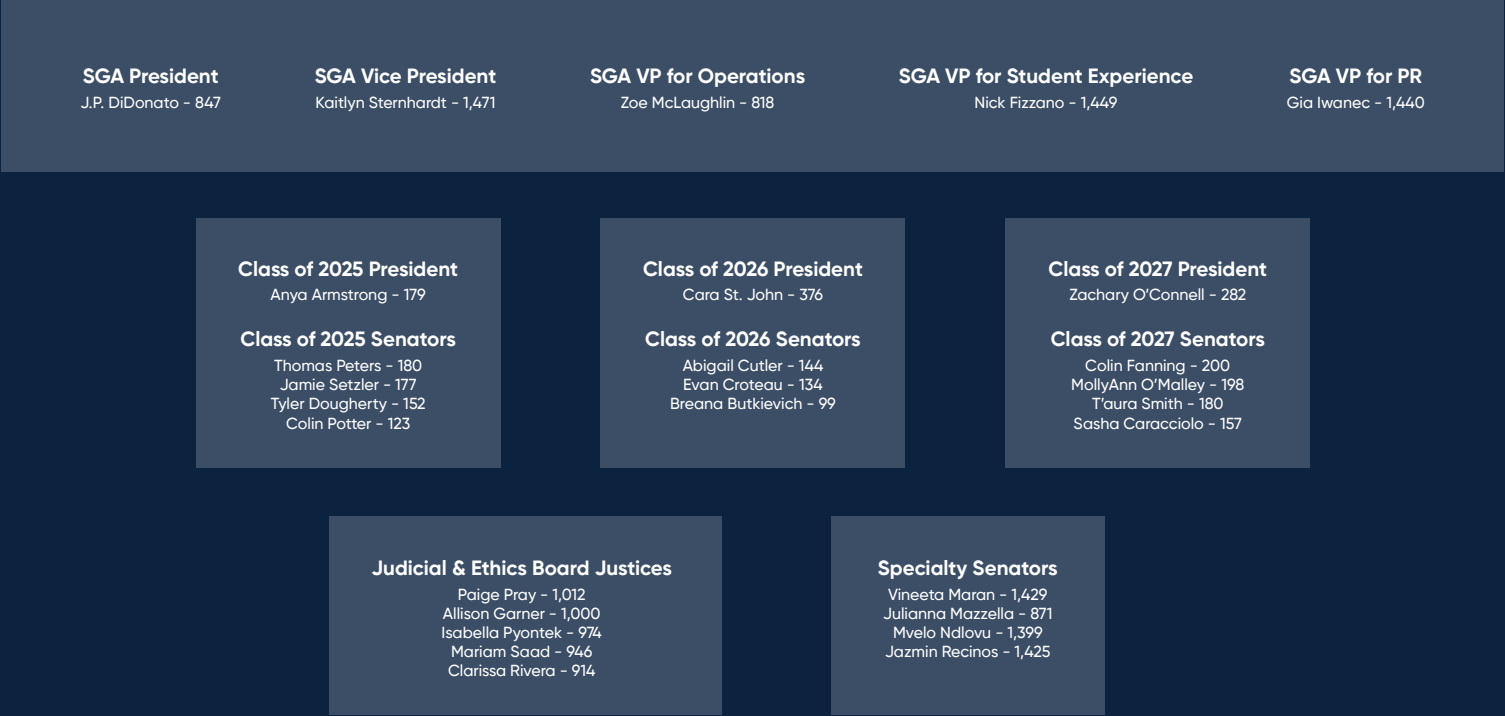
“I am excited about the recent upward trends in voter turnout during our elections, and I am thankful to have received such great support from the student body,” wrote DiDonato, a political science and applied business double major, in an April 15 statement to The Chronicle.

As body president, the rising junior — who has served as the class of 2026’s presi-

dent since September 2022 — said he aims to “empower all students, and to ensure that all voices, from all corners of our campuses, are heard and considered.”

“I will continue to advocate for student perspectives to be taken into account during each step of the university’s development, among all projects, large and small,” DiDonato wrote. “I am looking forward to working with all elected members to ensure that SGA becomes a powerful vehicle for student advocacy at Quinnipiac.”

## Spring 2024 SGA Election Results



INFOGRAPHIC BY PEYTON MCKENZIE

# Office of Learning Design and Technology brings online survey tool to all majors

By ALEXANDRA MARTINAKOVA  
News Editor

The online survey tool Qualtrics has been accessible to users for more than 20 years. Thanks to the Office of Learning Design and Technology, it is now available to all Quinnipiac University students.

Qualtrics XM is a cloud-based software that allows users to create surveys and collect feedback for academic research, course improvement and other educational purposes. It offers tools for designing surveys, gathering data and analyzing responses.

“It is a pretty common tool to find in most institutional academic tool collections,” said Adam Nemeroff, director of instructional design and technology, who also oversees the Office of Learning Design and Technology. “We’re really excited to make it available to the community overall.”

Nemeroff noted that Qualtrics is a versatile tool that can be extended from undergraduate research, teaching and learning projects, to mid-course surveys and more complex research projects.

Qualtrics has been used by Quinnipiac students before, mainly by those in the School of Business and School of Health Sciences, as well as offices of academic affairs.

“What’s new is that we were able to get

a campus-wide agreement for pretty much the same cost as we had for the pockets (we had),” Nemeroff said. “We were also able to make it more secure and integrated with Quinnipiac SSO and that also has other benefits because it allows us to set up collaborations more easily, so you can work with your faculty or other students.”

Nemeroff said that Qualtrics can be used by all majors, depending on the nature of the class.

“If you’re using it as a part of undergraduate research or capstone experience, I think there’s a lot of possibilities to built it into research methods courses and things like that,” Nemeroff said.

Qualtrics isn’t the only survey tool online. Other popular choices are sites such as SurveyMonkey, Google Forms or Microsoft Forms.

However, Qualtrics distinguishes itself from other tools as it is designed with academic needs in mind, enables large-scale data collections, provides comprehensive support resources and offers features for ethics compliance, according to the Quinnipiac Office of Learning Design and Technology informational website.

“Qualtrics is more advanced, more robust, has more customization,” Nemeroff said. “We’ve had Office Forms that still continue to be here and we actually recommend it a lot. In some cases it’s actually a better tool.”

Nemeroff said his team is always thinking about how to make new technology available to the campus community and how they can use it. In his words, they are “here to help people figure it out.”

“My team wants to be able to present the options available to people and then help them to know what kind of makes the most sense with that,” Nemeroff said. “There’s a lot you can do with it and dig into it.”

Even though Qualtrics has 4.8 out of 5 stars on Capterra, the destination for organizations to find the right software and services, many of the user reviews mention how difficult the software is to navigate.

“It is definitely something you need to learn how to use and wrap your head around it,” Nemeroff said.

He added that his team is thinking about ways to connect with those who use it and help them with resources.

“One of my colleagues went in (the software) and built out a premade theme,” Nemeroff said. “You can launch a quick survey and it’s got some QU branding and graphics going on with it too.”

Nemeroff added that if users have any questions or concerns, they can reach out to the Office of Learning Design and Technology or schedule a consultation.

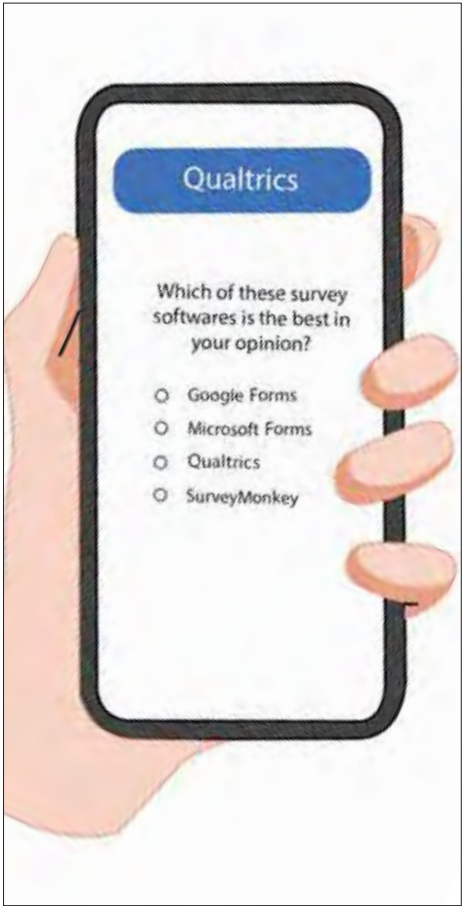


ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

# Opinion

## Breaking the stigma around drug addiction

### Why we should focus on rehabilitation instead of isolation

By **KRYSTAL MILLER**  
Associate Arts & Life Editor

When you hear the words “drug addict,” what words first come to your head? Is it junkie, druggie or burnout? For some, it may be the story of their brother, mother or neighbor.

People assume that drug addicts choose to be addicted to drugs, like anyone chooses to damage their relationships with the people they love. They don’t want to blow through their money or deal with the side effects of withdrawals. Drug addicts need help, not shame or avoidance.

In 2022, the U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 46.8 million Americans ages 12 and older battled a substance use disorder. Even if you may not be personally affected by drug addiction, I can almost guarantee that you have someone in your life who has, even if you are unaware.

Steve-O, also known as Stephen Glover, is mostly known as the star from MTV’s “Jackass” TV series and has been sober from drugs and alcohol for 15 years. He first got sober after his co-stars staged an intervention in 2008 when he was involuntarily placed into a psychiatric hospital and then went into an inpatient drug rehab center.

Glover said on the Tamron Hall Show that he never expected to even see the age of 30. Now he is 49 years old and has gone from not knowing where to go with his career or how to make back the money he lost during his addiction, to writing a book, going on tour and hosting a successful podcast.

Without the support of the people around him, he may never have gotten sober, which is why it is so important to take initiative rather than judge people with a history of drug addiction. I look up to Glover for his

determination to stay sober and give advice to others. Him sharing his story helps show that recovery is possible. The more people who open up about their experiences, the more the misconceptions around addiction can be reduced.

If the stigma around drug addiction does not go away, people are going to be scared to reach out for the resources they need. There needs to be more education around drugs, such as what to do if someone is having an overdose or signs that someone you know is struggling with addiction — rather than a D.A.R.E. program telling kids to simply not do drugs.

There also needs to be more safe spaces for young people to go if they have a drug problem. They deserve to have adults they can trust who don’t just immediately punish them.

Access to opioid reversal treatments, such as naloxone and nalmefene, needs to be expanded. Narcan, which is a product that dispenses Naloxone, is now available over-the-counter.

However, it costs around \$44 for 0.1 milliliters, which isn’t feasible for a lot of people when it expires after three years. There have been studies showing narcan works after expiration, but it is still marketed as lasting that amount of time.

Nalmefene requires a prescription and is around the same price for 0.1 milliliter. Having reversal treatments at places such as schools, concerts and bars would help so many people and normalize discussions about drug addiction rather than pretending it’s not a problem.

For more people to become sober, reha-

bilitation centers need to be more affordable. The total average cost individuals spend in the state of Connecticut to go to rehabilitation for substance abuse disorder is nearly \$58,000.

If people don’t have the money to receive treatment, they may just give up, especially if they have been there before. Free treatment centers don’t always have enough resources to provide what patients need and are more likely to run out of available space, which is not fair to workers or patients.

There also needs to be more government funding for syringe service programs, which facilitate the safe disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment. These programs provide opioid overdose prevention education and refer people to supportive housing, medication assisted therapy and primary care.

People who are in an SSP are five times more likely to enter drug treatment and about three times more likely to stop using drugs than those who don’t use the programs, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In 2021, approximately 107,000 people died of a drug overdose in the U.S., and the numbers only rise year after year. Significant change needs to be made on the local and national level, and people can’t be afraid to speak up. The first step is to let go of any negative associations you have with addicts and treat them the same as you would any other person.

Listen to the people around you. If you notice something is off about their personality or something seems to be going on, have a conversation with them. Be patient, even if they are not willing to talk about it or get help right away. It’s normal to feel angry or upset with them, but recovery is a process that’s not going to happen overnight.



## Bobcat Buzz



PEYTON MCKENZIE/CHRONICLE  
Ordering Starbucks through the Transact app can sometimes lead to hours-long waits.

## Starbucks Transact ordering is a sham

By **AMANDA MADERA**  
Copy Editor

I’ve personally always been a Dunkin’ girl, but I had to go out of my comfort zone and try something new when I came to Quinnipiac University.

Having a Starbucks in the Carl Hansen Student Center is a great asset. It’s a good place to grab food or a drink, study or hangout with friends. It’s also extremely convenient being able to place mobile orders to grab and go in between classes.

However, I order via the university’s mobile dining app, Transact, I find myself waiting longer than I would’ve if I ordered in person.

On any given day, you might have to order at least two hours ahead of time for your order to be ready. While Starbucks’s own app is pretty quick, QU makes customers use Transact.

The Starbucks employees have gone back and forth with putting orders behind the counter so people can’t grab their food or drink and be on their way. If this were to combat people stealing orders, I’d understand. But I don’t think that’s a huge issue.

This causes huge crowds to form, which makes students late for classes. The entire purpose of mobile ordering is defeated when I can’t just take my order and leave.

The Bobcat Den, commonly referred to as “The Rat,” requires you to show your order number before taking your food and leaving. This is a lot more efficient than waiting for an employee to hand you your order.

I’m not digging at the employees; I know working on campus can definitely be stressful especially at a popular place like Starbucks. However, I believe this could solve a few issues such as overcrowding and wasting time.

Let’s utilize mobile orders for what they’re meant to be used for. Students are trying to run on Starbucks, let them.



# Opinion

## Why we should have conversations surrounding sexual violence on campus

**By LILY PHILIPCZAK**  
Staff Writer

Pitiful and fake smiles, a sympathetic nod, a thumbs up, wide eyes looking at me up and down. Were these feelings of sympathy, disgust, fear, solidarity, appreciation or just discomfort? I contemplated that as I sat there for five hours.

Behind a table prepared to give information for the Survivor Advocacy Alliance, I watched as parents with their prospective students rushed past our table during Admitted Students Day.

The Survivor Advocacy Alliance is a student organization that supports survivors of gender and sexuality-based violence on college campuses. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, so I was shocked to see this reaction from onlookers.

At first, I thought it was an unusual experience, until a mother and her daughter came up to the table because they saw our shiny, teal tablecloth. When the mother read our poster, she grabbed her daughter by the shoulders and made a beeline for the next table. I had no idea what to make of that.

As parents with their prospective students dodged the table, I felt as though I had been slapped in the face.

Eighty-one percent of parents believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue, according to Love is Respect. Aside from the stigma, this could explain why parents avoided the table.

In the beginning, our brochures about

sexual assault resources remained untouched. I understand that talking about sexual and gender violence can be uncomfortable, but how do you think survivors feel?

The Red Zone, taking place from the beginning of the fall semester to Thanksgiving break, is the time of year when the majority of college campus sexual assaults happen, according to Promoting Awareness/Victim Empowerment. First-year undergraduate students are statistically the most vulnerable — which is why it is important to know the resources and support that are accessible.

First-year students are the most vulnerable because this might be the first time they are living away from home, exposure to campus culture and Greek Life rushing. They may be navigating new relationships, meeting new people, adjusting to the transition from high school, experimenting with alcohol or substances for the first time — which can increase the risk of experiencing sexual violence and may pose as barriers to reporting.

There are a multitude of reasons why parents may not discuss sexual violence with their child — because they believe that they could protect them, that the conversation about prevention would be too frightening or that it was not relevant to discuss, according to a study from Children and Youth Services Review.

That being said, there is a misconception that sexual and gender violence must be



ILLUSTRATION BY PEYTON MCKENZIE

physical for it to “count,” and this is extremely dangerous. There are many forms of violence such as harassment, stalking, emotional and psychological abuse. This misconception is significant because some young adults may not realize that what they experienced was an act of violence to begin with.

More than 57% of college students who report experiencing dating violence have experienced it while in college and 80% of survivors of stalking know the person who victimized them, according to Know Your IX. Education and community outreach is key to

sexual and gender violence prevention.

My friend and I reminded ourselves that even if people didn't stop and ask for more information, like they did for other student organizations, at least we got our word out. SAA is an organization open to both survivors and allies with the mission to destigmatize and spread awareness about sexual and gender-based violence.

To combat the Red Zone, prospective first-year students should know about SAA and the resources accessible to them and their peers.

## Stop the constant upgrades

### Not everything needs to be modernized

**By AMANDA MADERA**  
Copy Editor

As an 18 year old, why am I being made to feel like I'm 85 years old?

Everywhere I look, products are needlessly improving that are already functional. Out with the old, and in with the new seems to be everyone's motto.

These items don't need to be improved.

Constantly upgrading every time a piece of clothing gets old is not only a waste of money,

but it's actively hurting the environment.

Pollution, deforestation and global warming are actively destroying our planet, and a lot of it is due to the fact that we are constantly improving and upgrading everything and discarding what we think we don't need anymore.

By 2050, top causes of environmentally-related deaths worldwide will be outdoor air pollution, particulate matter and ground-level ozone, according to Fidelity International.

Growing up as a younger sibling, upcy-

cling was all I knew. I grew accustomed to hand-me-downs and playing with old toys.

By the time I grew out of my clothing, all of it would be donated to the Salvation Army or Goodwill for someone else to enjoy. While buying new items might be essential at times, a lot of things can be found at thrift stores for cheap prices and in good condition.

Places like the Salvation Army are affiliated with charitable organizations. Donating items you don't use anymore can help contribute to great causes.

You can save a ton of money buying items that are lightly used or sometimes even brand new from thrift stores.

Thrifts keeps clothing in use for longer, which limits wasted resources through decreased demand for new products, according to the University of Colorado Boulder.

There was definitely an uptick in thrifting among Gen-Z throughout 2020 and 2021 and even now, as we're making more environmentally conscious choices in an effort to practice sustainability. As of Oct. 26, 83% of Gen-Z Americans thrift second-hand items or are willing to, according to The Blackprint.

Thrifts can also diversify your wardrobe and help you find unique pieces that add a lot to outfits. You can often find items that have been discontinued from retail stores or that you'd never see in stores today.

However, thrifting is being hurt by the fast fashion industry. When people purchase clothing from online stores like SHEIN and

Fashion Nova, they quickly realize that the clothes were poorly made. A lot of these clothes end up in thrift stores and ruin the sustainability of thrifting.

Not to mention that buying fast fashion is unethical. A lot of those companies utilize child labor and treat their workers poorly.

People turn to fast fashion because it's cheap and easy to keep up with trends. However, these clothes are not durable and they end up being thrown or given away. Thrifting your clothes is a great and cheap way to find long-lasting pieces that can spice up your wardrobe.

Just because something might be old to you, doesn't mean it will be to someone else. Tag sales are a great way to get rid of items you don't use anymore and to make money.

Rather than throwing away usable items, hosting a tag sale can help reduce the amount of items in landfills. A lot of people go to tag sales as a hobby and you'd be surprised what people buy.

Tag sales and upcycling are also great for DIY projects. I love arts and crafts and it's really cool to be able to find unique items that you can use for problem-solving.

While some upgrades are good, I can't find any that outweigh the fact that the earth is dying, and modernization is one of the top contributors to that.

So, the next time you're going through old clothes and deciding what you don't need, keep in mind that someone else might find your trash to be treasure.



ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA



# Arts & Life

## Flo Rida brings the party to Wake the Giant



AIDAN SHEEDY/CHRONICLE

Throughout the performance, Flo Rida shouts "Make Some Noise!"



TRIPP MENHALL/CHRONICLE

Flo Rida's opener Oya Baby took over for two lively solo performances.

**FLO RIDA** from cover

A FEW FLO RIDA FACTS

The Chronicle interviewed Flo Rida via email prior to the event. He wrote that he decided to pursue music because it was always in his family. His father is an accomplished musician and his sisters have a gospel singing group.

To prepare for the show at Quinnipiac, Flo Rida wrote that he was working out, getting lots of rest and was just ready to bring the party. He also wrote that preparing to perform at Quinnipiac is not too different than preparing for his upcoming tour.

"I'm constantly performing so there's not much different," Flo Rida wrote. "I like each show to be organic so each show takes on a life of its own."

In the email, Flo Rida explained that his favorite song he's written is "Low" and it's also his favorite to perform.

"As soon as the intro starts you hear the crowd's reaction," Flo Rida wrote. "They're like, 'This is what I came for.'"

When asked what it's like to perform in front of a crowd that grew up listening to his music, Flo Rida responded that "It's surreal."

"I remember walking miles to attend a Nelly concert growing up and the fact that so many people want to see me perform and

tell me how much I inspire them is inspiring," Flo Rida wrote.

FLO RIDA TAKES THE STAGE

At 9 p.m. Flo Rida took the stage in a black vest with a silver sparkly logo printed on the back with fellow artist Oya Baby and several background dancers who helped keep the crowd's energy up for the entire night.

Anthony Pinto, a first-year psychology major, came to Wake the Giant because he said he just wanted to have a great time with his best friends and listen to live music.

"I thought it was awesome ... it was really worth it for the money we paid, lived up to all my expectations," Pinto said. "We all had a great time and at the end of the day that's all that matters."

Students hoped to hear several of Flo Rida's popular songs such as "Whistle," "Low" and "My House." All three were on the set list as well as a few other classics such as "Wild Ones" and "Right Round."

The rain didn't scare students away as many were in line outside before the doors opened at 7 p.m.

Lucas Jenkins, a sophomore computer science major, said that his experience at Wake the Giant was great besides standing in the rain for a little bit while waiting to get into the arena.

"I thought it would be a fun event to come

to," Jenkins said. "I don't get to come out to stuff often, so it's just nice to have a change of pace and do something bigger throughout the year."

Wake the Giant has been a staple event at Quinnipiac for generations and many students hear about it before they even come to campus.

Samantha Iaconis, a first-year marketing major, said she came to Wake the Giant because her cousin just graduated from Quinnipiac and she told her to attend every event and to be so excited for Wake the Giant.

"I think it was great," Iaconis said. "This was my first concert ever so it was definitely a cool way to go into it."

Iaconis said she liked that Flo Rida played "Whistle" but she said she was upset he didn't play "I Cry" because she said she was waiting for that one.

Many students remember listening to Flo Rida's songs throughout elementary and middle school with their friends.

"I know a lot of Flo Rida songs from middle school and I think it's very nostalgic and fun," said Christine Federico, a sophomore in the radiologic science program.

Flo Rida even brought groups of students on stage throughout the night to dance with him, sing into the microphone and some even got to take selfies with him. He also went

onto the floor several times and let students surround him.

Before singing "My House," Flo Rida took off his sneakers, signed them and gave them to two different students in the crowd.

"There is nothing like singing 'My House' in person and I was with a bunch of my friends," said Omar Metawea, a first-year finance major.

Toward the end of the night, Flo Rida sang the last few songs in a custom Quinnipiac men's ice hockey jersey with his name on the back.

The concert made students nostalgic as they listened to some childhood classics all while making new memories with their college friends.

Iwatsuki said that he hopes students had a good time at the event, especially seniors who are graduating soon.

"I want the seniors to enjoy their time, enjoy their moment, make memories with their friends," Iwatsuki added.

It's just about that time where classes finish up and there's projects and exams to study for, Iwatsuki said.

"It's one of the last times that people can come together with their friends and not really have to think about school or any stress in their lives and come and enjoy a concert," Iwatsuki said.

**"We were like, 'Oh, (Flo Rida) would create a great show for students where people will know the music, have a good time and get their mind off of finals and all those projects.'"**

**- ZACHARY IWATUKI**  
SPB PRESIDENT



AIDAN SHEEDY/CHRONICLE

The crowd in Wake the Giant reacts as Flo Rida performs one of his biggest hits of the 2000s.



# From bows to bad girl: JoJo Siwa's 'Karma' rebrand

By GINA LORUSSO  
Staff Writer

Following the debut of her newest single, “Karma,” JoJo Siwa is stepping into uncharted territory and embracing her so-called “bad girl” phase — which isn’t exactly a positive thing.

The former “Dance Moms” star always stood out because of her vibrant outfits, trademark hair bows and candid personality. Best known for her youthful pop music, Siwa is transitioning toward a mature phase — one she says is not for kids.

The “Karma” era includes the same amount of sequins as her previous style, but she’s openly using profanity in her new music and adding edge to her attitude — something she’s never done before.

With her new style comes a new personality. Siwa is still the outgoing icon we know, but she thinks this change has never been seen before. However, this switch from rainbows to monochrome is only to generate attention and won’t last long. Being that the majority of her fanbase is children, if she were to completely dedicate her image to match the “Karma” aesthetic, her brand would suffer tremendously.

The core message of her brand is empowerment and positivity for children and to inspire them to embrace their uniqueness. Now, her new image may be a bad influence for her audience.

Siwa ditched her pastel colors for a darker gothic look and became a less kid-friendly version of herself. While her new style draws public interest, that isn’t what outrages the public

— it’s her attitude.

Siwa’s attire in the music video for “Karma” is almost an identical replica of Gene Simmons’ iconic costume from the rock band Kiss. Interestingly, when compared to Simmons in an interview, Siwa was unaware of who the interviewer was referring to.

After sitting down with Billboard on April 5, Siwa came under heavy fire on social media.

During the interview, Siwa said she wants to pioneer a new genre of music called “gay pop.” This genre, however, has been established for decades. Queer artists like Miley Cyrus, Elton John, Lady Gaga and Freddie Mercury have launched their careers with music inspired by the queer community — all of which Siwa said are her inspirations for this new era.

TikToker @lemongayde later stitched the interview to be a voice for the LGBTQ+ community.

“Part of being young and queer and coming out and joining this community — entering into this space — is learning your history. Learning your roots and knowing where we’ve come from, knowing just how much work it has taken to get us where we are today,” they said.

After realizing it was a mistake, Siwa responded.

“I am not the inventor of gay pop, for sure not,” Siwa said in a video published by TMZ. “But I do want to be a piece of making it bigger than it already is. I want to bring more attention to it.”

On the other side of things, Siwa isn’t giving credit where it’s due.

It recently came out that Siwa actually has no songwriting credits on “Karma,” despite claiming she wrote it about one of her exes.

There are rumors that suggest “Karma” was originally written for Cyrus. The production team Rock Mafia — comprising Tim James and Antonina Armato, who are credited on Siwa’s version of the song — replied to a series of Cyrus’ tweets promoting the song’s potential release in 2012.

Prior to Cyrus’ recording, however, singer Brit Smith recorded and filmed a music video for “Karma” in 2011. This history has led fans to believe Siwa stole the song.

In another TMZ video on April 12, Siwa confirmed that the song was pitched to her and never belonged to another artist. She also said she has no idea who Smith is.

It seems like both Smith and Cyrus scrapped the song, ultimately letting it fall into Siwa’s hands.

A majority of the attention Siwa is receiving isn’t the good kind. Any press is

good press — and for Siwa, it’s working.

Every time I open social media, Siwa is being discussed in all her glory. Post after post, someone’s talking about her outfit, dance moves or something embarrassing she said or did. She gets people talking, and personally, I think she knows what she’s doing and how to keep it going.

Siwa feeds into social media, documenting everything she does and even collaborating with influencers like Alex Cooper, the host of the podcast “Call Her Daddy.” By doing so, she keeps her name in the headlines even if it’s for something negative.

The music video for “Karma” already has 20 million views. The video’s release was a can’t-miss event after the internet saw the excessive teasers Siwa put out.

“Karma” has led Siwa into edgier territory, sparking discussions about where this era will take her and if her efforts will be successful.

Despite the controversies online, Siwa isn’t slowing down. If anything, it’s fueling her desire to keep moving.

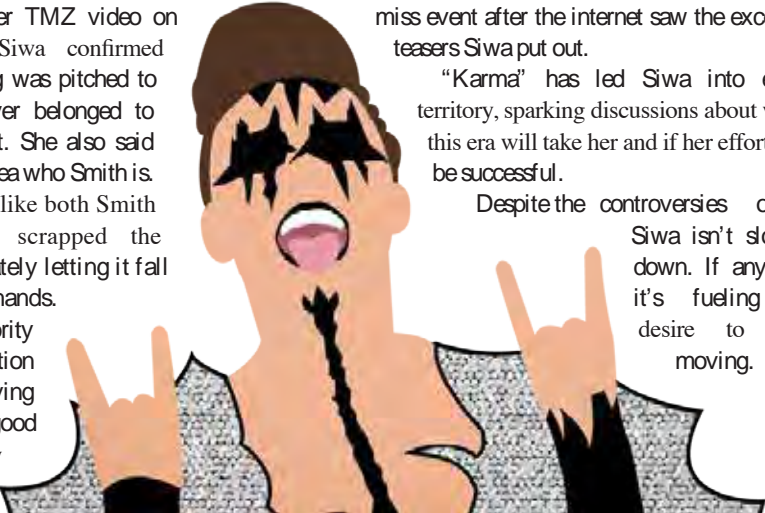


ILLUSTRATION BY TRIPP MENHALL

# 'Bluey' says goodbye for now in special season finale

By ZOE LEONE  
Arts & Life Editor

Seven minutes is not a particularly long time. But for those who watch the hit television series, “Bluey,” the time span has been a familiar episode length through the show’s past three seasons.

However, a special episode of “Bluey” — which follows the life of the 7-year-old Blue Heeler puppy Bluey Heeler and her little sister, Bingo, her mother, Chilli and her father, Bandit — marked a change for fans young and old of the show.

“The Sign,” which released on April 14, clocks in at a solid 28-minute runtime, providing audiences with an extra-long season finale to say goodbye for now to the Heeler family.

The final installment of season three follows the wedding of Radley, Bandit’s older brother, and Frisky, Bluey’s godmother. What starts as a picture-perfect gathering of friends, family and a gaggle of excited flower girls dissolves into a chaos when a runaway bride disrupts the planning.

But Frisky’s cold feet isn’t the only thing the Heeler family has to worry about. The previous episode, “Ghostbasket,” revealed that the family is in the process of selling their beloved home as they prepare to move to a new city thanks to Bandit’s new job opportunity.

And Bluey is not happy about it.

From breakdowns of howling puppies during school to desperate attempts to rip the large “For Sale” sign from the front lawn,

Bluey is ready to try anything to keep her family in their home of Brisbane, Australia.

The extra-long, extra-emotional episode follows the hijinks of Chilli, Bluey, Bingo and their cousins Muffin and Socks, as they race across town to track down Frisky and restore order to the impending nuptials. But Bluey’s ulterior motives — and Chilli and Bandit’s own doubts about uprooting their family — provide just as much chaos.

And as juvenile as that might all sound — because after all, it is an animated children’s show about anthropomorphic dogs — “The Sign” is about much more than just the silly adventures of a young girl and her family.

In true “Bluey” fashion, the episode doesn’t shy away from the hard stuff. Bluey and Bingo’s confusion and hurt about their upcoming move isn’t dumbed down for younger audiences. The sisters are shown experiencing raw and big emotions in an honest way. It affirms for children that it’s okay to feel, and for parents, that their kids understand more about the big world around them than they probably think.

But the youngest members of the Heeler family aren’t the only ones given the grace to work through the scary parts of life. As Bluey and Bingo grapple with the uncertainty of change, Bandit and Chilli stress about making choices that could hurt their family.

One moment in the episode finds the Heeler parents staring up at the large ‘For Sale’ sign in front of their family home, a “SOLD” sticker in bright yellow slapped across it. Bandit’s face droops as he lets out a sad sigh.

“I just wanna give them the best life I

can,” he tells Chilli.

As the Heeler family grows to learn throughout their extra-long runtime, change is a scary thing. Whether you’re a 7-year-old afraid of leaving behind the only world you’ve ever known or a parent trying your best to give your child an even bigger one, “The Sign” is a reminder of how scary the unknown can be.

Nothing in life is certain. There’s no way to know if the choices we make will be a success or a failure, whether they’ll enable us to thrive or prove difficult to survive through. And while change, no matter how big or small, can be scary, it can also be quite beautiful.

Throughout “The Sign,” the Heeler family learns perhaps one of the most valuable lessons life has to offer. As Bluey shares with her friends that she may soon move to a new city and “never see any of them ever again,” her always-wise teacher, Calypso, shares a secret with her:

“Everything will work out the way it’s supposed to, Bluey.”

Because “The Sign” is not just about the physical one sitting in the Heelers’ front yard. It’s also about the ones that follow them throughout the day, from Bingo’s favorite butterfly to Bluey’s lucky coin. Life is made up of the small things and the bright moments that guide us throughout the day.

So while fans may be temporarily bidding goodbye to the Heelers, “The Sign” was the perfect send-off. And while there will indeed be a season four of “Bluey,” only time will tell what adventures everyone’s favorite canine family will get up to next.

After all, as Chilli says, “I guess we’ll see.”



ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA RIHA



# Brunch served with a side of drag

By **KRYSTAL MILLER**  
Associate Arts & Life Editor

From being raised by late-'70s punks who were professional clowns, to now captivating students in the Carl Hansen Student Center Piazza, drag king Frankie Cyanide knows how to put on a show.

Students gathered in the piazza bright and early on a Sunday morning to enjoy brunch, bingo and a drag performance hosted by Quinnipiac University's Gender Sexuality Alliance.

Cyanide entered wearing a blue, green and gray tailored plaid suit, completing the look with striking black, green and purple makeup and chunky white heeled boots.

Cyanide now resides in Stamford, Connecticut, but is originally from Putnam County and Long Island, New York.

Gabrielle Inacio, the co-president of GSA, said the organization has been planning this event since the beginning of the semester, and having a drag king instead of a queen is what makes this unique from other past drag events.

"We really like supporting local artists," Inacio, a junior behavioral neuroscience major said. "We've learned that having bigger names is great, but as an e-board, I think we all decided that we'd rather support someone local. We feel a better sense of community by doing that."

One table in the piazza was colorfully decorated with pride flags and various stickers. The other had boxes of bagels and treats from Panera, as well as snacks and mocktails in elegant glasses.

There was also a door raffle prize, which was a pride flag signed by Cyanide. Any student that donated to the food drive for the New Haven Pride Center earned

another entry into the raffle.

Cyanide started off the event with a rendition of several songs, such as "Bad Idea" by Olivia Rodrigo, while dancing around the piazza. The crowd clapped and cheered him on with excitement.

Aleena Graveline, a sophomore game design and development and computer science double major, said her favorite part of the morning was Cyanide's performance. She also said she liked that students got the opportunity to get involved with lip sync battle during intermission.

"I always come to the drag events, I've been coming to all of them since I started school, I really think it's cool and fun that we have one so I always try to come if I'm available," Graveline said.

Students sat on the edge of their seats

eagerly waiting for their numbers to be called in bingo. Bingo rounds included making shapes like a music note or straight lines. As the game went on, Cyanide added clever commentary related to the numbers he was announcing, while sporting a bedazzled visor.

Neely Harrington, a first-year health sciences major in the physician assistant prep program, won a basket of painting supplies during bingo. Other baskets at the event had themes such as pride, music and books.

"I think it's really fun, it's exciting to experience, I've never been to a drag brunch so that's been cool and the breakfast is really good," Harrington said.

Inacio said with the increased violence against transgender youth, LGBTQ+ book bans and the restriction of gender-affirming

care, drag shows are more important than ever. She said drag is an expression of art and a way for the queer community to come together.

"(The political climate is) really quite horrible, but when you're at a drag show, it's kind of like a little bubble," Inacio said. "All that other negative stuff out in the world goes away and it's just you and other people in the queer community and allied supporters and the performer."

Multiple students volunteered for the competitive lip sync battle during intermission, where they performed to the song "Holding Out For a Hero" by Bonnie Tyler. All of the students won paper gold crowns at the end.

Anna Soliwoda, a first-year film, television and media arts major, started gliding across the floor to the beat while participating in the lip sync battle. She said she wishes there were more events like this on campus.

"It's a nice environment, it's not like you're gonna be judged," Soliwoda said.

Cyanide concluded the event with a fantastic final performance. As the routine went on, he revealed more coats under his brown trench coat. The other coats included two sequined jackets and another neutral colored jacket.

Inacio added that it is important for students' mental health and their sense of belonging to have spaces like the drag brunch where they can have a support system and meet others like them.

"I think it's really hard when you don't see yourself represented in a lot of places," Inacio said. "Nobody wants to feel like they're alone or left out, I think it's something that all people can relate to."



Frankie Cyanide showing off his drag outfit and makeup during Gender and Sexuality Alliance's Drag Brunch Bingo on Sunday.

# Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole and why their feud led to an apology

By **MICHAEL PETITTO**  
Staff Writer

Rapper J. Cole got up on stage in front of 50,000 people at his annual Dreamville music festival on April 7. It wasn't to rap, it was to speak his piece after dissing Kendrick Lamar on "7 Minute Drill" just two days prior.

"That's the lamest shit I ever did in my fucking life," Cole said. "I haven't been sleeping right the past few days, we taking that diss off streaming services."

Hip-hop was built on competition. From Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G. in the '90s, to Jay-Z and Nas battling for New York in the 2000s, it's always been about who's the No. 1 emcee. So rap fans may be wondering how it got to the point where instead of a diss, an apology was issued.

This all came to fruition last year, when Drake released his highly anticipated album "For All The Dogs" and dropped a song with Cole. On the track titled "First Person Shooter," Cole raps about the "big three" of hip-hop. It is a consensus in the hip-hop community that Drake, Cole and Lamar are the three best and biggest rappers from the 2010s, and Cole makes reference to this in his verse.

"Love when they argue the hardest emcee is it K-Dot, is it Aubrey or me," Cole raps. "We the big three like we started the league, but right now I feel like Muhammad Ali."

To see Cole give both Drake and Lamar their flowers was great to witness, as Lamar had not collaborated with either rapper in over a decade and these industry titans had not collided very often up to that point.

Not only did "First Person Shooter" go

No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, Cole's verse sparked conversation online about the big three, and whether or not the three rappers are still at the top of their game in the 2020s.

But a nuclear bomb was about to be dropped on the hip-hop landscape. On March 22, Future and Metro Boomin released their album, "We Don't Trust You," with a surprise feature from Lamar on "Like That," and he had a lot to say.

"Fuck sneak dissin,' first-person shooter, I hope they came with three switches," Lamar raps. "Motherfuck the big three ... it's just big me ... and your best work is a light pack, Prince outlived Mike Jack' ... 'fore all your dogs gettin' buried, That's a K with all these nines, he gon' see Pet Sematary."

As someone who thought the rap game took a hit in its entertainment value in 2023, it was thrilling to see Lamar take shots as the most successful hip-hop artist in the game currently. The Westside rapper has had an on-and-off-again feud with Drake for a decade.

The Michael Jackson reference is especially damaging, as Drake has compared himself to the popstar multiple times. Lamar is basically saying that he will outlast the Toronto rapper, in life and in the rap.

Just two weeks later, Cole released a surprise mixtape "Might Delete Later" where he throws shots at Lamar on the final track "7 Minute Drill."

"He still doing shows, but he fell off like 'The Simpsons,'" Cole said. "Your first shit was classic, your last shit was tragic, your second shit put them to sleep but they gassed it. Your third shit was massive and that was your prime, I was trailin' right behind and I now just hit

mine."

It's especially disingenuous to attack any part of Lamar's discography, as his bodies of work have few blemishes on them. It seemed from the start that Cole did not want to take any shots at Lamar, and that the North Carolina rapper was conflicted.

And it does seem that the attacks did not come from a place of malice, or were even genuine as Cole would deliver his apology and take back everything he said about the Compton rapper at his Dreamville festival just two days later.

"How many of y'all think Kendrick Lamar is one of the greatest ever to pick up a mic?"

Cole said.

As a fan of the rap game, it's a conflicting dilemma. It's corny to diss someone and their body of work just to take it all back two days later. And it's natural to want to see competition from these rappers — especially Cole — who has written in his bars for years how he's the best in the game and would annihilate anyone lyrically who tries to come at him. But as a person and a human being, it's mature to be the bigger man and walk away from it all.

So although Cole can sleep at night after making peace with the Compton rapper, it may come at the cost of his throne on rap's "big three" stage.



DESHAUN CRADDOCK/FICKR/INAKI ESPEJO-SAAVEDRA/FICKR/PHOTOILLUSTRATION BY TRIPP MENHALL



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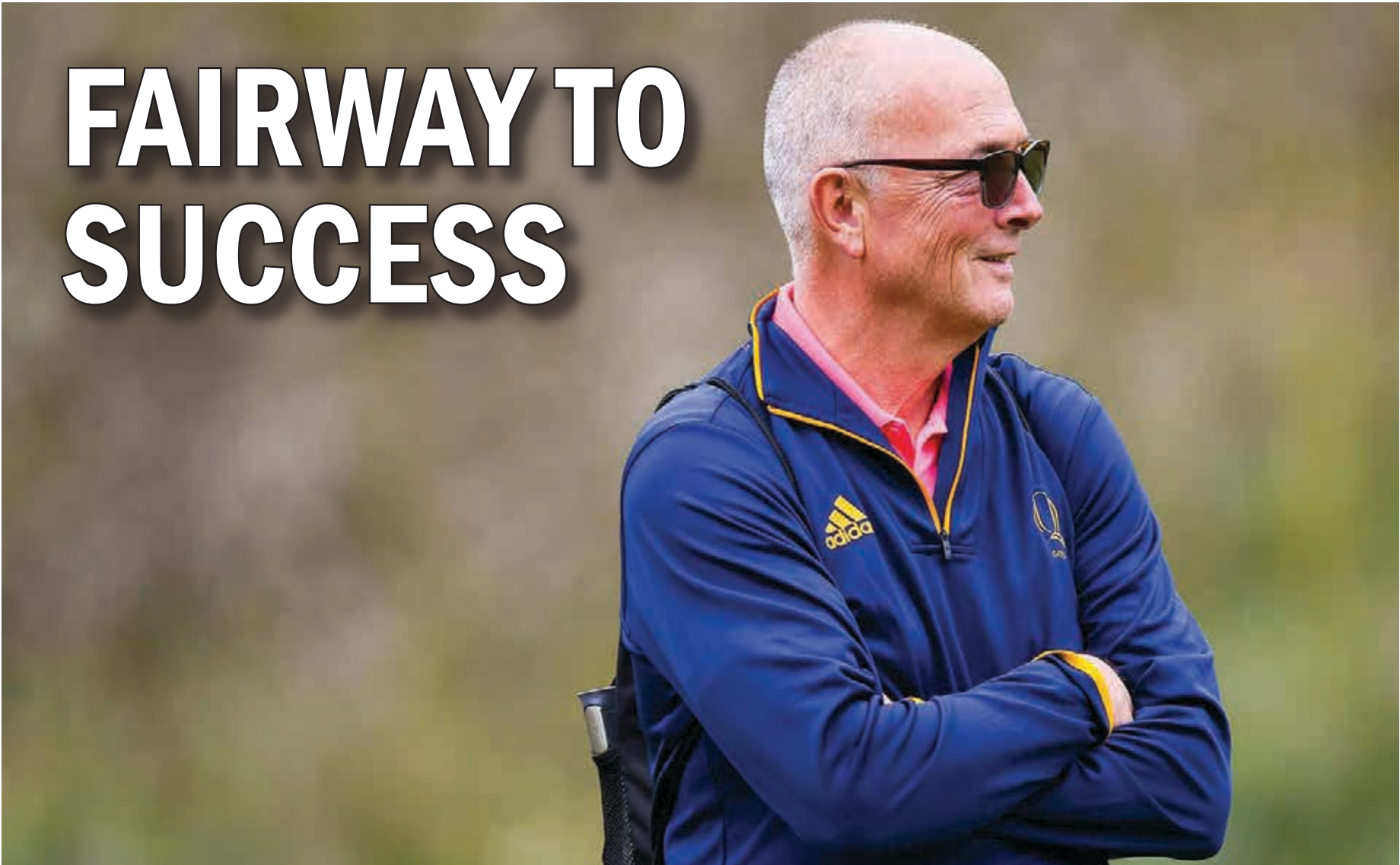


PHOTO COURTESY OF QUINNIPAC ATHLETICS

# FAIRWAY TO SUCCESS

## John O'Connor's coaching career on par for greatness

**By RYAN JOHANSON**  
Copy Editor

John O'Connor isn't your ordinary golf coach.

Quinnipiac golf's head man has been at the helm for 18 seasons, boasting five MAAC conference titles. He's a three-time conference coach of the year winner: once in the NEC (2013) and twice in the MAAC (2016-17), with a program-record 23 tournament wins.

But if you were to ask his teenage self, tournament wins weren't on his mind. In fact, neither was golf.

"When I was younger, I wound up swimming in high school and in college," O'Connor said. "I was the captain of my high school football team. Football ... was the most important thing to me for much of my life."

In his early life, O'Connor swam at the now-abandoned Twin Lakes Swim and Tennis Club in Stamford, Connecticut, as a sprinter — specializing in short-distance races ranging from 50-meter to the 100-meter freestyle — while playing wide receiver and free safety on the gridiron.

O'Connor chose the sub-30-second, 50-meter freestyle instead of the two-to-three-hour playtime over 18 holes. He opted for scoring touchdowns on the 100-yard field, rather than chasing birdies on 1,000-yard courses.

So how does a coach who didn't grow up loving the sport end up with 23 tournament wins and five conference titles? It's the skills he learned from being a sprinter.

"You don't have the opportunity to talk to people about what you're doing during a meet. It's all just you," O'Connor said. "I think it has given me the ability to read athletes and know which ones are going to be competitive. So much of what I see in coaching is the kids with more desire (to) succeed."

That focus and desire has translated to his players. They see how his commitment to other sports — while not being conventional for a top-ranked golf coach — has made him a better leader.

"Because he played so many sports, he knows what it takes to be a good athlete,"

graduate student Leeyen Peralta said. "He knows the work that it takes and the grit and the determination and I think he does a good job in relaying that message."

Though O'Connor may not be a PGA professional or a former college player like many coaches, one thing he does have is an eye for talent.

O'Connor doesn't recruit just from his own backyard. He seeks players outside of Connecticut, from California to China.

The top three finishers in last year's MAAC Championship — Peralta, graduate student Kaylee Sakoda and junior Fuge Zhang — all are from the west coast or overseas.

"I used to go down to the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida, and I brought in some good golfers from there," O'Connor said. "I brought in a golfer from Bolivia. I brought in girls from Venezuela at that time, and then at some point I started going out to California. They've got so many great golfers."

Hailing from California, Peralta has been with the program for five years, garnering eight individual wins — with a program-record four tournaments wins this season — and the 2021-22 MAAC Golfer of the Year award. She came to Quinnipiac after O'Connor's pursuit at her senior showcase. From then on, Peralta was destined to grace the navy and gold.

"I knew that he was the coach I wanted to play for just because of the way he supported me and the way he interacted with me and my dad," Peralta said. "I knew that he would be somebody that I wanted to be a part of a team and work with."

The ability to recruit Peralta, Sakoda and Zhang happened because of the news that changed O'Connor's golfing tenure at Quinnipiac.

Starting in July 2006, he took the reins of the men's golf team from former head coach Todd Howes. In O'Connor's three seasons as the men's coach, he didn't finish higher than eighth in the NEC championships.

During the middle of his third season, on March 4, 2009, O'Connor found out that his men's golf team was being cut for budgetary

reasons. In response to this on July 21, 2010, Quinnipiac announced its plans to add women's golf in compliance with Title IX.

The university brought along women's golf after the volleyball team filed a lawsuit against the school, citing that it was looking to replace volleyball for competitive cheer. This was until a decision of U.S. District Judge Stefan R. Underhill where he ruled competitive cheer not a varsity sport.

As a result, the aforementioned golf program and rugby were brought onto campus.

O'Connor took the role of women's golf head coach in its inaugural 2010-11 season. In 18 years, O'Connor has claimed a program-record 23 tournament wins. He won his first career tournament at the Quinnipiac Classic in 2012, and went on to take the classic again in 2021 and 2023.

"He really emphasizes self-discipline, and then he also tries to foster a lot of supportive and collaborative opportunities within the team," senior Aimee Uchida said. "So that at least motivates us, especially on the course we always cheer each

other and support each other."

O'Connor decided to also teach a new group of players.

The Orange, Connecticut, native extends his expertise by offering a one-credit class called Beginning Golf at the Sleeping Giant Golf Course. This unique opportunity allows students to delve into the fundamentals of golf under his guidance.

"I do enjoy introducing new people to golf," O'Connor said. "I spend time on the driving range and Sleeping Giant with the beginners, just getting them comfortable enough that they can go into the pro shop and say, 'I'd like to play nine.'"

O'Connor has come a long way from the sprinter who also played on the gridiron to teaching a course at Quinnipiac about the basics of golf.

For somebody who said he's "not a PGA professional," O'Connor has Quinnipiac one tournament win away from a four-peat, which hasn't been accomplished since Siena won 11 straight from 2001-2012.

Not bad for a swimmer.



COLIN KENNEDY/CHRONICLE

O'Connor (right) stands with graduate student Leeyen Peralta after winning the Quinnipiac Classic on Oct. 10.



# ‘Believe’: Women’s lacrosse going down fighting

By COLIN KENNEDY  
Associate Sports Editor

It’s been a rocky road for the Quinnipiac women’s lacrosse team.

Just a year ago, the program had its best season since 2011, winning 10 games and a MAAC quarterfinals win in what seemed like a turning point for the team.

Then, just seven weeks before the season, former head coach Tanya Kotowicz, “left the program.” Interim head coach Jordan Christopher was placed into the role that same day.

It’s been a different story in 2024, with only two wins up to this point. That said, the Bobcats aren’t going down without a fight.

Just take a look at the “Believe” sign hanging in their locker room.

“‘Ted Lasso’ is a big thing for us,” Christopher said. “We talk about the belief, we watched a video about it today.”

You don’t have to look any further than

the Bobcats’ April 13 overtime loss to Iona to see that belief shining through. The 9-4 Gaels came into Hamden looking to roll over the second-to-last-place team in the MAAC, but instead found themselves in a fight.

Quinnipiac gave Iona everything it had, with junior midfielder EllaGrace Delmond striking with just four seconds remaining in regulation to force overtime. Ultimately, the Bobcats fell just under a minute into the extra frame when Iona senior attack Micaela FitzPatrick scored her fourth goal of the game.

Despite the loss, the Bobcats showed plenty of grit, a common theme with this group coming down the home stretch of the season.

“They’re fighters,” Christopher said. “They aren’t going to give up on anything and (have handled) adversity through everything. We’re finding all the bright spots we can in a season that definitely hasn’t gone our way.”

One of those bright spots is the squad’s competitiveness. In Quinnipiac’s last seven games it’s only lost by more than three goals once, a 17-5 loss to No. 23 Fairfield. While it may not be translating in the win column, it’s a positive sign nonetheless.

“They’re really an awesome group,” Christopher said. “The scores haven’t been a reflection of how good of a group this really is. I’m proud to coach them.”

Another silver lining for the Bobcats has been the play of junior goaltender Lindsay Mazzucco. The Fair Haven, New Jersey, native has been solid between the pipes this season, suiting up in 12 games so far. Mazzucco currently ranks third in the MAAC in saves-per-game with 8.25.

Even coming off the loss to Iona, Christopher was proud of the way Mazzucco bounced back after giving up some early goals.

“We talk to her a lot about flushing it and moving on to the next play,” Christo-

pher said. “She showed up big time after those first couple (goals). Unfortunately, one goes in at the end that she is probably going to be thinking about for a while.”

Looking ahead, Quinnipiac needs a lot to happen for it to see postseason action. For now, it’ll have to focus on beating Siena on April 15 and Niagara on April 21 to close out the regular season.

“We actually rise to the occasion when we have better competition in front of us,” Christopher said. “I like that we are still playing the top of the conference at the end. It gives us a little extra fight, a little extra boost.”

Will the belief the Bobcats have turn into a miracle and land them a spot in the playoffs?

“We still have a fight to get ourselves into the playoffs, it helps keep the positivity,” Christopher said. “They believe in each other, they believe in themselves, they believe in what our plan is as a staff.”

If you ask them, they believe.



Quinnipiac women's lacrosse celebrates following a 18-13 win over Rider on April 6.

GEORGE MADDALONI/CHRONICLE

## Acrobatics and tumbling earns No. 2 seed in NCATA National Tournament

By COLIN KENNEDY  
Associate Sports Editor

Quinnipiac acrobatics and tumbling was selected as the No. 2 seed in the NCATA National Tournament, the league announced Monday. The Bobcats will head to Fairmount, West Virginia, on April 25 to take on No. 7 Frostburg State in the quarterfinals.

“This team is ready to go,” head coach Mary Ann Powers said on April 6. “There has been a village behind this team ... they just wanna put the Q on their chest and do the best they can.”

Quinnipiac is coming off a 6-0 regular season, its first undefeated season in program history. It knocked off No. 3 Gannon 277.610-270.345 on April 6 to close out the regular season.

“This team works hard and I’ve never been a part of a team so dedicated and so willing to put it all out there,” senior base Tiffany Zieba said on April 6. “I’m really lucky to have them as sisters.”

The Bobcats last went head-to-head with Frostburg State in a 267.785-260.800 victory on April 1, 2023. Frostburg went 7-2 during the regular season and is coming off a Mountain East Conference Championship win over Fairmount State on April 13.

Quinnipiac is still searching for its first national championship in program history. The Bobcats fell to Baylor in the 2023 NCATA semifinals, 281.055-272.420.

The quarterfinal matchup is set for 10:30 a.m., and will be streamed on ESPN+.



Quinnipiac acrobatics and tumbling celebrates after a win over Iona on March 23.

TYLER RINKO/CHRONICLE



# SWIMMING WITH THE SHARKS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAN JOSE SHARKS, PHOTOILLUSTRATION BY CAMERON LEVASSEUR

## Inside Collin Graf’s first week in the NHL: ‘Something you’ll never forget’

By CAMERON LEVASSEUR  
Sports Editor

Collin Graf tried to take it all in as he walked out of the locker room at SAP Center in San Jose, California, on April 6. The 21-year-old was seconds away from his NHL debut with the San Jose Sharks, doing his best to calm the nerves as he took the ice for his rookie lap.

It was the culminating moment of Graf’s hockey career thus far. And then he almost fell flat on his face.

“There was a nice little step down there that I wasn’t aware of,” he jokes a week later, now with a handful of NHL games under his belt.

Graf recovered from that misstep, playing more than 13 minutes for the last-place Sharks in a 3-2 overtime win over the St. Louis Blues. It marked a new beginning for the two-time Hobey Baker Finalist, less than a week after his collegiate career with Quinnipiac came to an end, railroaded in a valiant effort against eventual national runner-up Boston College in the NCAA Tournament.

The second Graf stepped off the ice that night in Providence, the clock began. As the undisputed top free agent in college hockey, it was no secret that he would turn pro — the only question was where.

He fielded interest from more than 20 teams, but tried to maintain some sense of routine on campus. So Graf went to class, ran through workouts and got on the ice for a few skates to stay sharp.

“I just sort of tried to use it as a normal week, but any free time that I had was analyzing and thinking about where I should go and what decision I should make,” Graf said.

Day by day, the pressure increased as Quinnipiac’s top line splintered. Jacob Quillan — Graf’s centerman — signed with the Toronto Maple Leafs on Monday. Sam Lipkin — who played the opposite wing — neared a contract decision of his own.

“It was getting to that point where ... I wanted to make a decision, I just didn’t want to make the wrong one,” Graf said. “Once I decided and signed that contract, there was definitely a weight lifted off my shoulders.”

The 20-team field narrowed to five by Wednesday, a group of “more western conference” teams, Graf said. He met with each finalist on Zoom, after which San Jose emerged as the favorite.

“They were honest with me. They said what they honestly thought of me. So I think that was really important,” Graf said.

That, combined with a strong northeast contingent in the Sharks organization, sold Graf on the move to Southern California.

San Jose general manager Mike Grier spent half a decade coaching at St. Sebastian’s School in Needham, Massachusetts, 20 miles south of Graf’s hometown of Lincoln. Head coach David Quinn, a Rhode Island native, coached at Boston University. Senior advisor Tom Burke, director of player personnel Scott Fitzgerald and assistant coaches Scott Gordon and Ryan

Warsofsky also all hail from Massachusetts.

“The relationship with the northeast and the college guys was important,” Graf said.

By Wednesday night, he’d reached his decision. By Thursday night, he was on a plane west. By Saturday night, he’d become the youngest Quinnipiac alumnus to play in the NHL.

The learning curve was evident from the first time Graf touched the puck, barreling straight toward 6-foot, 6-inch St. Louis defenseman Colton Parayko.

“He just sort of pushed me to the side,” Graf said. “The physicality is definitely a step up from college, going against men as opposed to college kids. I think that’s been the toughest adjustment for me.”

Parayko was far from the only player to welcome Graf to the league. Seattle Kraken forward Yanni Gourde shrugged him off on an offensive-zone break in an April 11 game, spinning Graf to the ice and sending his helmet flying. But the lowlights have become moments to build from for the rookie.

“The strength, it’s way different,” he

said. “It’s good for me to learn now so I can work on it in the summer.”

And on the offensive end, Graf is turning heads. He’s playing serious NHL minutes — averaging more than 16 per game — alongside Luke Kunin and William Eklund on the Sharks’ second line, and recorded his first career point against the Arizona Coyotes on April 7.

“His puck skills are real,” Quinn said following an overtime loss to the Calgary Flames on April 9. “He’s got a lot of confidence with the puck which is good to see for a young player at this level, especially when you’re three games into your NHL career.”

San Jose has long been eliminated from playoff contention, so Graf will return to Quinnipiac in a week to finish out the school year. But things have changed. He’s reached a tipping point in both his life and career, the moment where he goes from a 21-year-old college kid at an unpronounceable Connecticut school to neck deep in the waters of professional hockey, learning how to swim with the sharks.

He shared the ice with Connor McDavid on Monday, but he’s living in a hotel room, trying to keep up with school work the best he can.

Nearly every city he travels to will be a first. He’s still adjusting to the time change and has just become confident that he knows the name of every guy on the team.

But his comfort with the pace of play is “growing every game,” and the tangible skills that first caught the eye of NHL scouts two years ago are translating more and more.

“I think everyone’s advice was sort of the same thing,” Graf said. “Play your game, play what got you to this level. Don’t change your game now that you’re playing in the NHL.”

The Sharks burnt a year of Graf’s three-year, \$2.83 million entry-level deal to let him test the waters. And if this seven-game stint is any indication, it seems that he can swim just fine.



TYLER RINKO/CHRONICLE

Graf recorded 108 points in two seasons at Quinnipiac, twice earning All-American status.