

# The PauwWow

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## Undocumented Immigrants Left Out During COVID-19 Outbreak

By Victoria Bishop-Smith,  
Arts and Entertainment Editor

Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, there are undocumented immigrants who pay taxes but do not qualify for the recent stimulus package given to Americans. According to Vox, undocumented immigrants pay over 1.5 billion in taxes yearly in New York and New Jersey. During the COVID-19 outbreak, they are being affected along with everyone else. Johanna Juarez, a Saint Peter's University freshman studying biology, said her dad, who is from Mexico and works as a landscaper, is continuing to work, but due to COVID-19, his job requires landscapers to work alone meaning one person to one lawn. Because of this, her mother, who has switched to at-home work, has been helping him landscape due to his increase in workload. Both of her parents pay taxes but are unable to receive aid during this time. "I don't believe it's fair," said Juarez.

During quarantine, Juarez said they have been cutting down on spending because if not, money will become tight. Desiree Armas, an SPU junior studying environmental studies and social justice, said her parents have been stressed out since quarantine began. Throughout this time, her mom, who works for a non-profit organization, has continued to work at home, but her father is temporarily on leave.

She said her mother, who is not used to working at home, is becoming drained from the constant flood in phone calls received from her job. Both her parents contribute to paying taxes, and were heartbroken when they found out they did not qualify for the stimulus check because they are both undocumented. Armas expressed her concern about this. "Although we do pay our fair share and contribute to the economy, it is still dehumanizing to only be seen and validated in this context alone," said Armas. "Must we be 'productive' in order to be recognized as human beings? Are we not the same? Apparently, to those in power, it's not that simple."

During this time when families are adjusting to new norms, and being laid off, a stimulus check can make a difference. "The undocumented community, including DACA recipients, TPS holders, DAPA eligible parents and U.S. born children of undocumented parents have been degraded, isolated

and set aside for decades," said Armas. "And this anti-immigrant campaign has reached its fullest potential with the conscious exclusion of undocumented folk, ITIN holders, mixed-status families, and young DACAmented students from receiving a much needed stimulus check."

Many advocates have taken heed to this situation and are fighting for the rights of undocumented immigrants. Make the Road NJ, an organization founded in 2014 to fight for immigrants' rights, has been especially vocal. "They are starting petitions, calling folks and contacting our local officials in order to make much needed changes to the CARES Act," said Armas. They hope to have undocumented immigrants included in the next distribution of aid along with Armas, who said that the package should cover all families regardless of status.

Currently, resources available to undocumented immigrants include health care coverage. Make The Road NJ has also collaborated with Rutgers Law School students to hold virtual DACA clinics on Fridays from 2 to 5 p.m. along with multiple minor reliefs. Maria Mendez Varillas, an SPU sophomore studying political science, communication and marketing, said that the undocumented community needs allies now more than ever. "There is no check coming to help us. In some cases, people were already surviving with less than a liveable wage. We are counting on our community and allies to have our backs," said Mendez Varillas.

Mendez Varillas, who supports Make the Road NJ, said that right now, the website has a page where people can directly donate part of their stimulus check to support low-income immigrant families. And across the United States, there is a larger campaign called #ShareMyCheck, that encourages people to raise money for families as well.

As California became the first state to expand their aid to undocumented immigrants, the community hopes that New Jersey will do the same. "We are asking New Jersey to step up and be a leader in the protection and progress of immigrant rights - for all, not just some," said Mendez Varillas. More recently,



Governor Murphy has implemented a new order that allows foreign licensed individuals to carry medical licenses during this time and practice temporarily.

Make the Road NJ took to Twitter to thank Governor Murphy, but still hopes for more efforts to be made. Other than big campaigns, some smaller reliefs are being made for undocumented workers within the community. Kimberly Rojas, an SPU freshman studying cyber security and criminal justice, said her mom was recently laid off along with many of her colleagues. The restaurant group that her mom works for has created a Go Fund Me to implement staff relief. But as the country remains in quarantine, it becomes harder for people to get together and campaign as before. Nevertheless, the fight for representation for the undocumented community continues.

Mendez Varillas said now that there is a lack of gathering, it has pushed advocates to become more creative. She said there are people participating in driving rallies where they place signs on their cars and drive past detention centers, beeping their horns. There are also many petitions and ongoing meetings to campaign. "The world may be on pause but we are still undocumented and so we must still organize," said Mendez Varillas. •

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# News

## Stimulus Checks! Scratch That, You Probably Don't Qualify.

By Diana Paredes,  
Design Editor

On March 30 of this eternal 2020 year, President Donald Trump announced that the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) would be distributing economic impact payments beginning April 15. More commonly referred to as "stimulus checks," this payment would help with basic necessities for "as many Americans as possible" according to the Trump Administration.

As headlines bombarded all media outlets, Americans let go of the breath they had been holding since the quarantine started; but, quickly, that sigh of relief turned into a disappointed expression, going viral through social media. As with many things that seem too good to be true, that suspicion would be correct here. The rules for the stimulus checks according to the IRS are:

"Tax filers with an adjusted gross income up to \$75,000 for individuals will receive \$1,200 and up to \$150,000 for married couples filing joint returns will receive the full payment of \$2,400. Single filers with income exceeding \$99,000 and \$198,000 for joint filers with no children are not eligible. Social Security recipients and railroad retirees who are otherwise not required to file a tax return are also eligible and will not be required to file a return."

Eligible taxpayers who filed tax returns for either 2019 or 2018 will automatically receive an economic impact payment of up to \$1,200 for individuals or \$2,400 for married couples and up to \$500 for each qualifying child. Now, we see the information for our parents/legal guardians, but there's nothing that

talks about college students. One of the largest bodies of people contributing to the economy are college students.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, for the fall of 2019 there were 19.9 million students attending colleges/universities. Now, if half of those students filed their taxes independently over the age of 18, about 10 million students are being left out of this stimulus cut. With such a large quantity of people being left out of the stimulus denomination, a lot of confusion, disappointment and frustration with the government and Trump administration was created.

Graduate student for the Public Relations Program at Saint Peter's University, Analisa Leite talked about her experience through the stimulus checks situation. "I have a full time job, but I pay for grad school by myself with loans in my name, and I have my student loan payments which are \$836 a month, and I don't get a stimulus check because I am a dependent," said Leite.

Although Leite does live with her parents, she points out that it does not necessarily mean it has all her other external payments covered. Leite said, "I'm paying for my graduate degree, my loans, car insurance etc." In response to her thoughts about how the Trump administration is handling the pandemic and in the midst of it the announcement of these checks:

"It was negligent of the government to not think of college student's." Leite said, "I think he is handling this pandemic in the

worst, most embarrassing way possible. The Trump administration only cares about money, and, if we're being honest, a one time payment of \$1200 in the tristate area isn't doing anything."

The stimulus checks are meant to stimulate the economy and help move money, and who better to move money in our economy than college students. Leite said, "I'm in a very fortunate situation, where my parents help me if I need it. But for the majority of students who may be low income or depend on financial aid and work hard for their work study jobs, those are the students that needed this because they don't have the support to be able to get through this."•

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GRAPHIC & ARTICLE BY: DIANA PAREDES

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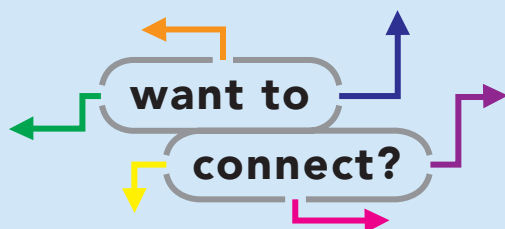
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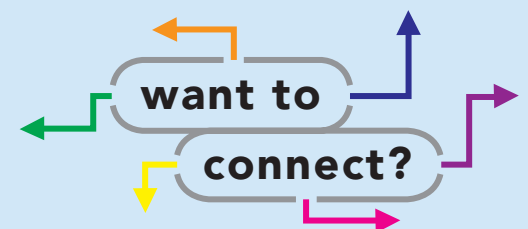
The Pauw Wow is looking for eager and talented students to fill the positions listed below. Any questions or inquiries can be directed to Alex Antonucci at [aantonucci15@saintpeters.edu](mailto:aantonucci15@saintpeters.edu)

#### Lifestyle

Someone with prior journalism experience who is who is able to edit the Lifestyle section for print and



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## News

# What It's Like To Teach A Lab On An Online Course

By Mark Rotundo,  
Chief Copy Editor

Online learning has been a confusing time for both faculty and students at SPU.

Since the school's closure in March, every department has had to reconfigure their teaching strategy and adapt to the usage of online learning tools in order to educate students during quarantine.

Needless to say, the transition was awkward for many departments. It was especially difficult for STEM departments who not only had the task of moving their regular classes online but their labs as well. With a teaching format that essentially requires students to have a hands on experience, where does a STEM professor begin?

Dr. Christian Traba, Associate Professor of Chemistry at SPU, found alternative means of giving his students a lab experience that he believes is as close to the real thing as possible.

"We've been having virtual labs; we've been using websites and virtual labs from ACS, which is the American Chemical Society. So, based off of their virtual labs, we've been making our own modifications," said Traba. "We've essentially incorporated that into the lab. So, instead of them having to do mixtures in person, they're doing it virtually."

Along with these virtual labs, Traba also uses videos on YouTube to show students particular experiments and other procedures. These videos come from other college professors and from the Chemistry Department's own YouTube channel that was made years ago.

According to Traba, his students seem to be adjusting well.

"I've been very open with my students. And I don't think that they have any complaints regarding my teaching and what I've been able to do. ... I think things are going well for my students," said Traba.

Dr. Jessica Epstein, Department Chair and Associate Professor of Chemistry, held much of the same sentiment. Epstein noted that although the regular curriculum transitioned smoothly thanks to the help of IT, labs were more of a "challenge".

"What the instructors were doing was that they were going into the lab and demonstrating the experiment in real time in the lab so the students could see and it was familiar. But then we were not allowed on campus. So now it's been a little bit more challenging," said Epstein.

Epstein also mentioned how the department at large has been relying on YouTube to teach their labs. She thought that some students would enjoy the online labs since it is a much more simplified version of a class that is usually 3-4 hours per session.

However, Epstein also acknowledged that many students still prefer regular labs.

"Some students really love lab; they love [the experiments] and to get in there and do it themselves. So I think for those students it's kind of a flatter experience. It's not as three dimensional," she said.

Epstein regarded the experience as, "the difference between watching a cooking show and actually

getting in the kitchen and making the recipe."

Adam Daoud, Junior and Chemistry major, is one of the students having to deal with online labs. He is in Traba's Instrumental Analysis class.

Daoud said that, although he believes his professors are doing a great job of trying to capture the lab experience in an online setting, it just isn't the same.

"There are some instruments that are very much necessary in the chemistry field that you need to know how to use," said Daoud. "You can't say that you know how to use it, if you've never actually touched it."

Even so, Daoud is still pleased with how the department has handled online courses. He believed that due the nature of his major the transition would be much more difficult.

"I feel like they're doing well. They are doing the most that they can," Daoud said. I was really surprised to see how [professors are] teaching I honestly thought it was going to go worse ... but I'm actually understanding a bit more than I did in [person] for some of the classes."

Daoud's only real complaint was the increased amount of homework being assigned. He said some professors "bombard" him with more homework with the idea that since he is home, he has more time for work.

Ultimately, Daoud was more concerned about the well being of his fellow classmates and professors.

"I just hope everybody's safe and that everybody's doing well. And, hopefully, we all pass this semester and forget about it," said Daoud.

to screen share so as to present powerpoints or other prepared material.

Both professors also expressed support for the university's decision to give students an extended period for the pass/fail option for their courses, saying that it is good that in this emergency that the university is willing to be lenient on students in consideration of their anxiety surrounding this crisis. •



"I'm actually understanding a bit more than I did in [person] for some of the classes," said Daoud. Photo courtesy of Adam Daoud



Epstein regarded the experience as, "the difference between watching a cooking show and actually getting in the kitchen and making the recipe." Photo courtesy of Saint Peter's University Chemistry Department



Traba (bottom row, right) has been utilizing virtual software provided by the American Chemistry Society and YouTube to teach his labs. Photo courtesy of Dr. Christian Traba



## News

# Meet Gabby Ambroise, The SPU Student Running For Public Office

By Loretta Graceffo,  
News Editor

For the past five years, Gabby Ambroise has been a familiar face around the Saint Peter's campus. Since she graduated last year with a history degree, she has started working for the Communications and Political Science departments. She also works as an RA, and is currently pursuing her masters in Public Administration— all while running for the position of Hudson County freeholder at only 22 years old.

Because of the pandemic, she's had to replace door-to-door campaigning with phone banking, but she hasn't let that stop her. In order to run, candidates must amass 100 signatures from people in their district— and though she had to get some of her signatures online, Ambroise has secured her spot on the ballot. Her opponent, Bill O'Dea, has held the position since 1998.

If you are from District 2 of Hudson County (which encompasses parts of Jersey City, like Greenville and Journal Square) you will be able to vote for Gabby on June 2nd, when national primaries and local elections are taking place. Currently, Gabby and some of the other candidates are fighting to hold the vote by mail in order to maintain social distancing.

I got the chance to speak with Gabby about the ideals behind her campaign, her passion for public service and why local politics are important.

**For people who don't know, how would you describe what a freeholder does?**

Freeholders create legislation on the county level, so they control the county parks, the roads, the budget, the taxes and the county schools. It's a huge position and not many people know about it. It's concerning because the freeholder of the county has a \$3 million budget— everyone should know what they do, because they have so much money to use.

**What made you decide to run?**

I went to a meeting at the Holland Gardens in Jersey City as part of one of my public policy classes at Saint Peter's. It's an affordable housing unit, and we met the tenants there. They shared their experiences about the conditions they live in, which are terrible.

There are rodents, and one tenant even experienced a loss of hair from the mold.

At the meeting, it was so clear that developers' interests in Jersey City to build luxury style housing is superseding the needs of the majority of working people here.

I strongly believe that housing is a human right. And hearing the tenants' stories, I just knew that the cities weren't doing enough. The county has been

in Greenville and parts of the Heights, that are hard to access with public transportation. Part of my platform is sustainable transportation and climate justice. We need to work on reducing our individual carbon footprints. That means expanding access to public transportation so the folks don't have to rely on their car so much.

I also think that we need to be doing more to support our communities of color and provide better educational opportunities. Something I want to work on countywide is establishing a Pathways to Higher Education program so young folks can have a better grasp of what they want their future to look like post-graduation. Getting young people off the streets and focused on their future will boost their self-esteem and give them a better sense of their purpose.

**What are some experiences you've had that qualify you for this position?**

When it comes to internships and experience with advocacy, I've dipped my toes and gotten involved in a little bit of everything. But more importantly, I think the future of politics in Jersey City looks and sounds like me. It is young, black, brown, people of color, women, and LGBTQ folks. I am genderqueer and bisexual. I grew up with a working-class immigrant mother, and I grew up paycheck to paycheck. It's us who are representing our communities, and standing with our communities. We have lived these experiences.

**What is your advice for other young people who are considering running for office?**

Run! Just run! Don't even question it. I know it seems super scary, and you don't know what's going to happen, but just do it. Don't be afraid to fail— life is a learning process. If you aren't afraid to try, you don't know what could happen. You could fall in love with it!

**Other than serving as freeholder for Hudson County, what are some of your long term career goals?**

I want to do work surrounding human rights and justice, no matter what that ends up looking like. One thing I've thought about is becoming an immigration lawyer. My mom is from Haiti and she got her citizenship in 2015, so it's something I'm really passionate about.

I don't believe in dream jobs— the concept of living to work in a capitalistic society is something I can't fully agree to. But I do dream about making effective change. I want to improve not only my life, but all people's lives. •



Gabby Ambroise has been a student at Saint Peter's for the past five years— and at only 22 years old, she is running for public office in Hudson County; Photo by, Gabby Ambroise.

silent for far too long— they need to step in and do more. For me, that meant taking on a bigger role by running for freeholder.

**Affordable housing is a major part of your platform. What are some other issues in Hudson County that are important to you?**

There are certain parts of Jersey City, especially



## Stand Up, Organize And Fight: Dr. Edgar Rivera Colon Says Goodbye To Saint Peter's And Jersey City

By Gineen Abuali,  
Opinions Editor

On the first day of classes, he makes all of his students fill out index cards with their names and fun facts about themselves. He takes this extra effort because he wants to do more than simply remember his students' names. He also wants to get to know them.

That is Edgar Rivera Colon, PhD, a professor who encourages his students to speak up inside and outside of the classroom. Whether he is seen on campus talking animatedly to a student while gesturing passionately with his hands or giving one of classroom life lessons, Dr. Rivera Colon is a big part of the Saint Peter's family.

Although he is a professor who has lived in Jersey City his whole life, he has now made the decision to leave Saint Peter's and Jersey City. Effective June 30th, Rivera Colon will no longer be an Assistant Professor at Saint Peter's University; instead, he will be moving to California to be with his family.

He will miss his home, but he said that he is excited to make the move to East Los Angeles.

"It's like living in a Latin American city," he said. "It's nice in this part of my life to start something new."

After five years at Saint Peter's, Rivera Colon hopes that his students stay strong and succeed, just as he says they have helped make him a better teacher.

"I realized early on that I needed to frame the teaching in the context of the lives my students were living and to be very clear to them about what they need to do in the next step in their lives," he explained. "A lot of the work of teaching at Saint Peter's is not only teaching, but also saying to students 'prepare for the next steps, and these are the resources for you to do that.'"

In California, Rivera Colon thinks that he will most likely end up teaching and doing research, but his main priority is being in California and enjoying it. In the meantime, he will continue to teach online at Columbia University.

He knows that change is difficult, but he is confident in Saint Peter's Jesuit tradition of pursuing social justice.

Saint Peter's, he said, "is an institution that values social justice and spirituality. That's a key connection that lasts longer in the struggle for social justice." But Rivera Colon does not think Saint Peter's is perfect. He says that there is a diversity problem amongst faculty that is currently being addressed, but it needs to be addressed more intensely in the coming years.

Despite that, he explained that he has seen a lot of diverse hires compared to when he first started, and a surge in development of great leaders in the Latin community makes him happy and proud.

What is his favorite thing about Saint Peter's?

"My favorite thing about Saint Peter's is that a lot of people including students, faculty and staff, are first-

generation in terms of college or PhD, and I think that gives the place a different quality. There is not a lot of snootiness. It's a very down to earth, grounded place," he said.

Although he will be moving across the country, Rivera Colon wants his students to be proud of how resilient they are. Getting to know them has been one of his best experiences.

"To get to know students and the way they manage their lives is very admirable. They have to be multi-taskers. I understand that, but it's also a lot of stress. I've really enjoyed some of the work I did with the undocumented students at The Center for Undocumented Students with the healing circles. That's been very important work for me," he explained with pride.

Rivera Colon is a first-generation student, and comes from a poor, working class background. This has played a major part in helping him relate to his students.

"I've been teaching people in my home city that are very similar to me in background," said Rivera Colon. "I see it as teaching people that I care about and are a part of my community."

His message to students is this: "The most important thing that they can remember is that they have really all the basic human qualities to move forward. They may need some skills or tools, but because they come from communities of struggle, they are resilient."

He wants his students to know that they are capable, and he hopes that Saint Peter's continues to grow and remain an institution that is accessible to many students who depend on it.

Saint Peter's has gone through a rough patch these past few years. Many people are overwhelmed at Saint Peter's, and they have a lot on their shoulders. There are also widespread economic difficulties, explained Rivera Colon.

He said, "The thing that I worry about is the resources. I worry about the economics. Will Saint Peter's be able to survive in the next five to ten years?" Rivera Colon hopes that it does.

Not only does he hope to see it continue as an institution that supports and is accessible to low-income, working class students, but he also hopes that it grows and remains grounded in its community, commitment to social justice and Jesuit tradition.

After all, "We are not a university anywhere; we are a university here in Jersey City, in Hudson County, in Northern New Jersey. That is part of our identity that must be preserved, and I think that will happen."

This identity and his students help him understand that what he calls the main crises in effect – widespread gentrification in Jersey City, the climate and health crises, the collapsing economy and hollow political parties – will be met head on with community work and activism.

Although he is moving to California, he will be taking Jersey City and Saint Peter's with him to

continue the struggle for justice, and despite all of the chaos currently going on in the world, Dr. Rivera Colon has one final message for his community:

To Jersey City and Saint Peter's he says, "Stand up, organize and fight." •



Dr. Edgar Rivera Colon speaking to students as he encourages them to speak up and use their voices; Photo by Edgar Rivera Colon, PhD.



Dr. Edgar Rivera Colon says goodbye to Saint Peter's after five years; Photo by Edgar Rivera Colon, PhD.

# Arts & Entertainment

## All Hail Tik Tok (At Least During The Quarantine)

By Diana Paredes,  
Design Editor

The second week of March came, and Jayson Idelfonso, an undergraduate student, returned from his spring break trip to Amsterdam where he'd learned that classes at Saint Peter's University were being moved to online to slow the spread of Covid-19.

Like thousands across the country, in the next few days, Idelfonso was confined to being home.

So, he turned to Tik Tok. Formerly known as Musical.ly, in August 2018 the app was taken over by ByteDance, a Chinese company, and so all musical.ly users were moved to Tik Tok officially.

Tik Tok maintains a separate app for the Chinese market called DUYIN and has over 300 million active monthly users. The logo of Tik Tok in the United States is a combination of Musical.ly and DUYIN logos.

But what is Tik Tok, exactly? The short version: song snippets, special effects and a couple of filters. The more complex version: a new era of video editing in short form and creative space.

During quarantine, Tik Tok has become the third most used app across the world. With Instagram holding the number one spot and Facebook coming in second, Tik Tok follows all the major social media apps.

At 500 million active users and over 80 million downloads, the app is thriving during the pandemic (at least something is).

"The app captures local trends through hashtags and gives you an equal playing field to go viral," said Idelfonso.

Idelfonso joined the app before quarantine, but didn't use it as much at the beginning.

"I downloaded the app last year, then I deleted it and redownloaded it as something fun to do with friends," he said.

His first Tik Tok got 236 views with Chris Brown's song "Don't wake me up" in the background and different clips of him under his blanket, symbolizing, well... not wanting to wake up. If 236 views seem like a ton, try 434 thousand views!

A video of the "Savage" challenge dance, set to Megan Thee Stallion's song, went viral when she reposted the Tik Tok of a fan on her Instagram. Later on, celebrities like Justin Bieber and Jimmy Fallon began showing off their savage dance.

Idelfonso's savage video got him over 400k views and plot twist, he had his mom standing in the background for a reaction, to which he responded "that's probably what got me the views, my mom's facial expressions are known to be funny."

Idelfonso says he tries to post daily and goes on Tik Tok to look for inspiration, then making his own video and adding what he thinks will be funny and personalizes it.

In a new social world, this includes dancing challenges, Frozen sing-alongs, or relatable #mood content. Tik Tok has reached the influencer level with the term "Tik Tokers" coming into play.

Now, everyone is a Tik Toker if you're on the app,

but are you influencer level? And what does that even mean?

Like all the platforms that have their run of the mill celebrities, Instagram reigning in for the crown of influencing, Tik Tok brings to you "The Hype House"

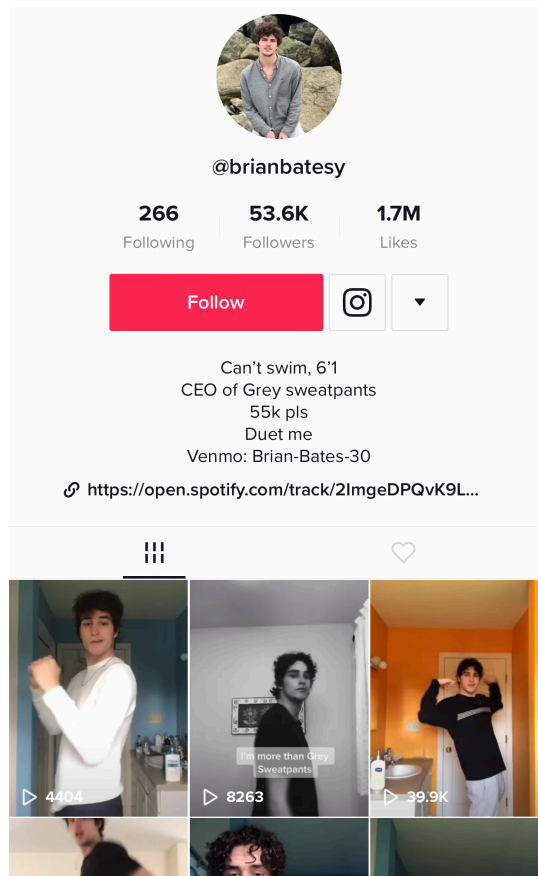
Labeled as a content creator collective by the NYTimes, it is a sleek, modern-styled mansion sat at the top of a hill located in Los Angeles. There are a total of 19 members in the house, four who reside in the mansion permanently and others who crash while they're in town.

The Hype house was formed in December of 2019 by some of Tik Tok's most influential stars and was designed to be a productivity house where all the members produce a various number of Tik Toks with other members and get their viewership up.

You may have heard of something similar with Jake Paul's "Team 10" house. There was another instance back in the day when content creators surfaced "02L short for Our Second Life" which was run by YouTubers Kian Lawley and JC Caylen.

Essentially, all the houses built around the same idea, have a group who will produce content to boost ratings and get the hype needed to draw attention from the public and be your own self-made celebrity.

Brian Bates, a former Saint Peter's University student now attending Pace University, studies film and shares his rise to fame on Tik Tok racking in 53.6 thousand followers with over 1.7 million likes and all still growing.



"Follow the CEO of grey sweatpants @brianbatesy on Tik Tok"

"I used to post 3 times a day, but then I realized that one did better than the others, so then I just decided to post one really good one daily," he said.

Bates, a swimmer for his university, started Tik Tok with a large swim following and although he still caters to that following, he has branched off into different content.

His bio on Tik Tok, containing a 4 line, short description of what people may be able to find on his page says "Can't Swim, 6'1, CEO of Grey sweatpants, 55k pls, Duet Me."

Bates said he tries to see what people like and creates his content around that. "I'm really trying to collaborate with people, and with the duet feature I want to get on that to see if it'll get my viewership up."

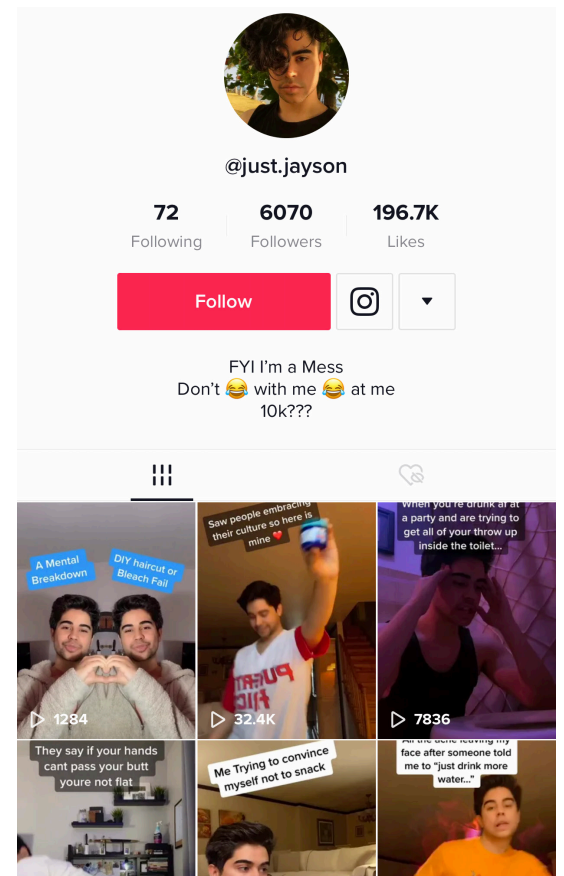
As far as making a potential career out of Tik Tok, both Idelfonso and Bates agree that it is very likely because unlike other platforms, the chance of you going viral is 8 out of 10.

Bates said, "Going into the summer, I've asked myself what if my following quadruples, and so I'm trying to make connections to keep my following growing, that potentially could lead to something more."

With his biggest video at over 4 million views, Bates seeks to grow his following and capture the audience as much as he can during this quarantine.

"I have zoom calls with fans and it's cool to see a whole bunch of people who like my content," he said

Needless to say, Tik Tok is buzzing during times of crisis and whether you're making videos of your dog at home or your toosie slide dance challenge, there is room for anything and everyone. Like in Idelfonso's case, you may have the chance to be reposted by JLO, or in Bates' case host your own zoom call with your very own fans from all over. •



"You can find more of Jayson's Tik Tok's @just.jayson"



## Lifestyle

# Finals In The Age Of A Pandemic

By Eva Reid,  
Contributing Writer

In a time of distress, it has been a challenge for Saint Peter's University students to transition from a face-to-face classroom setting to an online one. Now with the semester coming to a close soon, it is time for professors to start finalizing their exam plans.

Attila Medl, a Mathematics professor, is giving a take-home final. He plans on making the exam harder since it will be considered open-book.

Medl thinks that a take-home exam makes the most sense during this time.

"I don't think that a real-time exam given online is effective. Students can be in a noisy environment, they can be nervous in this unusual setup, or network issues can come up," he said. "I prefer a take-home exam. Cheating and group work can be an issue, but I plan to give out several versions of the test with slightly different problems, which will make cheating more difficult,"

But Medl is not the only professor preparing for final exam alternatives. James Adler, a fine arts professor, is doing what Medl feared, a "real-time exam."

"For my Intro to Music class, students will access the exam on the day and time as though it were given 'live' in class. As on earlier exams, during this terrible pandemic, students copy the exam and input their answers into a Word document or PDF. There is a time limitation on the exam and it is essentially an 'open notes' exam," Adler stated.

Adler, who also teaches a Live Musical Art class for the Honors Program, plans on changing the final format for his students in that class.

"For my Live Musical Art Honors Class, instead of giving a final exam this year, they will do a final project," said Adler.

Even though these formats are different from the normal exam format, Adler is hopeful for the results. "I believe this will be as effective as an in-class exam," he said. "But it will also be a different nature than an in-class exam."

Katherine Wydner, a Biology professor, is giving an online final exam for the first time.

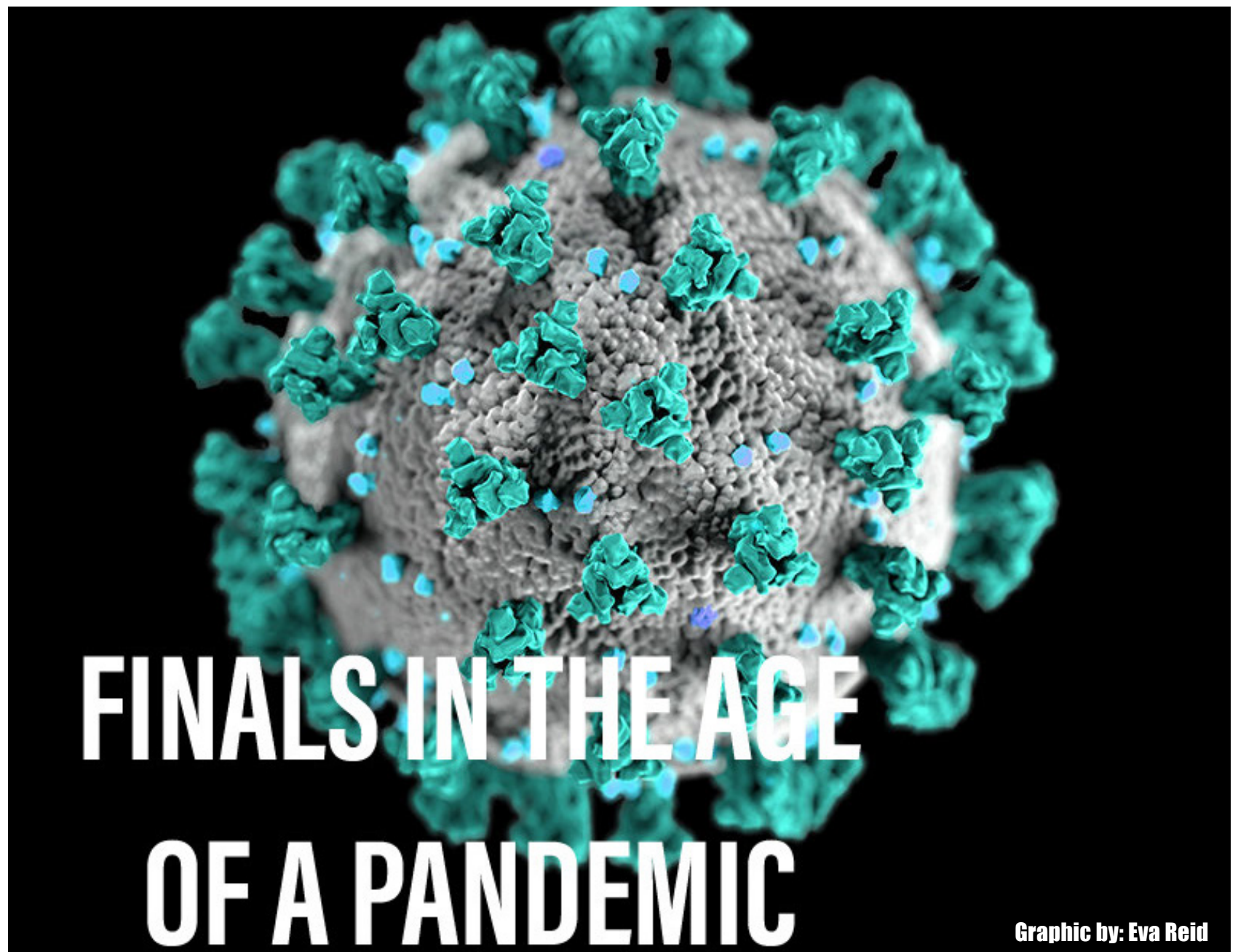
"Next week I'm planning to attend a Google Meet workshop on final exams being taught by Rob Adelson of our IT department. I'm planning to set up the exam to be taken through Blackboard during the scheduled final exam," said Wydner.

She believes that online exams can be effective in some ways.

"I think an online exam can be effective in assessing how much students have learned. Since I can't proctor the exam, I am considering allowing it to be an 'open resource' for them, meaning that they can use their notes, textbooks, the internet, etc. They will just be asked not to give or get help from any other person inside or outside the class," Wydner said.

In the age of COVID-19, professors at SPU are figuring out new approaches to giving final exams that they believe will be effective.

As these new approaches are implemented, professors and students alike can see how it all turns out. •





## Lifestyle

# Student Profile: Graymi Angeles Marte

By Ethan Mangold,  
Contributing Writer

As her newswriting class had come to an end, while most of Graymi Angeles Marte's classmates headed off to another class, to lunch, or to study elsewhere on campus, she was headed to work.

Angeles is a junior at Saint Peter's University with a major in communication and a minor in business. Currently, she also works at a local bank as a branch ambassador.

"We do everything; we go from the teller, processing cash transactions, to helping people opening accounts, closing accounts, opening business accounts," said Angeles.

She said this jack-of-all-trades style work has served her well.

"It was easy for me to get to know everything; you get more experience, if you end up wanting to do something else."

Aside from experience, Angeles's job helps with her educational finances by paying for half of her tuition. Her job also offers her tuition reimbursement.

"Whatever I pay to [my] loan, they give back to me at the end of the semester," said Angeles.

But while banking is serving Angeles well, she has other plans that may take her elsewhere—like into the world of journalism, a field she's worked in before.

"I want to do broadcast journalism, or work on radio stations," said Angeles.

At 27 years old, she has developed a love for communication which began in her home country, the Dominican Republic. "Ever since I was younger at the age of 6 or 7, I was always exposed to presenting at school activities. I would perform throughout dances, acting for Independence Day activities, etc.," she said in an email.

For Angeles, juggling work and studies has been the norm since high school.

"I used to sell lottery tickets. I was in high school and I was going to work in the afternoon. I worked the whole week. It did help me a lot because I had to be exposed to people. I learned how to talk to people and how to express myself in public. That opened the door for me to get the job I have today in the bank as well."

She wasn't always interested in communications. As a child, she wanted to become a lawyer.

Angeles came to the United States in 2011 at the age of 18, and the timing of the move led to her heightened interest in journalism.

After finishing high school, her family was in the process of acquiring visas to live in the U.S., following a trend among their relatives.

"Most of my family was already here. That's pretty much why we came. I have family here that's been here since the 80s."

For some of her relatives, the migration was notably challenging.

"On 9/11, my grandma had the appointment to go to the embassy to get her visa. When she was waiting

to be assisted, they had to take everybody out, shut everything down. On Sept. 23, she was able to come in. She has been here for almost 20 years now."

Now her own family's turn to migrate was approaching. Rather than begin college in her home country and be quickly uprooted, Angeles took courses and was able to land a receptionist position at a local T.V. channel. It was there that the door to the media world opened to her.

"In the same building there were radio stations, so I got the chance to see how they worked, and I asked some of the employees how they got into it. Someone told me that all I had to do was a course that took 6 to 12 months to complete in order to get a license to work in a radio program, and so I did," said Angeles.

If she had stayed in D.R., her radio connection could have created a career for her.

"Right before I came to this country, they actually offered me a position there in a program they were going to do."

When Angeles first arrived in New Jersey with her parents and siblings, things were tough. They found themselves sleeping together in one room of a friend's house for the first months.

Angeles was able to land herself a job quickly, however. She worked in a restaurant kitchen making appetizers and desserts. The job helped her learn to communicate in her new country.

"I learned a lot. I got to learn a lot of English, because I got to practice with a lot of people."

Before coming to Saint Peter's, Angeles studied at Hudson County Community College.

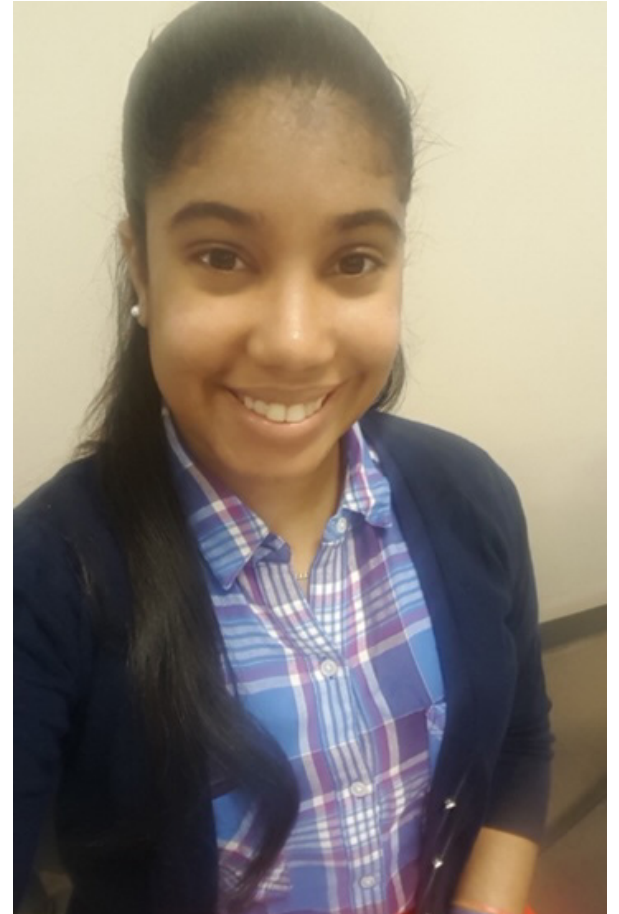
"Over there they have English Majors, but I wasn't interested in studying English itself because I didn't want to become a writer or anything like that. I'm more of a talker," she said.

Angeles currently lives in West New York with her husband. Whether she finds a place for her talent and passion at the bank or returns to broadcast journalism, she is pleased with where she's at right now.

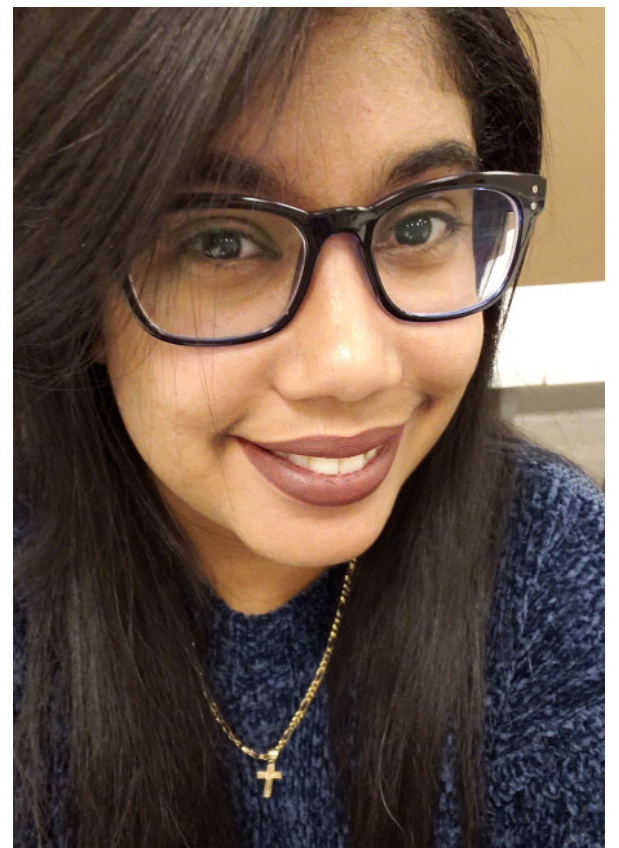
"I really like living here. I work in Journal Square so it's easy for me to come from work to school here. My job pays very well, and it pays almost half of my tuition here."

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses have made their employees work remotely from their homes, or in some cases, they have shut down entirely. However, banks are determined to stay open for the time being, and so Angeles is still behind the teller's glass, albeit now wearing gloves to handle people's money. She maintains a bold attitude despite the circumstances.

"I've been through a lot before now, so if that all didn't kill me, nothing will." •



Angeles is a junior at Saint Peter's University with a major in communication and a minor in business. Currently, she also works at a local bank as a branch ambassador; photo courtesy of Graymi Angeles Marte



"I've been through a lot before now, so if that all didn't kill me, nothing will;" photo courtesy of Graymi Angeles Marte



## Lifestyle

# Higher Education: How Marijuana Has Helped

By Lauren Lapitan,  
Contributing Writer

Anxiety and stress builds up with the overwhelming amount of school work students have while also trying to balance a social life, work and extracurricular activities.

With 4/20 having recently passed, students have expressed how marijuana has helped them overcome the challenges of college and the stress that comes with it.

A recent study from the National Institute on Drug Abuse says that 39 percent of college students aged 18 to 22 use marijuana recreationally.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, the chemical in marijuana known as THC is carried throughout the bloodstream to the brain and other organs. THC activates receptors in the brain that cause “high” feelings, such as altered senses, changes in mood, and impaired body movement.

Jack Payne, a senior studying political science, has been an avid marijuana user since high school.

“Weed helped me get through college because it’s what de-stressed me at the end of the day,” said Payne.

A junior nursing student, who chose to remain anonymous, has a forty minute commute to school and must balance their clinicals with their part time job. They must also find time to study for the rigorous nursing classes they take.

The junior nursing student started smoking in high school but more frequently began smoking during this spring semester as their schedule became hectic.

“It helps me relieve stress and helps me sleep better,” they said.

But according to the Foundation of a Drug Free World, there are some negative long term effects of marijuana. These include impaired thinking, anti-social behavior, and dependency on marijuana. It is also said that marijuana can lead to the use of stronger drugs such as opiates.

However, Payne believes these are all common misconceptions about people who use marijuana. He believes people who frequently consume marijuana can have goals and that developing an addiction is based on the person.

“Your reasons behind smoking may lead you to getting high to avoid problems and issues,” said Payne. “If someone smokes because they enjoy it recreationally or socially with friends then that’s as far as it will go.”

Payne describes the marijuana community on campus as relaxed. “There would be fellow smokers who will tell each other they have to get together soon to smoke,” said Payne.

Though the marijuana community is present on campus, it is against policy to possess or use marijuana on campus.

According to the University of Student Handbook

on Controlled Substances, the use and possession of marijuana can lead to immediate disciplinary action of probation or suspension. The distribution of controlled substances leads to expulsion.

As a resident of four years, Payne is proud to have never been caught with the possession of marijuana.

“People who are on campus and smoke who’ve made it this far are the ones who don’t draw attention to themselves,” said Payne. “It sucks to say but sometimes the outliers and the people who don’t think about it do get caught and kicked off of campus.”

While the university has its own policies on drug use, certain programs require drug screening.

The nursing program requires a mandatory drug screening every semester. Students who are tested positive for drugs will be dismissed from the program.

The student who remained anonymous said they are not scared of getting caught, because they plan to not consume marijuana for three weeks and drink lots of water to excrete the cannabinoids before their scheduled screening.

“I’ll sober up by then,” they said.

For this year’s 4/20, they plan to smoke all day. As for Payne, his original plans have been changed due to COVID-19. Now, he is having movie marathons with an abundance of snacks.

How will you be celebrating 4/20 this year? •



Bongs, rolling paper, and marijuana in containers; photos courtesy of Derian Lopez.



## Opinion

# The Conflict of an Overachiever: My Life Without Softball

By Natasha Solano,  
Contributing Writer

March 12 2020 was one of the happiest and saddest days of my life because it was the day the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) canceled winter and spring championships.

For the first time in my 16-year career, I was told I could not play softball, and I was relieved.

This might seem shocking, and I can think of a few people who would be angry to hear that I was not particularly upset my junior season was cut short.

The fact is, I have always been an overachiever; I fill up my plate with as many things as I can to see how far I can push myself. This semester was no different; I decided to take on a full schedule and continue to work two jobs, all while I was in season. Needless to say, I pushed myself a little too far.

Exhausted from waking up at 4:30 a.m. every day for early morning lifts and practices, I found myself falling asleep in every class throughout the semester. I was struggling to keep up with all of my assignments, and I felt like I was falling behind.

This became increasingly more difficult once we hit the road for the start of our season at the end of February. On February 28, we started the season with a weekend tournament in California.

Despite being a short trip, it was an incredible start to what should have been a promising season. However, once we touched down in New Jersey we were thrown into a whirlwind of traveling, going back and forth to Virginia and Maryland nonstop for two weeks.

It was an intense distraction that caused me to lose all motivation for school and avoid all my assignments. The stress of college was getting to me, and each day brought new challenges that overwhelmed me.

March 12 was a game day for us, and it started like any other. Except, it was not just another game day.

Before the game began, my teammates and I whispered to each other about the possibility of our season being canceled, but secretly, I wished it to be true. When we finally received the news, I could not help but breathe a sigh of relief.

I felt awkward amongst my teammates. Many of them were crying and angry that our season had come to an end so abruptly. I, however, would be lying if I claimed to be even the slightest bit upset. •



Natasha Solano in uniform on photo day  
Photo courtesy of GR Productions/Gabe Rhodes.



Natasha Solano participating in a drill during practice; photo courtesy of Saint Peter's Athletics