The legacy of Roderick McDavis

After becoming the first black president of OU nearly 13 years ago, McDavis has watched the school’s party reputation fall, student diversity rise and protests erupt on campus.
FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

‘Post’ has covered McDavis legacy for almost 13 years

It is rare that The Post’s staff members have the opportunity to attempt to contextualize one person’s legacy in a way that can nearly carry an entire print edition.

So often, those people we interview often – or often hope to interview – are stacked into quotes that contribute to the ingredients of a broad-picture story. Athens city officials and Ohio University administrators are often the voices and perspectives behind some of The Post’s most important reporting, but rarely are they the subject itself.

In a way, that can be a good thing.

The Post has been reporting on President Roderick McDavis’ administration for nearly 13 years. The nature of a student-run publication has allowed dozens of Post reporters to enter and exit Cutler Hall over the decade, attempting to explain the complexities of higher education while still navigating it ourselves. Often, our reporting has focused on issues that trace a history far longer than the reporter’s time on campus.

Our aim, of course, was to hold the highest office on campus accountable. A glance at our archives suggests we devoted the reporting required.

But, The Post’s archives also suggest we rarely wrote about McDavis’ life. Perhaps that was because public figures need some semblance of a private life, too. An additional cause – at least in recent years – was a sizable decrease in media availability. Now, when it comes to context, The Post leans on more than a decade’s worth of reporting to bolster student and faculty opinion from years ago. Seeing the good and bad moments relies on the strength of reporting done far before some of us wrote our first Post story.

We were fortunate enough that some of those moments were retold or relayed to us for this print issue by McDavis and others close to him. We’re equally fortunate for the reporters past and present who contributed to this special edition.

Whether it was the success of OU’s athletic teams, student demonstrations on campus or complex university budgets, it is promising to know The Post was there – and will continue to be – as an institution supported by more than a century’s worth of its history.

As we move into a new era on campus, The Post hopes to continue that reporting so that an alumnus glancing through our archives might not only see breaking news and in-depth reporting on university issues, but also what we see each day: people.

We thank McDavis and his staff for being a part of our reporting over the years, and we look forward to covering another administration with equal dedication.

Emma Ockerman is a senior studying journalism and editor-in-chief of The Post. Want to talk to her? Tweet her at @eockerman or email her at eo300813@ohio.edu.

Cover illustration by Chance Brinkman-Sull
Thank you, President McDavis. You are a part of our past, our present, and our enduring future. We take great pride that you are an alumnus of our College and that our renovation happened under your leadership. Thank you for the time it has been our privilege to call you Mr. President.

U.S. News and World Report ranks The Patton College’s Online Graduate Programs as #10 in the nation! And we are ranked #99 in Best Grad Schools out of more than 350 Colleges of Education.
Ohio University President Roderick McDavis returned to his alma mater 13 years ago to serve as president, the second alumnus and first black man to do so at OU.

McDavis, whose salary increased from $275,000 to $500,000 over the course of his presidency, came to the university with a list of goals — some since met, some not — including increasing diversity in the student body, improving university athletic programs and further renovating residence halls.

During his time as president, he has also faced conflict with faculty and student activists on campus, particularly when he and his wife, Deborah, left 29 Park Place for 31 Coventry Lane, a property the Ohio University Foundation entered into a $1.2 million lease-purchase agreement in March 2015.

McDavis will wrap up more than a decade as university president Friday and will soon after depart for Washington, D.C., where he will work as a managing principal for AGB Search, a higher education search firm.
My final goodbye

After 13 years as Ohio University’s 20th president, I now understand something that few others do – no one individual embodies the office of a university president. Sure, one person is the face and the name behind the title; but the actions that the president takes and the decisions which he or she makes are the product of a more collective effort. The needs and the desires of every student enrolled or person employed at Ohio University as well as the needs and desires of former and future Bobcats are weighed and discussed. Balancing all those needs has always been a real labor of love.

I will forever be grateful to those tireless faculty and staff whose passion for higher education rivaled my own and who spent countless hours chartering the future course of Ohio University alongside me. I will forever remember the laughs with students and the tears shed as they walked across the stage at commencement.

As I prepare to leave my office in Cutler Hall, I look around at the boxes, now-empty shelves and the bare walls. The Office of the President is prepared for a new person to take on the title, but I know that those influences that drive the next president’s decisions still remain. The circumstances will change as our world continues to evolve, but for 213 years, our academic mission for excellence has never faltered. We will always remain true to our values. I am excited for the future that lies ahead for this fantastic University.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your 20th president. It has been the greatest honor of my life. Continue to reach for your highest star!

Letter from the President

More than a screenshot: The Rod McDavis I know

One thing you should know about President Roderick McDavis is his weakness is jellybeans. He has a wicked sense of humor. He eats salads for lunch every day. He loves fountain Coke. He personally signs each letter with a special, blue, felt-tipped pen. He reads every email and letter he receives and responds to almost all of them.

In serving on the staff of a university president, you have the great honor of being in that unique, safe, personal space where the president can be himself. That space is a necessary refuge that allows the president to recharge from his demanding role as the public face of the institution.

Being part of his non-public space also means you get to know the person for who they are, not how the public may portray them. Presidents are people too.

This is who Rod McDavis is.

He is selfless, curious, caring, humble, private and generous. He married his high school sweetheart. He holds things deeply in his heart but knows that his presidency is not about him or his passions. Rather, his presidency is about so much more.

He understands leadership is about the student who comes to office hours, crying, desperate because she is the oldest of 10 children and is spending all the money she can scrape together to fill her gas tank to drive from Athens to Columbus to work the only job she can find. His response is to find her a job, on campus, in his office where he and his team can make sure she is supported, safe and fed. And we all cried and cheered for her when she walked on stage to receive her OHIO degree.

He is the president who cheers the loudest at Bobcat games and comes to the office the next day hoarse from all of his yelling.

He is the president who speaks to classes but doesn’t publicize or tweet about it because it is a special moment he looks forward to each time and wants to keep it close to his heart rather than earn points with the public.

He is the person who is the first to say thank you and the last to take credit. He is the person who bleeds green and has committed himself to service, education and —yes — social justice.

Letter from the Chief of Staff

Jennifer Kirksey serves as President’s Chief of Staff. She is a two-time alumna from Ohio University and holds a bachelor’s in journalism and a master’s in organizational communication. She also has wrote for The Post during her time as an undergraduate at OHIO.
Despite a recent dip in the number of students from out of the United States attending Ohio University, OU President Roderick McDavis’ time in office has marked an overall boost in the number of international students enrolled.

The number of international students on campus increased as a whole from 979 when McDavis started his presidency in 2004 to 1,695 in 2015. International enrollment peaked in 2013 with 1,859 students, according to data from OU’s Office of Institutional Research.

International students typically represent about 7 percent of total enrollment.

Enrollment has been decreasing in recent years, though university officials are not certain what is causing the decline. In Fall Semester 2015, there were roughly 1,700 international students on campus. That number decreased to about 1,500 students on campus during Fall Semester 2016, the biggest drop in the past five years, according to university records.

“We are continuing our analysis related to our changing enrollments for international students,” Craig Cornell, senior vice provost for Strategic Enrollment Management, said in a previous Post report. “We are seeing that changing economics in the countries that send us the largest number of students, increased competition and a need for a more proactive marketing effort overseas were all instrumental in our decline in enrollments this past fall.”

National numbers do not reflect the dip in international student enrollment that has taken place at OU in recent years. For the 2015-16 academic year, the number of international students studying in the U.S. increased by 7.1 percent, according to an article from Inside Higher Ed.

“Those numbers have been climbing for several years.

Between 2008 and 2015, OU received more than $2 million in international donations, according to a previous Post report.

While revenue and donations are a factor when entering into partnerships with universities around the world, “the benefits for our students for pursuing research, education and experiential learning are the driving force behind these partnerships,” Lorna Jean Edmonds, vice provost for Global Affairs, said in an email.

Students from China make up the second largest population of students following the U.S., with 612 enrolled for the Spring Semester 2016 — about 450 more than the next highest, Saudi Arabia.

McDavis discussed the importance of international partnerships, particularly with Asian institutions, with The Post in 2015.

“Our future relevancy and distinction in the higher education community depends upon our ability to sustain international linkages such as these,” McDavis said in an email.

Despite the increase in international enrollment under McDavis, international students on campus have mixed opinions on McDavis’ relationship with the international population in Athens, International Student Union President Hashim Pashtun said.

In his experience as ISU president, Pashtun said McDavis has been very involved with the activities of ISU, including holding monthly meetings with Pashtun.

“I know many international students who are happy with his performance, and there are some people who are concerned,” Pashtun said.
Roderick McDavis began his presidency at Ohio University in 2004 with diversity at the top of his list of goals.

In addition to being the second alumnus to fill the office of OU’s president, McDavis is also the first African-American to lead the university. For some students and employees of color at OU, McDavis’ presidency was a point of inspiration. “Particularly to our black male students, we Ye often heard them comment on how much they admire him, and they see him as this sort of mentor that they would like to emulate,” Winsome Chunnu-Brayda, associate director of OU’s Multicultural Center, said.

The number of African-American students on the Athens campus has doubled in the almost 13 years McDavis has served as president, increasing from about 650 students in 2004 to more than 1,200 in 2015, according to the most recent university data available. The percentage of minority students, including African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Hispanics, have all increased during McDavis’ presidency as well. As of 2015, white students accounted for about 78 percent of the nearly 23,000 students on the Athens campus. In 2004, white students accounted for 89 percent of about 17,500 total students.

While universities across the country strive to create more diverse campuses, McDavis’ efforts stand out statistically, according to an analysis by The Chronicle of Higher Education. The Chronicle found McDavis was “one of five African-American leaders of predominantly white institutions who have seen the enrollment of black students rise by more than 100 percent during their tenures,” according to the August 2016 article.

The experiences of African-American students at OU can vary when it comes to diversity-related issues, though. Students of color who are not in leadership positions often feel their voices are not heard by McDavis’ administration, Brittany Mitchell, a senior studying political science pre-law and global studies – war and peace, said.

“We can’t get complacent with a black face in a white space,” Mitchell said. “They (the administration) need to be more transparent and there needs to be more student input. … I feel like all they do is conversations, and conversations don’t lead to anything without action.”

Alexis Apparicio and Nile Harris, president and vice president of OU’s chapter of the NAACP, respectively, recall McDavis as a support system they would look toward when diversity-related issues arose on campus.

In 2015, after the defacement of a #BlackLivesMatter message on OU’s graffiti wall and an NAACP-organized rally in support of students at the University of Missouri, McDavis initiated monthly meetings with multicultural student leaders. One such meeting with Apparicio, who previously served on Student Senate, included demands from Student Senate to ensure more diverse student leaders and faculty members, which McDavis noted in a list.

“He carried that list with him all the time,” Apparicio said, “and he would check in with us every month or so, sometimes even more frequent (than that).”

For Harris and other students of color, one-on-one meetings with McDavis are what will stand out most to them once he leaves OU.

“There were moments where we would bring in McDavis … and just talk about his experience and how he got to where he is,” Harris said. “Those stories were really powerful, and they helped people to kind of actualize their own dreams and feel like those things were definitely attainable.”
Ohio University President Roderick McDavis' time in Athens has been marked with periods of tension with faculty members.

Three years after he assumed office, OU faculty members and students completed surveys that overwhelmingly stated no confidence in McDavis for two years in a row.

The American Association for University Professors conducted the surveys, which focused on McDavis and those in top administrative positions. The no-confidence rating served as a reflection of communication between OU faculty, students and administrators.

Kevin Uhalde, an associate professor of history, has been a part of the OU AAUP for more than a decade. He said AAUP's involvement has reflected the same concerns that were “in the air” at the time of the 2007 survey.

"From the OU AAUP perspective, which is a faculty perspective, there’s been either remarkable consistency or remarkably little change, whichever way you want to put it, from 10 years ago to until today and the end of McDavis’ presidency," Uhalde said.

The OU chapter of AAUP stopped conducting those surveys once Faculty Senate developed their own evaluation instrument of the president, Uhalde said.

During May 2008, Faculty Senate passed a resolution that called for an evaluation of the president and provost to inform the Board of Trustees.

Those collections did not frame the evaluations as no confidence or confidence, like the AAUP’s surveys. However, the combination of “disagree” or “strongly disagree” responses to questions regarding good leadership of OU’s administration was more than 50 percent, Faculty Senate Chair Joe McLaughlin said.

Such evaluations took place during McLaughlin’s first term as Faculty Senate’s executive committee chair between 2009 and 2012. There is no resolution ending the evaluations.

“I do remember the tension I sensed generally on the campus at the time, between faculty and administrators, and that was one thing as a new professor that I sort of noticed right out of the gate,” Harold Perkins, associate professor of geography, said. “Ever since that time, there’s been an ongoing concern among many of my colleagues about shared governance on OU’s campus.”

Perkins was a new, untenured faculty member when the 2007 survey results were released. He said as a whole, faculty are concerned about the degree to which administrators respond to faculty, undergraduate and graduate students.

“(McDavis) for a long time has used very broad pronouncements that are addressed to the whole community,” Uhalde said. “They are pronouncements that don’t invite discussion, they certainly don’t invite debate.”

Uhalde said he hopes the next president will have meaningful forms of dialogue with all constituencies.

In 2015, some faculty members took issue with the lease of 31 Coventry Lane following the McVavises’ move out of 29 Park Place because of a bat problem.

More than 80 faculty members signed a letter that expressed their discontent with the purchase and urged administrators to reconsider leasing the property.

"Just about every faculty member I’ve talked to is very upset about this," McLaughlin said in a previous Post report.

Some faculty members expressed concern about the rights of student protesters who demonstrated and were arrested in Baker Center on Feb. 1. Those faculty members asked that the charges for those students be dropped, though McDavis said at a Faculty Senate meeting the Ohio University Police Department acted in its best interest during the situation.
When a university president resigns, the transition that follows isn’t always a smooth one.

Tension at Ohio University peaked in 1974 when concerns over a dwindling university budget, low enrollment and turbulent national politics erupted into campus riots. Former university President Claude Sowle resigned from his position largely as a result of those demonstrations.

“Sowle was a president who faced crises with a deliberate calm and a calculating precision. But as the economic base of the University crumbled, so did Sowle,” read a column titled “Why it happened” that appeared in a May 1974 edition of The Post.

More than 40 years later, OU President 5oderic Nocayis final weeNs in office were also marked by displays of discontent. A sit-in, a “sing-in” and a rally against U.S. President Donald Trump’s immigration ban were organized as McDavis planned to leave the university following his resignation announced last spring.

On Feb. 7, McDavis sent a university-wide email to cancel his farewell open house due to a possible protest scheduled to occur at the same time and place as the open house. McDavis wrote that he and his wife “have concerns for our OUPD officers and want to avoid unnecessary run-ins between OUPD officers and protesters who feel they have legitimate issues and concerns.”

Though Sowle’s farewell party passed without incident, he sometimes had a difficult relationship with protest groups. “President Claude R. Sowle yesterday indicated he thought the demonstration was a waste of time,” a 1974 Post article said of his reaction to a multi-issue rally. “He said the demonstrator’s actions were legal, but added they ‘have the right to make damn fools of themselves if they wish.’ ”

Sowle briefly reconsidered resigning but eventually reaffirmed his original decision.

“Presidential transitions not always easy

MAYGAN BEELER FOR THE POST

I think there is no way to understand the responsibility and demands of the position until you take over.”

FORMER OU INTERIM PRESIDENT HARRY CREWSON

OU’s interim president Feb. 18, Harry Crewson assumed his interim role after Sowle’s departure.

OU archivist Bill Kimok remembers Crewson as a friend, popular in the university community and responsible for bringing the osteopathic medical college to campus.

Not everyone shared that sentiment, however. As evidenced by a letter to the editor of The Post titled “Turn Crewson loose,” some thought he wasn’t accomplishing enough.

“In many ways I am in an awkward situation,” Crewson told The Post in 1975. “Some things that possibly should be moving I am holding in limbo until the announcement (of the new president) is made.”

After a year of searching, the 13-member OU Presidential Search Committee selected Charles Ping, a former Presbyterian minister, philosophy professor and football coach to replace Crewson.

Sowle gave Crewson a two-month orientation, though Crewson warned future university presidents that no introduction to the job could be sufficient.

“I think there is no way to understand the responsibility and demands of the position until you take over,” Crewson said.

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The Promise Lives Campaign, which raised more than $500 million, started in July 2007 and ended in June 2015. Ohio University President Roderick McDavis highlighted the completion of the Promise Lives Campaign during his president’s report for 2015.

The original goal of the campaign was $450 million. The campaign ended June 30, 2015, and was primarily paid for by three major donors.

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MEGAN HENRY ASST. NEWS EDITOR

McDavis plans for OU’s future with campaign

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Since OU President Roderick McDavis stepped into his role in 2004, the university has increased the amount of scholarship money it gives to students by millions of dollars.

Since 2004, the amount of scholarship money given to students by the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships has increased by about $25 million. In 2006, the office gave about 1 million in scholarships.

Creating scholarships that would bring more diverse students to campus was a goal for McDavis from the beginning. He created the Urban Scholars program in 2005 and he proposed the Appalachian Scholars program in 2005. He hoped those programs would make more people interested in attending OU, regardless of whether they received the scholarship.

The Urban Scholars program started with the hope of providing 10 minority students from urban cities in Ohio, such as Cleveland, Cincinnati and Columbus, with scholarships to attend OU. McDavis hoped that number would eventually increase to 100 a year. However, only 58 people have received the scholarship since it began in 2004, five of whom are enrolled in the program now.

McDavis believed diversity on campus would increase as a result of the program. After the first year of his presidency, diversity increased on campus when 120 more minority students enrolled at OU in 2005. McDavis said the program was the second greatest achievement of his first year.

“In my estimation, that’s a group we need to pay more attention to,” McDavis said in 2005. “We live in Appalachia, we are in southeast Ohio, and yet we don’t have a lot of programs that attract some of the top students from the area.”

Since it began, 38 people have received the scholarship. This year, there are five Appalachian Scholars in total.

McDavis and his wife, Deborah, contributed personal money to help fund the program.

In 2009, they committed to donating $10,000 to the Urban Scholars program and the Appalachian Scholars program every year for the following five years, according to a previous Post report. As of 2014, the McDavises contributed more than $119,000 to scholarships, most of which went to the two programs he created.

In addition to those programs, Craig Cornell, senior vice provost for Strategic Enrollment Management, said the implementation of the OHIO Signature Award Program in 2014, a set of scholarships and grants given to first-year students, helps show “significant commitment to student affordability.”

“It was an effort to look at how much money we give to students ... and figuring out, ‘Are we giving the right scholarships? Are we giving them the right amount of dollars? Are we giving them to the right students?’” Chad Mitchell, chief of staff for the vice president for Finance and Administration, said when the program began in 2014.

The OHIO Guarantee was also created during McDavis’ time as president. Cornell said McDavis worked “tirelessly” with the Ohio Department of Education and the State Legislature to get the program passed. The program guarantees students will pay the same amount of money during their four years at OU.

“There has been significant gains related to institutional financial aid over the course of Dr. McDavis’ Presidency,” Cornell said in an email.

McDavvis presidency brought scholarships

MADDIE CAPRON FOR THE POST

Illustration by Abby Day
Athletics improve during McDavis’ tenure

CHARLIE HATCH SPORTS EDITOR

When President Roderick McDavis returned to Ohio University, he made one thing clear: He wanted to see Ohio University field more competitive sports teams.

His first major sports hire, football coach Frank Solich, came in December 2004. At the time, offensive coordinator Tim Albin said McDavis wanted the football team to be the front door for the university. In 2005, Peden Stadium was revamped, and football facilities were renovated.

Looking back, the decision helped re-surge the athletic program, quickly transforming Ohio into one of the most competitive schools, regardless of sport, in the Mid-American Conference.

With McDavis leaving, his legacy is easy to see. Just check the wins columns for each team, or drive on State Route 682, with The Convo, Peden and the still-new Walter Fieldhouse just across the Hocking River.

Below are a few statistics and accolades the Bobcats have seen under their 20th president.

FOOTBALL

Before Solich, OU only had two winning seasons in the previous 22 years.

That changed.

During his 12 seasons, the Bobcats have won the MAC East Division four times, leading to four conference championship game appearances, including in 2016. Ohio still has not won the MAC since 1968.

The football team also won its first bowl game in program history in 2011.

MEN’S BASKETBALL

The basketball program has seen success under McDavis, particularly in 2012 when the Bobcats won the MAC Tournament and advanced to the Sweet 16 in the NCAA Tournament. Ohio also made the NCAA Tournament in 2005 and 2010.

Maurice Ndour, who played for Ohio from 2013-2015, plays for the New York Knicks as the only former OU player on an NBA regular season roster since 2005.

WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

The women’s program has never been better. When coach Bob Boldon inherited the program, Ohio was coming off its worst season in program history. Now in his fourth season, the past two years rank first and second in program history for wins.

In both years Ohio won the MAC regular season title, and in 2014-15, the Bobcats won the MAC Tournament and appeared in the NCAA Tournament. Four of the top six seasons in terms of total wins have come since McDavis became president.

SOFTBALL

Ohio has made the NCAA Tournament as recently as 2014, and the Bobcats appeared in the conference championship game last season. They were also the preseason pick to win the MAC in 2017.

BASEBALL

After the worst season in program history in 2014, Ohio won the MAC in 2015 and appeared in the NCAA Tournament.

Former conference MVP Mitch Longo was the most recent Ohio player taken in the MLB Draft after being selected by the Cleveland Indians in 2016.

VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball has arguably been the most successful sport at Ohio since McDavis arrived. Since 2004, the Bobcats have had the conference MVP eight times, with Abby Gil- liland being the most recent in 2013 and 2014.

Additionally, since 2004, Ohio has appeared in the NCAA Championship nine times, advancing to the Regional Semifinal in 2005.

Ohio’s most recent MAC championship came in 2015.

CROSS COUNTRY

Juli Accurso, the best runner in Ohio history, was the first runner in MAC history to win three-consecutive conference titles as an individual in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Additionally, she was named the Great Lakes Regional Runner of the Year her final two seasons.

JIM SCHAUS

The majority of praise for Ohio’s resurgence in athletics goes to Jim Schaus, the university’s director of Athletics since 2008. While teams have performed well, Schaus took a $2.3 million annual deficit and helped the university profit in two years, according to the Athletic Department website. In August 2016, he signed a five-year extension with the university to continue his position.

FOUR SPORTS CUT

While Schaus has brought stability, OU did cut four varsity programs prior to his arrival. In 2007, the university cut men’s indoor and outdoor track, lacrosse and swimming.

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McDavies ends tenure with higher enrollment

Enrollment for the Athens campus has jumped by about 50 percent since 2004

KAITLIN COWARD NEWS EDITOR

During Ohio University President Roderick McDavis’ tenure, the number of students on the Athens campus has increased by nearly 50 percent.

Between Fall Semester 2005 and Fall Semester 2014, the university’s Athens campus enrollment increased by about 9,000 students, according to data provided by OU’s Office of Institutional Research.

During that time, OU saw the second-most growth in terms of total number of students on its main campus, with Northeast Ohio Medical University topping the list with about a 94 percent increase in the same time frame.

“It is hard to state the enormity of success that has occurred relative to enrollments under Dr. McDavis’ tenure,” Craig Cornell, senior vice provost for Strategic Enrollment Management, said in an email.

OU’s total enrollment has increased by about 33 percent since McDavis became president.

“This unprecedented growth equates to record breaking enrollments year after year for an entire decade,” Cornell said in an email. “These enrollments are also reflected in the fact that we have crossed record after record in any category that we would want to discuss from undergraduate, graduate, Athens, medical, regional and/or online enrollments.”

REGIONAL CAMPUSES

The regional campuses have seen rises and falls during McDavis’ tenure as president.

When the economy fell in 2008, more students began attending regional campuses, which increased regional enrollment but decreased main campus enrollment.

But when the economy picked back up after the recession, the roles were reversed, and regional campuses saw a drop in the number of students attending the five branch campuses.

Though enrollment on those campuses has plateaued slightly, enrollments are up compared to when McDavis started his presidency.

ONLINE

Online enrollment has also increased in recent years. OU’s online eLearning program started under McDavis’ leadership in 2011.

The most popular online program is the bachelor of science in nursing program.

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When Ohio University President Roderick McDavis laid out ideas in his first month on the job, he acknowledged his goal of improving OU’s reputation as a national research institution.

A year later, McDavis said both the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Russ College of Engineering and Technology were essential to improving OU’s research reputation.

“I want to look at our landscape and colleges and say, ‘Who’s in the best position to attract money that’s being made available for research?’” McDavis said in a previous Post report. “The two that come right to the top of my list are the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Russ College of Engineering and Technology.”

Since then, both OU-HCOM and the Russ College have received gifts of more than $100 million. OU-HCOM in particular has seen an improvement to facilities and research funding, Kenneth Johnson, executive dean of OU-HCOM, said.

“For the Heritage College, research has really grown dramatically during his presidency,” Johnson said.

For OU-HCOM, that money came from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation in the form of a $105 million grant.

“A large portion of the gift is devoted to research, and that includes hiring faculty (and) building on infrastructure to support research,” Johnson said. The primary projects the grant has funded include scholarships, research and part of the college’s Dublin campus, which cost about $14 million.

Richard Vincent, president and CEO of the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, said the foundation had been interested in donating to the college for a while.

Johnson said McDavis played a “major role” in securing the grant and that he sat in on meetings afterward to plan how the money would be used.

The money donated to the Russ College came from the college’s namesakes, Fritz and Dolores Russ, who donated about $124 million: $95 million in 2008 and then $29 million more in 2011. The gifts were part of the McDavis-led Promise Lives Campaign.

“Dr. McDavis has always been very supportive of research in the Russ College. This is most strongly evidenced by his partnership and support on the Russ Gift oversight committee — in fact as chairman of that committee — of the Ohio University Foundation Board of Trustees,” Russ College Dean Dennis Irwin said in an email.

Johnson cited McDavis’ help in raising money for the Academic and Research Center on West Green that opened in partnership with the Russ College in 2010.

McDavis also stressed in 2005 the importance of identifying six to eight “niches” of research.

Since then, the college has become noted for diabetes research and neuromusculoskeletal research, especially with the Ohio Musculoskeletal and Neurological Institute and the Diabetes Institute, which are both housed at OU.

“Through the whole time that I’ve known him, he’s really challenged the Heritage College to think about how we can be great in those areas of research,” Johnson said.

During McDavis’ tenure, OU-HCOM also saw the opening of two regional campuses in Dublin and Cleveland. The Cleveland campus cost $20.2 million.
McDavis fosters closer ties with Athens

Some of the most valuable contributions Ohio University President Roderick McDavis made during his 13 years in office, local officials said, were those that fostered communication between the university and the city.

McDavis, who took office in 2004, saw three Athens mayors in office and opened several lines of communication between the city and the university during his presidency.

Athens Mayor Steve Patterson, who took office in 2016, said the memorandum was a “big thing” because it created cooperation between the city and OU.

“Things are being documented in terms of relationship building, shared resources and things of that nature that hadn’t been done before,” Patterson said. “We now have a living document.”

City Council President Chris Knisely said the memorandum was created out of necessity. In 2011, OU helped Athens pay for a $1.1 million ladder truck for the city’s fire department, which had been a source of contention between university and city officials for more than a year, according to a previous Post report.

After that, the city and OU created a formal document to set out their collective goals.

When the memorandum was created, McDavis’ staff said OU and Athens would begin to work together to find initiatives on which to collaborate.

“We will begin our work very quickly and explore opportunities to improve the university and the city,” Becky Watts, chief of staff to McDavis, said in 2011.

In a public letter, McDavis said the agreement would benefit all residents of Athens.

“These partnerships reflect some of the meaningful ways we work together to benefit all who live, work and study in Athens,” McDavis said.

Patterson said semiannual meetings between city council and OU’s administration have helped OU and Athens to communicate and that he meets with McDavis often.

“I meet with President McDavis monthly, and we’ll continue that process (with a new president) moving forward,” he said. “That’s been going on since President McDavis became president of OU.”

Knisely said McDavis’ leadership had a strong effect on the Athens community.

“I’ve seen him speak in a passionate way about how being involved in community events can make a difference,” Knisely said.

Knisely said she hopes the next president will promote an “inclusive” community.

“I think that’s very, very important to us to continue to make that statement, that we are all part of one community, and we welcome everyone here,” she said.

Patterson said he hopes the city will continue to have a strong relationship with OU under the next president.

“I was fortunate to have had breakfast with all four of the (former presidential) candidates,” Patterson said. “Everyone seemed very receptive to continue going down the path of monthly engagements with my office as well as the MOU.”

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Thank You!

Throughout his tenure, President McDavis made a point of putting students first. He taught us by example to reach for the highest stars while being true to our Bobcat roots. His vision and passion for transformative education have impacted our University community beyond measure.

President McDavis: Thank you for your unwavering commitment to your alma mater and its students. We are a stronger University family on account of your leadership, and we wish you much continued success!
‘It’s been a little bittersweet.’

After 13 years as president, Roderick McDavis leaves behind complicated legacy

TONY WOLFE  SENIOR WRITER

To recognize the look of the president’s office on that cold, dull February afternoon, you don’t need to have ever entered Cutler Hall.

But you might have to picture the bedroom you may have left back home, with all your childhood possessions boxed up, a too-small bed set resting in the back of a U-Haul. Picture the day you last laid eyes on the empty dorm room you hated, or the day you said goodbye to the apartment you loved.

You see it. The empty bookshelves, once lined end to end with everything: your favorite novels, the book that hasn’t been moved since the day it was first handed to you. The walls, once adorned with artwork, are now so bare and white they seem to light themselves.

The room is not completely empty, mind you. There’s still a desk, though it is mostly clean apart from the desktop computer, a keyboard and a row of neatly stacked papers and folders. There is still a circle of chairs and couches in the middle of the room, waiting to be occupied by whomever the president can squeeze in a visit with before his tenure comes to an end Feb. 17.

In the center of this room is President Roderick McDavis, a 1970 Ohio University alumnus, two days away from leaving Athens after nearly 13 years of being in charge of OU.

Most people only have to pack up and leave Athens once. He’ll be doing it for a second time.

“There’s been a lot of farewells and at the same time, a lot of finishing business,” McDavis said Feb. 15. “It’s been a little bittersweet.”
McDavis was announced as the university's 20th president May 17, 2004, and in doing so, became its first black president, as well as the second alumnus to lead the university. His appointment replaced former OU President Robert Glidden, who retired in June 2004.

While the Board of Trustees may have liked McDavis for his 30 years of experience in higher education and his commitment to increasing the university's national presence, students seemed to like McDavis simply because he was different.

"I like that we have someone with a bit of ethnicity instead of a bunch of stuffy white guys," one student told The Post the day McDavis' hire was announced.

His hire, though, didn't simply represent a move toward diversifying the president's office. The selection also meant a strategic decision to diversify the rest of the campus, with McDavis leading that charge.

While one of the focal points at the time of his hire was recruiting more black students — a segment of the student population McDavis said was lower in 2003 than it was when he was at Ohio in the late 1960s — the overall plan was to achieve as wide-ranging of a student body as possible. That meant attempting to increase the number of out-of-state, international and LGBTQ-identifying students in each year of the administration.

"I think President McDavis shares the values of a lot of Ohio University students," Hannah Britton, a junior in the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism who gave a speech about McDavis on Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year, said. "I think a lot of people at Ohio University have a strong set of core values that make us such a strong campus ... I think they're values that we as a university have together."

As an alumnus of the university, McDavis entered into his administration with the advantage of knowing what the student experience was like at OU, leading to his interest in including student voices in his administration.

"When I became student trustee, President McDavis made it clear the voice of the student perspective is held in high regard," Sharmaine Wilcox, a student trustee from May 2014 to May 2016, said in an email. "He always encouraged me to speak up with my experiences and to not shy away from my seat at the table. I will always be grateful for that."

Despite staunch support from the Board of Trustees, in addition to the three Student Senate tickets that endorsed his hire, McDavis' first few years presented a number of trials for the administration, the faculty and the student body.

The first tuition increase of McDavis' tenure occurred by the end of his first academic year, when a 6 percent increase was approved. The following academic year, McDavis cut four varsity sports programs from the university, including the men's track and field team, which he was a part of for one year.

Near the end of his third academic year on campus, multiple studies were released within a week of each other showing an overwhelming vote of no confidence toward McDavis. It was a bleak time for the administration, but one that both sides were able to work through and improve on over the next decade.

Some years of smoother sailing followed the no-confidence vote, but more rough points were in the distance. Additional tuition increases followed, as well as more battles surrounding athletics and a nationwide recession that meant budget cuts at public universities across the country.

Perhaps the toughest struggle the administration experienced with students, though, was the 2015 incident in which a bat infestation drove the president and his wife, Deborah, out of their 29 Park Place residence and into an off-campus home leased by the university. The saga sparked student protests on campus — some of the largest the university saw during McDavis' presidency. According to a Post report published Feb. 6, the Ohio Office of the Inspector General appeared to still be active in a months-long "investigation involving the purchase of 31 Coventry Lane," following a so-called "problematic" verbal agreement made between John Wharton,
the owner of the home, and OU Director of Athletics Jim Schaus. The office’s policy is to neither confirm nor deny the existence of an investigation until one is completed.

Though it might be impossible to ignore the trials of the McDavis administration, it’s hard to ignore what’s gone right, too. Enrollment and application numbers are higher than they have ever been in history, McDavis said, surpassing 25,000 applicants for the 2021 class. He opened a steady dialogue with Athens mayors throughout his tenure to address the needs of the city and helped to add two branch campuses of the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, in addition to five new residence halls.

The president’s complicated tenure came to a head Feb. 6 when McDavis attended his final Faculty Senate meeting. A faculty body angered by the arrest of about 70 student protesters the previous week aimed its frustration and its grief-laden questions at the president, a former activist himself, who, during his college days, fought to get a black studies institute at OU and helped fight for civil and voting rights in the ’60s and ’70s. He stood before them, defending the police chief who authorized the arrest of the students for criminal trespassing, following their protest demanding that OU declare itself a sanctuary campus. After McDavis left, Faculty Senate passed a resolution asking that the criminal charges against the students be dropped.

McDavis’ presidential farewell — scheduled to take place the next day — was canceled due to planned protests. His initial interview with The Post for that day was canceled, too, and it was rescheduled with the understanding the president would not comment any further on what happened at the Faculty Senate meeting.

“I would hope that people look back 20, 30, 40 years from now and are like, ‘Wow, that guy had a really good stretch and really hard times,’ ” Dean of Students Jenny Hall-Jones said. “Because it wasn’t easy. These were not easy times, and he’s not always been well-liked. There’s been moments, ups and downs, I think, from a campus-climate perspective.”

McDavis’ time as the president of a university, for now, is over. That means next year will likely end a long span of him speaking at commencement ceremonies — a day he says is his favorite of every year, save maybe for the year he met then-U.S. President Barack Obama during his visit to Athens.

“Getting to know students from the convocation and having a relationship with them over four years, there is no better day on this campus than graduation,” McDavis said. “That’s been my most emotional day, is to look out at 4,000 students and know that each one of them is gonna have a better life.”

Some students have had the opportunity to meet the president while on a campus tour, before they’ve even enrolled at the university. Most, however, are first introduced to him with the address he gives each freshman class — a loud, passionate speech that those close to McDavis say matches the energy he brings into work each day.

“He’s the Energizer Bunny. He never stops,” Amber Epling, director of presidential communications for McDavis, said. “He always comes in, and he’s always happy, and I don’t think people get to see that side of him very much. He goes nonstop, and he’s 100 percent wherever he goes.”

The next “wherever he goes” for McDavis is a job as the managing principal for AGB Search, a Washington, D.C.-based search firm dedicated to higher education leadership.

Exactly what kind of legacy McDavis leaves depends on who you ask. It’s different from person to person, with any number of leaps and stumbles to attach to his name over the past 13 years. But no matter what legacy he has had at Ohio University, it doesn’t change the fact that it is now in his past.

All McDavis could want now is a fresh start, a slate as clean as the walls of his office.

Ohio University President Roderick McDavis poses for a portrait in Cutler Hall on Wednesday, Feb. 15. (PATRICK CONNOLLY / FOR THE POST)
During the nearly 13 years he has served as his alma mater’s president, Roderick McDavis presided over several convocations, encountered multiple protests and took part in supporting student-related activities.
1. President Roderick McDavis speaks to the class of 2017 in the Convocation Center during their official introduction to Ohio University.
2. McDavis was a student at Ohio University when the school switched from semesters to quarters in 1969.
3. Deborah McDavis wipes tears from her eyes as she listens to her husband announce his retirement in Walter Hall rotunda.
4. The McDavises helped Cleveland native DeJane Manuel, an incoming freshman studying fine arts, move into Lincoln Hall.
5. McDavis cuts the ribbon during the grand opening celebration of the Living Learning Center while Megan Marzec, former president of student senate president, holds up a sign in criticizing him.
6. Roderick McDavis and his wife, Deborah, kiss on their wedding day.
7. Ohio University President Roderick McDavis addresses the crowd during the International Street Fair on Court Street.
8. Ohio senior guard D.J. Cooper is congratulated by McDavis on the Bobcats’ senior day in 2013.
9. Columbia University Professor Fredrick Harris, left, walks next to McDavis during a silent march in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Ohio University was the top party school in the country in 2011, according to The Princeton Review, right in the middle of President Roderick McDavis’ time in Cutler Hall.

Since securing the top spot, OU has been slipping in the party school rankings, and what once was the top party school in the country did not even crack The Princeton Review’s most recent party school rankings.

OU is not absent from all party school rankings, however, as Playboy named OU the top party school for 2015.

“A hallmark of President McDavis’ legacy has been altering the high-risk drinking culture at Ohio University,” OU Spokesman Dan Pittman said in an email.

Athens Police Chief Tom Pyle said he has noticed a difference in the party culture during McDavis’ tenure as OU’s president.

“Certainly the fests reflect, in my mind, a significant change in party culture,” Pyle said. “Noise complaints are down, so I think our enforcement in that regard has had an impact.”

Although arrests during fests have also been decreasing in recent years, they have fluctuated up and down throughout McDavis’ presidency. Nine students were arrested during 2005’s Palmer Fest, 74 people were arrested during Palmer Fest in 2009 and 14 people were arrested during 2016’s Palmer Fest, which does not include arrests from the Ohio Investigative Unit.

Matt Pruetz, a senior studying management information systems, said fest season helps make OU a party school.

“Not a lot of other schools do that,” Pruetz said. “If they do have (fests), it’s usually one time, not a whole season.”

Recent fests haven’t seen the fires that had previously been a reoccurring event at Palmer Fest during McDavis’ presidency. The fest ended in flames in 2012 because of a basement fire at one of the houses, and it was later declared a riot by then-Athens Mayor Paul Wiehl. The fire, which was later deemed to be arson, broke out at about 7 p.m. in 2010, partygoers set a couch on fire after 11 p.m. during Palmer Fest.

In addition to fewer arrests, parties during fest season have been shutting down earlier in recent years as well. During 2016’s fest season, most parties during Palmer Fest were shut down by 5:30 p.m.

The Ohio University Police Department has also noticed a difference during McDavis’ presidency, OUPD Lt. Tim Ryan said.

“I think that we have seen less of a party atmosphere,” Ryan said.

Arrests for Halloween have also been down lately. During McDavis’ first Halloween in 2004, police arrested 98 people. Arrests rose for 2005’s Halloween to nearly 150. In 2010, there were 181 arrests, and in 2011, there were 148 arrests, which officials described as “quiet” compared to previous years. APD arrested 35 people during the 2016 Halloween block party, OUPD issued 69 citations and the Ohio Department of Public Safety Investigation Unit charged approximately 50 people.

Pyle said there were too many factors in play to pinpoint one aspect that has changed the party culture at OU.
“It was a concentrated effort to try to impact the culture of partying and drinking,” Pyle said.

APD noise complaints have fluctuated during McDavis’ presidency. When he started his presidency in 2004, there were more than 830 noise complaints that year. The complaints hovered at about 750 for the first few years of his presidency, until there were nearly 900 complaints in 2010. From 2012 to 2015, which is the most recent data available, the complaints have been on a downward slope, with 569 in 2015.

Noise arrests have also varied during his presidency. In 2004, there were 115, and the arrests peaked during his presidency in 2006 with 146. 2015 had the fewest noise arrests with 25.

Pruetz said he has noticed a difference in the party culture during his time at OU.

“When I was younger ... it was more house party-based a lot,” Pruetz said. “I remember going to parties during the weekdays. Now it’s definitely bar central.”

Anna McCall, a freshman studying special education, said she thinks OU’s party school reputation is “way overrated.”

“I’ve been to other colleges around and it’s no different there,” McCall said. She said she thinks university officials are trying to change OU’s reputation as a party school.

“It seems like they’ll be cracking down here on that and just trying to get rid of the party school reputation,” McCall said.

All incoming OU students are required to complete AlcoholEdu, an online alcohol education course. Since 2005, it has been mandated for first-year students and transfer students with fewer than 30 credit hours, Pittman said.

AlcoholEdu cost the Division of Student Affairs $45,000 for the 2015-16 academic year, Pittman said.

Nearly 55 percent of OU students identified as moderate drinkers, about 16 percent identified as non-drinkers and nearly 13 percent identified as abstainers, according to the Fall 2016 Healthy Campus Survey. The survey, which started fall 2015, is a tool used by the university to monitor student alcohol consumption.

A moderate drinker is categorized as one to four drinks for males and one to three drinks for females, a nondrinker is zero drinks in the past two weeks and an abstainer has not had a drink in the past year.

About 10 percent of students identified as heavy episodic drinkers, and about 7 percent identified as problematic drinkers, according to the Fall 2016 Healthy Campus Survey.

A heavy episodic drinker is categorized as consuming five to nine drinks for males and four to seven drinks for females, and a problematic drinker is categorized as consuming 10 or more drinks for males and eight or more drinks for females.

Pruetz said the party culture attracted him to OU.

“There’s not too many places in the world where you could even go out to the bars on a Monday, Tuesday night, and there (will) be a ton of people out,” Pruetz said.
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During Ohio University President Roderick McDavis’ administration, numerous building and construction projects were completed on campus. Notable projects included the new Baker University Center, built in 2007, renovated dining halls and several residence halls. Prior to 2007, no new residence halls had been built for 30 years. During McDavis’ presidency, five residence halls were built. The Housing Master Plan began in 2006, and Adams Hall was built in 2007, breaking the hiatus of residence hall construction to meet enrollment needs. Adams Hall has 350 beds for residents.

“There was a period in Ohio University’s history where resources were not what they were in 2007,” Shawna Bolin, the university planner, said. “Enrollment increases changed the need. Adams Hall was built to accommodate that.” The Housing Master Plan called for the renovation and construction of residence halls on South Green. Cady, Foster and Brough were demolished last summer as part of the Back South Demolition Phase I project for about $1.6 million.

Other demolitions on South Green have been scheduled for summer 2017 as a part of the Housing Master Plan. The Board of Trustees approved a plan in October to demolish O’Brien House and Martzolff House. The budget of the project is $2.5 million if Fenzel House is demolished, but if not, the project will cost about $1.8 million. OU will decide in March if Fenzel will be included in the South Green demolitions.

All 15 of the Back South residence halls are scheduled for demolition in the future. They will be replaced once demolished. Four new dorms have been constructed so far: Sowle Hall, Luchs Hall, Tanaka Hall and Carr Hall.

“We always rebase to say what’s our enrollment, what’s our occupancy requirements,” Christine Sheets, the assistant vice president for the division of student affairs, said. “That’s changed the speed at which we completed the demolition. … It’s smart growth. We’re taking off old and replacing them with higher-efficiency residence halls.”

The “new” Baker Center opened in 2007 as a five-story building with a theater, Latitude 39, West 82 and student organization offices. It cost $60 million, two-thirds of which was funded by student fees. The previous student center was housed in what is now Schoonover Center and the Radio-Television Building.

“(Baker Center) is really nice for students to come to get away from our dorms,” Amy Rapien, a sophomore studying child and family studies, said. “It’s very central and accessible.”

All three dining halls on campus were renovated during McDavis’ time as president. Shively Court was revamped in 2010 for approximately $8.9 million. Nelson Court opened its doors in fall 2012. $12 million was put into renovating the West Green Market District in 2015, including Boyd’s dining hall and market.

Most recently, Jefferson Market opened in January after about $8.8 million in renovations, part of the $40 million budget for Jefferson Hall. Jefferson Market features a juice bar, a sandwich shop, a coffee shop and more.

In McDavis’ absence, OU will continue to maintain all aspects of campus, from dining areas to residence halls, Jenny Hall-Jones, dean of students, said. “When students go and visit colleges they look at the residence halls, they look at the campus rec faculties, they look at the student center and the dining halls,” she said. “The things where students spend most of their time are really, really important to them, and we need to upkeep those.”

Illustration by Matt Ryan

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Ohio University is down to one presidential search finalist in the days before OU President Roderick McDavis leaves office.

David Descutner will officially take over as interim president Feb. 18, and the Board of Trustees is expected to select a permanent president Feb. 22 at OU’s Dublin campus.

Duane Nellis, former president of Texas Tech University, is the sole finalist in the search after three of the four candidates for the position dropped out last week.

Nellis serves as the university honors professor at Texas Tech. He served as Texas Tech’s president from June 2013 to January 2016, and before that he spent four years as president of the University of Idaho.

According to The Texas Tribune, he expressed his frustration with the Texas Tech leadership, describing a “bit of tension” that arose from being in the same office building as the system’s chancellor, Robert Duncan.

Nellis began his career as a geography professor and has spent almost 27 years as a higher education administrator. He received his Ph.D. in geography from Oregon State University in 1980.

The three candidates who dropped out of the search were Dean Bresciani, Pam Benoit and Robert Frank, all of whom left the search within a period of three days of each other.

Bresciani, president of North Dakota State University, withdrew his name from the search Feb. 7. He noted his intention to remain at NDSU in an email to the NDSU community.

Benoit, OU’s executive vice president and provost, pulled out of the search Feb. 8. Frank, former president of the University of New Mexico, dropped out the following day, Feb. 9. Neither cited reasons for leaving the search in their emails to OU administrators.

It is unclear if the university intends to hire Nellis as president on or before Feb. 22.

In the meantime, Descutner, who began serving as special assistant to the president Feb. 1, will serve as interim president from Feb. 18 until June 30. When he signed his contract with the university in late January, it was announced he will make a $350,000 annual salary that will be prorated based on the number of months served. He will also receive $30,000 in additional compensation if he successfully helps transition OU’s new president into the role, according to his contract with the university.

“This university matters deeply to me,” Descutner said.

As interim president, Descutner, 64, is expected to help fundraise, hire and fire employees, work with the budget and recommend policies, among other roles.

“Anytime you look for a president – interim or permanent – there are certain qualities, certainly communication skills, and Dean Descutner is right at the top of that list in terms of his ability to effectively communicate,” McDavis said during a news conference Jan. 20.

Descutner previously worked as special advisor of Faculty & Academic Planning in OU’s Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, and will return to that role and his previous salary of $154,158 Aug. 1, according to the contract.

“I can promise you that I don’t think the board could’ve done a better job at selecting an interim president,” Kenneth Johnson, executive dean of OU-HCOM, said. Descutner has worked at OU since 1979.
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2 Ersatz chocolate
5 An Instagram file format
10 Relay-team assignment
15 Cropped up
16 Word on some shampoo bottles
17 Mail routing letters
18 1984 laborer
19 Tight-lipped one
20 Be influential
23 Obama treasury secretary
24 Serious mistake
25 Suggest subtly
29 Undistinguished collegian
34 "Red eye" or "green thumb"
35 2001 astronaut
36 Londoner's law
37 Make the common more clever
41 Friend of Fidel
42 Neighbor of Yemen
43 Non-Hollywood
44 Delivery center of a sort
47 Drainage system
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50 Be an unnamed source, perhaps
58 Painter Chagall
59 Flip over
60 Much
61 Most essential element
62 Certain cosmetic
63 Name on Notorious posters
64 Cambridge colour
65 Yorkshire city
66 Lego competitor

DOWN
1 Uninspiring
2 "Later!"
3 Being aired
4 Appian Way approval
5 Dosage delivery system
6 Roadway symbol
7 Show partiality
8 Nobel Institute locale
9 Casserole concoction
10 Merry
11 Dosage delivery system
12 Airline to TLV
13 High school class
21 South central Texas attraction
22 More, on a score
24 Tip of pumps
25 Service stint
26 Continental Divide state
27 Reeboks alternative
28 Word related to "channel"
30 Frozen reindere
31 Use
32 Respectful denial
33 Lugs around
34 Spanish lady
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50 Be an unnamed source, perhaps
58 Painter Chagall
59 Flip over
60 Much
61 Most essential element
62 Certain cosmetic

Answer to previous puzzle

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2/16/17
Climbing for consciousness

Climbing out of civilization is life-changing, but reconnecting with society brings different problems

SARAH FRANKS FOR THE POST

Nina Adjanin spends months on mountain peaks, consuming about 7,000 calories a day, not taking showers and living without modern technology. Despite those extreme conditions, Adjanin, a graduate teaching assistant in outdoor studies at Ohio University, leaves her extreme expeditions feeling calm. “I don’t understand why people are so angry on some stuff,” Adjanin said. “When you’re on expedition, you don’t think about (anything). You just think about your life.”
At 35 years old, Adjanin has summited several of the tallest peaks in the world, including Denali, North America’s highest peak, in Alaska. While there, she saved the life of a mountaineer stuck with altitude sickness, an illness that results from not having enough oxygen to the brain. Adjanin has scaled Mount Everest and crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a sailboat with a crew of five others.

While some might not understand the force pulling people like Adjanin back to the wild, time and time again, each explorer has their own reason for disconnecting.

EXTREME EXPLORATION

Adjanin is not alone in pursuing daunting endeavors. In fact, by May 2016, more than 7,000 people had successfully reached the top of Mount Everest since 1922, according to The Washington Post.

An adventure of such dangerous magnitude requires time, knowledge and often a lot of savings set aside for supplies and travel expenses.

However, the benefits of disconnecting from everyday life can be felt on a smaller level right here in Athens. Rob Warner, a graduate teaching assistant studying recreation and sport pedagogy, said.

Unknown to many people who live in southeast Ohio, the North Country Trail, which runs from New York to North Dakota, cuts right through Wayne National Forest, Tyler Call, an employee at the forest headquarters, said. The national scenic trail goes through the Marietta and Athens District of the Wayne, providing an opportunity to escape easily to Ohio’s only national forest.

Completing an extreme adventure doesn’t come without much preparation, persistence and perspiration. After visiting her youngest son on his Appalachian Trail hike, Karen Rossi is someone who can attest to how wilderness adventures can change a person visibly.

“He looked like he had grown up and matured a lot. He looked so much older ... my husband was most impressed with how bad he smelled,” Karen said.

Brendan Rossi, who graduated from OU in December 2016 with a degree in environmental geography, was 19 when he completed the 2,190 mile Appalachian Trail. Although originally planning to do the whole trek solo, Brendan had a change of heart early. When a single set of footsteps and nature’s conversation with itself are the only sounds heard for months, the presence of another human becomes much more valuable, Brendan said.

“One of the things I like about backpacking is that it’s so simple that important things become very obvious. So sitting alone in the rain, I realized, ‘Oh, I’m a social animal. I need to talk to people,’” Brendan said.

Soon after beginning his journey south, Brendan met a woman who went by her trail name, Sherpa. A trail name is an alternative name hikers often adopt during their journey that suits their personality, according to the Appalachian Trail Museum. Enjoying the company, Brendan, self-named “Delta,” and his new companion hiked the majority of the trail together.

One of the best moments Brendan experienced on his journey was seeing the Milky Way without the distraction of city lights. Humans keep their eyes to the ground, perhaps because potential threats rarely came from the ground when man was evolving, Brendan said.

“I think people in general ... don’t look up enough,” Brendan said. “I find comfort in looking out at that expanse, feeling insignificant ... it means whatever’s stressing me or bothering me is insignificant.”

INSPIRATION TO DISCONNECT

In 2013, Brendan was a freshman at the University of Cincinnati who was unhappy with where he was and what he was studying, and he wanted to get out. He announced his plans to hike the Appalachian Trail to his family in April and headed to Mount Katahdin in Maine that July to begin his expedition.

“I remember I made the announcement on April Fool’s Day, and so no one believed me. I went out extremely unprepared,” Brendan said.

Despite her initial doubts about her son’s journey, Karen said the five-month experience for Brendan was invaluable.

Brendan’s parents gave maps to relatives for them to put on their walls to follow Brendan’s progress. Karen said they were his “remote cheerleaders.”

“We think this was just as valuable as a formal education in determining who he was going to be and what he wanted to do,” Karen said.

A TRICKY TRANSITION

After 30 consecutive days of staking out camp with one another, Delta and Sherpa were excited to share a campsite with a large group of hikers one holiday weekend, Brendan said. However, being disconnected can change what kind of interaction a person craves with others.

“We tried to join the fireside conversation, but we just couldn’t work our way in ... it was just the things that this group was talking about, we had no interest in anymore,” Brendan said. “It wasn’t really a conversation, they were kind of just filling silence with noise ... we kind of recognized that and retreated to our corner and went to bed.”

That moment changed things for Brendan, he said. Like many explorers before him, entering back into daily life after a long expedition can be a tricky transition.

Warner paddled the length of the Mississippi River in an open canoe. The 62-day voyage had a reliable routine, he said. Constantly moving and camping out somewhere different every night made returning to domestic life “wearing.”

“If you’re paddling, day after day, it’s easy to see that’s what’s frustrating you,” Warner said. “When you’re living in a town or in an urban setting, there are so many moving parts that you can’t necessarily pinpoint what’s causing the rub.”

The transition back to routine life was a bit different for Brendan. Arriving at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport to fly back to Columbus, he couldn’t wait to share what he experienced.

“I just sat there hoping someone would talk to me because I’d just accomplished this thing like two hours ago ... but I didn’t approach anyone,” Brendan said. “I think I’d lost the social skills to do that.”

While on the trail, Brendan had no headphones for music and a phone only for emergencies and photos. He only came into contact with facets of modern living whenever he shopped at a grocery store every ten days or so to stock up on supplies.

Shopping is often an aversion many people wouldn’t think twice about, is a chore Brendan now avoids whenever he can.

“When you’re used to looking at nothing and then looking at a shelf in a grocery store and finding what you need ... just so many words, so overwhelming,” Brendan said.

The first few weeks of sleep are especially strange and difficult, Adjanin said. Used to sleeping on the ground and in a tent, she usually ends up moving to the floor of her bedroom after tossing and turning in bed, unable to feel normal.

Along with trying to get a decent night’s sleep, Adjanin said coming back to city life after months on the mountain takes away a little of that stability she felt in the wild.

“In a city, I don’t know who can hit me with car, because I don’t have control,” Adjanin said. “On mountains, if I know tomorrow will be warm day, I know I will not go overnight because there’s a chance of avalanche – I have control.”

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THEPOSTATHENS.COM / 29
Country musicians to play ‘intimate’ show

LYNANNE VUCOVICH FOR THE POST

After a five-year break from recording music, Hayes Carll released his first album since 2011 last year titled Lovers and Leavers and is supporting it with a tour. Stuart’s Opera House will host Carll on Friday with the doors opening at 7 p.m.

General admission tickets are $20 before the show and will cost $25 at the door.

“If you know you’re coming, you need to get your tickets,” Brian Koscho, the marketing director of Stuart’s, said. “(The show) is selling well.”

The show will begin at 8 p.m. with John Evans opening the evening. Evans is from Texas, and according to his website, his “iconic look” is described as “big hair, horn-rimmed glasses, bell-bottoms and vintage cowboy boots.”

“(Evans) has collaborated with Hayes before,” Koscho said.

Evans has been a songwriter for more than 20 years, and he has written more than 400 original songs. He has won eight consecutive Houston Press Awards, including Best Male Vocalist, Best Songwriter and Musician of the Year.

Evans’ daughter passed away in 2013 from a skin disease, and according to his website, she was “very involved” with her father’s music career, traveling with him on tour and selling merchandise at his show.

“The gusto she lived her life with opened my eyes to how delicate life can be and how you really have to take life by the reins and go live it,” Evans said on his website. “She was one heck of a girl.”

Carll is a singer-songwriter hailing from Texas, and his music has an Americana flair to it. He once played the Nelsonville Music Festival in 2012 and multiple times at the Opera House.

Carll was nominated for a Grammy in 2016 for Best Country Song for his hit “Chances Are.” His music is usually humorous through the way he tells stories, but Lovers and Leavers shows a different side of Carll.

Carll said he recorded the album Lovers and Leavers with the assistance of poet and artist Joe Henry.

“We recorded this record live in five days, using just an acoustic guitar, a mix of bass, percussion, pianos and organs, and a touch of pedal steel,” Carll said on his website.

“Lovers and Leavers isn’t funny or raucous. There are very few hoots and almost no hol-lers. But it is joyous, and it makes me smile,” Carll said on his website. The album reflects on his divorce and his son, and it is “quiet.”

“He’s a really great storyteller, and he’s been around for awhile now,” Koscho said. “He’s had some good critical acclaim.”

Koscho said that Carll is a creative musician, doing exciting things and is a great performer.

“He’s out on tour and it was a good opportunity to bring him back for a show,” Koscho said. “Americana is important to us (at Stuart’s), and Hayes is one of the best.”

Max Look, a junior studying integrated media, has been to Stuart’s Opera House in the past for an acoustic show similar to the one on Friday.

“It’s pretty great,” Look said. “The concert room sounded fantastic and it was very cozy.”

Solo shows at Stuart’s are more intimate, Koscho said and offer the opportunity for the artist to share the story behind the music, and focus on the songs.

“Stuart’s is great for acoustic and solo shows where the focus is on the music,” Koscho said. “The audience is excited by that kind of setting.”

Koscho said the show will feel close, like a small show.

“The acoustics in there are great. It’s not super big, but it’s very nice,” Koscho said.

IF YOU GO
WHAT: Hayes Carll & John Evans
WHEN: Doors open at 7 p.m., Friday
WHERE: Stuart’s Opera House, 52 Public Square, Nelsonville
ADMISSION: $20 advance, $25 at the door for floor seats; $25 advance, $30 at the door for box seats

Hayes Carll will perform at Stuart’s Opera House on Friday night. (PROVIDED VIA BRIAN KOSCHO)
WHAT’S GOING ON?

ALEX MCCANN
FOR THE POST

FRIDAY

Beers N’ Queers 6 p.m. at Devil’s Kettle Brewing, 97 Columbus Rd. Hosted by the Ohio University LGBT Center, allows all Athens residents, LGBT or not, to converse and enjoy a beer or two together. Admission: free.

Sons of Italy 2nd Annual Wine Tasting 6 p.m. at Sons of Italy, 15 Dove Drive. The Sons of Italy is a non-profit group that strives to preserve and celebrate Italian heritage. Proceeds will be donated to the Doug Flutie Autism Association. Admission: $35

Star Party 9.3 8 p.m. at State Street Cemetery. Star Party 9.3 is a continuation of the Athens Astronomical Society’s Star Party series, but it also advises attendees to “leave the booze at home.” Admission: free.

Hellnaw 9 p.m. at The Union Bar & Grill, 18 W. Union St. Athens-based rock duo Hellnaw will perform at The Union Bar & Grill for the second time this year. The show’s special guest had yet to be announced as of press time. Admission: $5.

Mountains Lost 10 p.m. at The Smiling Skull Saloon, 108 W. Union St. Athens-based bluegrass trio is a self-described blend of Americana and newgrass, a genre that combines bluegrass, folk and rock, according to newgrassfestivals.com. Admission: $3.

Bar deals in Athens
Cat’s Eye Saloon: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. $0.40 for a glass, increases $0.50 every hour. $3 pitchers.
The C.I.: $2.75 well drinks and domestic bottles. $5.50 pitchers.
Jackie O’s Public House & BrewPub: $2 FAF beers. Power hour 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. $2 select house pints.
Lucky’s Sports Tavern: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. $1.75 domestic bottles and well drinks.
The Over Hang: $3 “F” bombs. Daily $2 well drinks.
Red Brick Tavern: “Brick Break” daily. 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. $1 well drinks, domestic bottles and pints.

SATURDAY

15th Annual Good Works Walk
8:30 a.m. at First United Methodist Church, 2 S. College St. Hosted by the non-profit organization Good Works, Inc., works to fight poverty in southeastern Ohio. The walk raises awareness and money for Ohioans struggling with poverty and homelessness. All money raised by the walk will benefit the Good Works Timothy House. Admission: free.

18th Annual Rock Stars Climbing Competition
9 a.m. at Ping Center. Three skill divisions will be open: recreation, intermediate and advanced. Registration is available either online or the morning of the event. Admission: $30.

Bar deals in Athens
The C.I.: $2.75 well drinks and domestic bottles. $5.50 pitchers.
Jackie O’s Public House & BrewPub: power hour 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. $2 select house pints.
Lucky’s Sports Tavern: daily one-topping, 16-inch pizza with $14.95 domestic pitcher.
The Over Hang: daily $2 well drinks.
Red Brick Tavern: ‘Brick Break’ daily. 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. $1 well drinks, domestic bottles and pints.

The Athena Cinema movie times
‘The Handmaiden,’ NR: 7:05 p.m., 9:10 p.m.
‘I Am Not Your Negro,’ PG-13: 2:45 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m., 9:45 p.m.
‘Jackie,’ R: 2:55 p.m., 5:20 p.m., 7:20 p.m.

Oscar-nominated animated shorts, NR: 2:35 p.m., 9:30 p.m.
Oscar-nominated live action shorts, NR: 4:35 p.m.

SUNDAY

Great Backyard Bird Count
7:30 a.m. or 2 p.m. at Ohio University Compost Facility, 7876 Blackburn Rd. Rural Action is hosting the Great Backyard Bird Count for all birdwatchers. The event helps researchers learn about local birds and how to protect them. Admission: free.

MSA Night 5 p.m. at Baker Ballroom. The OU Muslim Student Association will host MSA Night. MSA Night is designed to bring people together to have fun and learn about Islam. The event will feature food, performances and more. Admission: $5.

Bar deals in Athens
The C.I.: $2 well drinks, $1.75 domestic, $5.50 pitchers.
The Over Hang: daily $1.50 pints.

Tony’s Tavern: $1 PBR and High Life. $1.75 Hot Nuts.

The Athena Cinema movie times
‘Drop Your Shorts!’ 7:00 p.m.
‘The Handmaiden,’ NR: 2:35 p.m., 9:10 p.m.
‘I Am Not Your Negro,’ PG-13: 2:45 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m., 9:45 p.m.
‘Jackie,’ R: 2:55 p.m., 5:20 p.m., 7:20 p.m.

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**Spring Semester**

**RENT**
***20th Anniversary Tour***
MAR 28, 2017 // 7:30 PM // MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

**PARMALEE**
***W/ Special Guest Chase Bryant***
PARMALEE
CHASE BRYANT
MAR 20, 2017 // 8 PM // MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

**X Ambassadors**

**Broadway’s Next Hit Musical**
APRIL 1, 2017 // 8 PM // MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

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OHIO IN CRISIS

The epidemic of addiction to prescription opioid painkillers and heroin is sweeping through Ohio, taking lives P4
Why ‘The Post’ reported on opioids

News reporters at The Post have spent their last few weeks on campus sinking their storytelling chops into a problem it seems nearly everyone has heard about: the opioid epidemic.

But I don’t think reporters realized how much of a problem it had become until they interviewed more than 30 people for the series of stories that are encompassed in this special issue. People were dying – that much was obvious. We’re hardly the first local media outlet to showcase that. But how long have opioid drugs been on campus and in Athens, and why?

This isn’t an easy story to tell, partially because it’s been told so many times and partially because it’s hardly over yet. Plus, many of us have been personally affected by drug addiction in our families.

Among those we talked to, it was apparent that the stigmas against people who speak up about drug addiction are prevalent. For those who do speak up, it’s often exhausting to continue to hammer the same message on deaf ears. And then some of the people we talked to had never been interviewed for a newspaper article before, but certainly had a lot to say.

I hope our readers dive into each of these stories and walk away feeling like they might have learned something, or maybe that they want to reach out, too.

The Post’s next issue will be entirely photos, and this serves as my second-to-last column as editor-in-chief after two years in this role. I have to say that I’ve had many proud moments with our reporters, and that hard, tireless work isn’t a new concept to our newsroom.

But highlighting the opioid epidemic through deep reporting is something I’m immensely proud of, and I thank the numerous sources for these stories who had hours-long conversations with our reporters to help them understand this issue, and the editors who took a little bit of responsibility off my back while I took time to report a few stories in this issue.

Emma Ockerman is a senior studying journalism and editor-in-chief of The Post. Want to talk to her? Tweet her at @eocker or email her at eo300813@ohio.edu

Emma Ockerman / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
HOW DOES OHIO RECOVER?

With the opioid epidemic devastating southeastern Ohio, The Post reports on how it hit Athens County, Appalachia’s historical lack of resources, the epidemic’s impact on children and the treatment options available for those suffering from addiction. Advocates say the onslaught of overdose deaths won’t end until society adapts to devote empathetic care for those who are suffering, in addition to prevention measures to make sure future generations don’t suffer the same fate.
‘WE’VE CREATED THIS PROBLEM OURSELVES, AND NOW WE HAVE TO REEL IT IN’

Years ago, a crisis of prescription opioid pills and heroin hit Ohio hard, killing thousands. Advocates in southeast Ohio were soon thrown to the front lines of a problem that seemed to have no end in sight.

EMMA OCKERMAN / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
t’s hard to talk about because it shouldn’t have happened.

Chris Theil was planning to intern with a music festival over the summer. He divided his time between the cello and guitar while studying music production at Hocking College.

Hannah O’Harra-Brown, who was studying physical therapy at Hocking, worked at Bagel Street Deli and made sure to tell her mother how much she loved her life. Brad loved Ohio University from the start, even though, as he puts it, his “focus was not academics by any means.”

The three didn’t know each other. Like a lot of college students, they were living in the moment.

Then came hell.

In May 2008, Theil was found in the bathroom of a Riverpark Towers apartment. He was hunched over the bathtub; his girlfriend, an OU student, lay beneath him in the water. They both died at 22 years old from an accidental overdose of heroin and alcohol during Moms Weekend.

More than two years later, in December 2010, O’Harra-Brown was drinking and took oxycodone. The 21-year-old died in her sleep.

And in 2012, Brad, who asked to only be identified by his first name for this report due to the stigmas associated with addiction and recovery, started to abuse Vicodin. Less than a year later, high on heroin for the first time, he walked down Court Street knowing he would probably use again.

He spent his last few months in Athens driving up Route 33 to Columbus a few times a week to buy heroin. He graduated in 2013.

Nobody else who took those rides with him graduated.

“When I was using, I never even thought about it,” Brad said. “You don’t realize the gamble that you’re taking with your life.”

The epidemic of prescription opioid painkillers, heroin and resulting accidental overdose deaths can be just a faraway headline – someone else’s tragedy, or something you’re completely unaware of – until you’re on the other side of it.

Some people told O’Harra-Brown’s mother, Melissa, that she could attribute Hannah’s death to a freak accident. It was just a second of her daughter’s life, a horrible mistake that could have been made by any well-meaning college student.

It never gets easier to talk about, Melissa O’Harra-Brown, a nurse practitioner in Logan, said. But she won’t hide what happened.

Just like it’s hard for Brad to talk openly about his addiction, now that he’s been clean for three years. Just like it has been immensely frustrating for Lauren Kuhn, Theil’s younger sister, who lost her brother-in-law, too, to an accidental overdose death in November.

“We all want to think that we’re somehow smarter, better, brighter, that it would never happen to us,” O’Harra-Brown said.

Through her tears – as painful as it may be – she’s one of many who asks that society starts talking.

WHERE IT BEGAN

There is no short way to describe the opioid epidemic in full, except, perhaps, that it was triggered by the lax prescribing guidelines attached to legal painkillers, such as oxycodone and hydrocodone.

Years later, that led to widespread heroin and prescription opioid addiction, spikes in crime, the advent of so-called “pill mills,” doctor shopping and overdose deaths. Ultimately, dozens of health providers, law enforcement officers, advocates and family members of addicts were thrown to the front lines of a problem that seemed to have no true end in sight.

One February morning, Athens City-County Health Commissioner Dr. James Gaskell attempted to describe the history of the problem.

He thought back to when he was a pediatrician in the early ’90s and an Ohio Medical Board member came to him and other physicians at OhioHealth O’Bleness Hospital, saying they weren’t prescribing enough painkillers because they were afraid they would be looked upon unfavorably. And those opioids were once feared for their particularly addictive chemical compounds.

What happened next, he said, was an overreaction on the medical field’s part.

“They were trying to make the point that we were letting people die in pain, that we needed to provide pain relief,” Gaskell said. “We took it more generally, and that was sort of the beginning of it all.”

The opioid drugs mimic endorphins by attaching to proteins referred to as “opioid receptors” to reduce the perception of pain in a patient, often producing a sense of well-being and relief.

However, repeated use can inhibit the brain’s ability to feel pleasure naturally, lessening the drug’s effect and prompting users to take a higher dose as their tolerance increases. As time goes on, some opioid users are unable to feel comfortable without the drug. Heroin, which has a similar pharmacological makeup, also activates those same opioid receptors. The drug began to spike in popularity as the street worth of prescription painkillers steadily rose.

“That’s why you think, you know, ‘What the heck are they doing?’ They steal from their parents, they’re ignoring their kids. But that addiction is so strong that they’re going to do what they have to do to continue that addiction,” Athens County Sheriff Rodney Smith said.

Now, it’s more than just addiction to the typical prescription opioids, which actually saw a slight decrease in overdose deaths in 2015.

2003

According to data from the Ohio Department of Health, 296 people had died from accidental opioid overdose deaths.

2005

11 overdose deaths occurred in Athens County, according to data from the Athens City-County Health Department.

2008

Chris Theil dies of an accidental heroin and alcohol overdose.

13 overdose deaths occurred in Athens County, according to the city-county health department.

2010

Hannah O’Harra-Brown dies of an accidental oxycodone and alcohol overdose.

2014

Athens County joins the state-initiated Deaths Avoided With Naloxone program to make Narcan more widely available.

2016

President Barack Obama signs 21st Century Cures Act, which designates $1 billion over two years to helping states battle the opioid epidemic.
Heroin and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl — considered 30 to 50 times stronger than heroin — have driven the epidemic’s narrative toward drugs that kill quicker and with a greater frequency.

And if you want to see where the needle on the epidemic began to switch from a handful of addicts to an onslaught of overdose deaths, look no further than the data that Dr. Joe Gay, executive director of Health Recovery Services in Athens, collects with widely acknowledged fervor.

“I love numbers, always have,” Gay said.

A member of the 317 Board first approached him in 2007 to ask if he had seen a spike in heroin use. Gay told the board member he hadn’t. At the time, the data just wasn’t there.

When a supervisor came to him shortly after in 2008 and reported an increasing number of patients seeking help for addictions to heroin, Gay started crunching the numbers. Clinicians told Gay he had “jinxed” them. Heroin just didn’t happen in Appalachia, Gay said.

What happened next “scared the devil” out of him, he said — especially since people were injecting the drug.

In spring 2010, Gay looked at data from the Ohio Department of Health that showed the relationship between opioids prescribed and overdose death rates in the state from 1997 to 2007 and ran a correlation coefficient — a measure of the linear relationship between two variables, with a perfect, positive relationship being 1.0.

Any student who has taken a basic statistics course knows: Correlation does not necessarily imply causation. But the correlation between opioid drugs distributed per 100,000 and accidental death overdose was .979.

Gay assumed he had to be wrong. It was just too high. He called Orman Hall, who would go on to become the director of the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, and left a voicemail with the results to double-check. He soon heard back from Hall that it had to be “bulls—t.” Gay checked again. Then Hall calculated the same result.

“That’s how closely related prescribing was to the death rate,” Gay said.

**HARD TO IGNORE**

After her older brother’s overdose death, Lauren Kuhn attended another funeral for a young addict. Then another. Then another.

She watched as four young lives ended due to opioids in the three months after her brother, Chris, was found dead in May 2008.

Theil’s addiction started with a prescription, she said. Like a lot of teenage boys in Dublin, where they grew up, he was into skateboard and snowboarding. As a result, he secured a handful of injuries. He broke his wrist his freshman year of high school and was prescribed Percocet and Vicodin. He started using heroin about a year later.

He bounced in and out of treatment several times, and his arm was nearly amputated by doctors after he continued to shoot into an infected area. But then, Kuhn said, he finally got clean, went to college and even called her the night of his death to talk about his internship.

“For as well as he was doing, we kind of thought it was in the clear,” Kuhn said.

Brad, too, said he has attended more funerals than some one his age should have to.

By the time he started abusing Vicodin in 2012, he said painkiller use had exploded on campus. Less than a year passed between his first time taking an opioid drug and the realization that he had become a “full-blown” heroin addict.

When people jumped to heroin, that’s when the problem became harder to ignore: People started dying.

But even then, at the same time that more earth was being hollowed across Ohio for young men and women who died from opioid addiction, Kuhn remembers being frustrated by how little people spoke of it — especially in the quiet, well-off Dublin community where she was raised.

It’s been nine years since her brother died, and for so long she has felt alone in recognizing just how devastating the epidemic has become. Only in the past two years have people really talked about it.

“There’s so much denial,” Kuhn said.

Some addicts still think their fate is in their own hands. Kuhn’s brother-in-law left three children behind when he died, she said, convinced he could beat his addiction before heading to treatment. Others can’t get access to care in the first place. Theil’s best friend died of an overdose too, waiting for a spot in a treatment center.

As a result of those deaths, states and municipalities continue to file lawsuits against some of the country’s largest opioid drug manufacturers, like Purdue Pharma — the manufacturer of OxyContin — Johnson & Johnson and Endo International, while others, such as West Virginia, have sued distributors of the drugs, such as McKesson Corp.

In 2007 — more than a decade after OxyContin was introduced to the market — one such case against Purdue Pharma resulted in three executives pleading guilty in federal court to allegations that they had misled patients, doctors and regulators through false marketing about the adverse effects of OxyContin, for which they were forced to pay $600 million in fines.

“It was not enough money to make a difference,” Gaskell said of the lawsuit. “Unfortunately, it’s going to fall to the taxpayer to pay for this. The federal government is going to have to get more and more involved … there has to be more funding provided for treatment.”

That’s one reason why Bill Dunlap said the epidemic might grow to become a much bigger monster before it’s tamed.

Dunlap serves as the deputy director of the 317 Board, which coordinates and funds services for alcohol dependency, drug addiction and mental health in Athens, Hocking and Vinton counties. After working with the board for about two decades, his energy has been almost entirely devoted to combating opioid addiction by any financial means available for the past few years.

“It’s out there: People are addicted and they’re not getting into treatment,” Dunlap said. “We’re doing everything we can, but the system is not working at full-throttle as it should.”

**OVERDOSES:**

There were more 33,000 overdose deaths involving an opioid in the U.S. in 2015.

For context, that’s about double the size of the undergraduate student population enrolled at Ohio University’s Athens campus for Spring Semester 2016: 16,974 undergraduate students.

That’s a particularly grim statistic, especially when one considers that those 33,000 deaths occurred across the country. About 2,500 of those 2015 opioid overdose deaths were in Ohio.

**HEROINE-RELATED DRUG OVERDOSES**

After prescription drug guidelines were strengthened, heroin became a cheaper and more widely available alternative, according to a 2014 report from Ohio Gov. John Kasich’s Opiate Action Team.

There were 87 heroin overdose deaths in Ohio in 2003. The overdose death rate for heroin was more than 16 times that in 2015.

**FENTANYL-RELATED DRUG OVERDOSES**

Fentanyl is a prescription opioid typically used during anesthesia or to treat severe pain, though recent overdoses have been connected to illegally produced and trafficked fentanyl, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The drug is highly potent and is sometimes mixed with heroin to amplify its effects.

**PATHWAY OUT**

Dunlap took a seat at the head of the table in the Hocking County Health Department in Logan on March 23 and tried to draw a path out of the opioid epidemic with a room of health professionals, counselors, addiction service providers, law enforcement and recovering addicts.

He’s been doing that for years. The motions are familiar now.

Hocking County’s opiate task force is where solutions typically start, Dunlap said. He has led the
PRESSURE ON PHYSICIANS:

Some medical professionals say the epidemic is rooted in a letter to the editor published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1980, wherein Jane Porter and Dr. Hershel Jick shortly summarized that fewer than 1 percent of the 11,882 patients they treated with narcotics became addicted.

Then, a decade later, pain gained recognition as the “fifth vital sign,” despite its inability to be properly measured. To treat that chronic pain, doctors were increasingly expected to prescribe opioids.

SUCCESSES:

317 BOARD: The 317 Board’s opiate task forces promote awareness of the epidemic or drug-free alternative activities for local teenagers. Task force members have also researched which recovery and prevention models worked in their communities — such as trauma-informed care or wraparound treatment services that attempt to address an addict’s individual, unmet needs — all while manning the gates of the epidemic.

OARRS: Ben Holter, pharmacy manager at Shrivers Pharmacy in Nelsonville, points to the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System and its reports as one method of simply limiting the amount of prescription opioid painkillers being pumped into patients’ hands.

The program, often referred to as OARRS, collects information on prescriptions for controlled substances dispensed by Ohio-licensed pharmacists or personally furnished by prescribers. It’s something pharmacists can check before filling a prescription to see if it’s legitimate or to see if the patient has been doctor shopping.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Through the Athens County Sheriff’s Office Criminal Interdiction Unit, local law enforcement agencies have realized that opioid drug abusers should be offered recovery services instead of just jail time. Athens County Sheriff Rodney Smith said. The agency’s focus has been on stopping those who are trafficking or dealing drugs, and in educating the public on the dangers of the epidemic.

“We want people to know that we do see this as a medical issue, not a criminal issue.” Smith said. “We want to reach out as much as we can and bring in as many resources as we can to these addicted people and let them know that they’ve got somebody they can call.”

"It’s out there: People are addicted and they’re not getting into treatment. We’re doing everything we can but the system is not working at full-throttle as it should.”

— Bill Dunlap, deputy director of the 317 Board
There are many options around Athens and at OU for those seeking treatment for drug addiction.

Recovery doesn’t look the same for everyone. There are a variety of options available to those seeking help, from inpatient or outpatient services, medication-assisted treatment and more. Here are some local resources to explore:

**HOPEWELL HEALTH CENTER**

Hopewell Health Center is an integrated healthcare center.

“We have recently added expanded medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder into some of our primary care sites,” Kate Jiggins, medication-assisted treatment project director at the center, said.

Medication-assisted treatment uses behavioral therapy and medication to treat substance abuse disorders. It can involve methadone, buprenorphine or Vivitrol.

**HEALTH RECOVERY SERVICES**

Health Recovery Services serves those affected with mental illness and alcohol, tobacco or drug addiction.

“In treating individuals dependent on opioids, HRS utilizes a combination of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) along with counseling,” Joe Gay, the executive director of HRS, said in an email.

**JOHN W. CLEM HOUSE**

John W. Clem House, 8044 Dairy Lane, is a residential center for men struggling with addiction. It is a substance-free living center that can serve a maximum of 12 people, Ron Luce, executive director of the facility, said. Clem House does not provide medical treatment and is not a detoxification facility.

**RURAL WOMEN’S RECOVERY**

Rural Women’s Recovery is a medication and mental health treatment program for women that has been around since January 1990.

A maximum of 16 women can be in treatment at a time, and the program serves about 80 people a year, Catherine Chelak, Rural Women’s Recovery’s program director, said. Typically, women stay at the center for 90 to 120 days, unless they are pregnant and need to stay the duration of their pregnancy or longer.

Rural Women’s Recovery is not a medication-assisted treatment program. “We’re very proud of the fact that we have a gender-specific program … and we make serving women here a priority,” Reggie Robinson, the program manager for the division of community services at Health Recovery Services, said.

**OHIO UNIVERSITY**

Ohio University offers two services for those dealing with addiction: the Collegiate Recovery Community and SMART recovery.

“It’s not specific to opioid addiction, it’s any addiction including addiction to alcohol,” Terry Koons, associate director for Health Promotion, said. “It could be addiction to unhealthy behaviors like pornography.”

The Collegiate Recovery Community began at OU in 2012 and is a part of the Campus Involvement Center, which falls under the Division of Student Affairs. The CRC is located in Baker 321, and it holds a weekly peer support group for college students Fridays at 3 p.m.

SMART recovery stands for Self-Management and Recovery Training. Those meetings are open to the public in addition to OU students. The meetings take place Wednesday at noon in the CRC office.

“I like it, especially when you have an older person in here that is trying to overcome an addiction,” Ann Addington, assistant director for health promotion, said. “To just have a student sit and listen to them and look at them physically and see what the addiction has done to their bodies physically really, I think, can be impactful for the students.”

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Hocking County Judge Fred Moses runs a Vivitrol Drug Court program in Logan. Participants are eligible if they have a misdemeanor charge of the third-degree or higher and are on probation. They also must have a dependency diagnosis for opioids from a licensed treatment agency.

“We were the starter of Vivitrol in the state, they’re all modeled off us,” Moses said. “We just took the standard drug court model and started using Vivitrol as the medication-assisted treatment.”

Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn started the first prosecutor-based Vivitrol program in Ohio, he said, and the program has treated more than 150 people.

“There are individuals who have been to prison before, who are now clean and have jobs,” Blackburn said. “There are people who have gone to college because of this. There are a lot of success stories. It’s not 100 percent perfect, but it’s successful.”

- Emma Ockerman contributed to this report.

**ILLUSTRATION BY: CLAIRE HANNA**

[Image of various healthcare icons]
It started with a few prescriptions for pain pills from about 1999 to 2003. By 2004, Columbus Southern Medical Center was doling out 800,000 controlled substances for pain. Then it was more than one million. And it didn't stop there.

Physicians and their assistants at Columbus Southern — owned and managed by former Ohio University Trustee Kevin Lake — prescribed drugs like hydrocodone and oxycodone to hundreds of patients every day.

Still, the clinic, which was in operation as early as 1999 as a standard family medical clinic on 2912 S. High St. in Columbus, could only go so far.

In June 2010, the Drug Enforcement Administration executed a warrant to investigate the clinic. At that point, Lake stepped back. Around that time, he was also appointed to the Board of Trustees by then-Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland. Lake began to monitor and manage the clinic remotely, instructing physicians to never say that he owned it, according to court documents.

A year later, in 2011, Ohio Gov. John Kasich passed House Bill 93, which strengthened the state's ability to investigate and shut down pill mills.

“What the bill said was that it has to be owned by physicians or has to be owned by a hospital,” Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine said. “So that in of itself took a lot of ‘em. It just closed ‘em. So the bill itself ... has been one part of the overall effort to deal with the pain med problem.”

No one was found guilty in connection with the DEA’s investigation until 2014, when former staff member Terry Dragash pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute oxycodone. More than a year later, two other former staff members pleaded guilty as well.

It wasn’t until January that Lake, who graduated from OU’s Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1992, pleaded guilty to drug, tax and fraud charges and admitted to operating the pain management clinic as a pill mill. The clinic had made tens of millions of dollars.

While the clinic was still in operation, investigators began to notice its growth. Sometimes, patients would line up outside Columbus Southern an hour and a half before it would open. On a regular day, doctors and assistants might see up to 100 patients, who usually paid solely with cash, for visits as short as a few minutes.

While the clinic's client base continued to grow, doctors doled out opioids daily to patients, some of whom traveled long distances to seek out the clinic.

Lake resigned from OU’s Board of Trustees on Jan. 21. The trustees released a statement Jan. 31 that acknowledged Lake’s crimes.

Because Lake has yet to be sentenced, members of the U.S. Attorney General’s office declined to comment. Lake’s lawyer, Bradley Barbin, did not respond to phone calls or emails requesting comment.

“We are shocked and deeply disappointed by this development, and we sympathize with the patients and their families impacted by his unlawful behavior,” according to the Board of Trustees’ statement.

Around the time that the DEA’s investigation of Columbus Southern began, about 10 pill mills in were closed in Scioto County from 2010 to 2011.

Since then, DeWine said pill mills in Ohio have been “pretty much dealt with,” primarily because the state has focused on addressing the culture of drug addiction in prescribing practices. Meanwhile, his office has cracked down on investigating doctors who might not be adhering to the law.

“(Some doctors) only have the best interest of their patients at heart, but some of them are prescribing 30 to 40 pain pills for a fairly routine procedure, and what happens is these drugs if they’re taken by the patient, all of them, the patient risks becoming addicted,” DeWine said.

DeWine said he wants to make sure people in pain are being adequately treated, but he stressed the need for weighing the risk of addiction against the seriousness of the problem. He said addressing those issues is how the state could decrease the number of drug-addicted people and the number of pill mills as whole.

“We're making progress on the pain problem, but we still have a ways to go,” he said.

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Lining the path to the front door of the Rural Women’s Recovery Program house in Athens County are several hand-painted stones, placed among the now-blooming flowers and carefully maintained garden.

“Every day is a second chance.” “Perfect imperfection.” “Perfectly broken.” “We do recover.” The stones are a cheery accessory to the calming grounds of the cozy, log cabin-like facility.

The women inside the home are working through their recoveries, whether that be due to drug or alcohol dependency or mental health diagnoses.

Often, they have been subjected to a vicious cycle of trauma after trauma, Catherine Chelak, program director at Rural Women’s, said. Here, they follow a 12-step model with other women and take the time they need to heal.

It’s a sanctuary for many women, she added.

“We need a paradigm shift where wellness is sought,” Chelak said.

The Post visited Rural Women’s on April 5 and talked to six women in the program, some of whom asked to remain anonymous due to the stigmas associated with addiction and recovery. After suffering from dependency issues or traumatic experiences, the women echoed those stones outside: We do recover.

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1. Jenn, 27, of north central Ohio, poses for a portrait outside of Rural Women’s. She asked to only be identified by her first name. The last time her story was told, she said, was when her drug overdose was on the front page of a newspaper. “That day, I hadn’t planned on coming back from that overdose,” she said. “Thankfully, my higher power was working in my favor and there was a random nurse and doctor around the corner. They were able to call 911 in time to save my life.” Being known by her addiction rather than her recovery was devastating, she said. Now, she wants to reach out to people who feel the same way she did that day — that they should take their life, unable to get away from their addiction — and let them know there is hope. “There are people you can trust, and people that want to help you,” she said.

2. Aimee Kincaid, 24, of McConnelsville, sits cross-legged in a chair outside Rural Women’s. She said her addiction began when she was 15, after she delivered her son by cesarean section and was prescribed Percocet. Within the next year, she started using heroin. Her probation officer referred her to the program, and she came to the house on Feb. 14. “My son is 8 now, and he really needs me,” she said. “This is an amazing place, I’ve learned so much about myself here, not just the using but why I started using in the first place. … I was like a body without a soul.”

3. One of several hand-painted stones outside of Rural Women’s sits in the garden outside the home.

4. Megan Archer, 37, of Dresden, sits at a picnic table outside of the Rural Women’s Recovery House. She came to the program earlier this year, she said, because she was “sick and tired of being sick and tired” after being there physically for her children, but not emotionally. At the time, she was suffering from an addiction to heroin and prescription drugs. She’s about halfway through the program and said she’s hoping to enter intensive outpatient therapy in Zanesville once she leaves Athens. It might take a lot of work to get sober, she added, but it’s worth sticking to a path toward recovery. “I’ve lost a couple friends to this addiction,” she said. “I don’t want to be that one.”
5. Chelsea Holland, 25, of Zanesville, keeps pictures of her children posted in her shared room at Rural Women’s. She came to the program March 20 and said she has a long journey ahead of her. After a difficult childhood, she was ecstatic when she found out she was pregnant. But when her child was just a few days old, a former friend told children services that she was abusing prescription pills. “I had to give her away,” she said of her daughter, who is now 2 years old. “That broke me.” Later, a friend turned her on to heroin. “My life went to complete chaos and hell,” she said. During that time, she became pregnant again. But when she’s recovered, Holland has exceptional goals: regain custody of both her children, go back to school, get a job and enlist in the United States Navy.

6. Mindy, 37, of Athens, sits outside of Rural Women’s. She asked to only be identified by her first name. After multiple injuries and a car accident, she was prescribed opioid painkillers and was later introduced to heroin. She always wanted help, she said, but never quite knew how to ask. “At first, when I came here I was ready to walk out the doors, but I just knew somewhere in my life I wanted to be proud to say my name again,” she said. “It’s taught me how to be responsible, it’s taught me how to get my dignity back. I don’t have hopelessness in my life anymore.”

7. A 23-year-old client of Rural Women’s looks out over Athens’ hilly terrain on a warm day. The woman, who is pregnant, asked to not be identified by name for this article. She found Rural Women’s through her parole officer about two months ago and said her recovery has been the calmest part of her life thus far. “I’ve been through addiction,” she said, “it’s difficult to understand. If you want to save your life, this is it,” she said. “It’s harder to give up when you’ve worked so hard for something.”
The opioid epidemic has left broken families and childhood trauma in its wake, launching an urgent crisis in foster care and a pressing need for more empathy.

Maybe, Macey Brandeberry wonders, her mother’s downward spiral could have begun where many find their solutions: a doctor’s appointment. All the vitriolic words exchanged, the violent arguments, the years-long turmoil between one family member in crisis and the rest who sought to help her — those moments had to start somewhere.

“IT was just hard. IT was really sometimes very unhappy just to be home,” Brandeberry, a second-year medical student on Ohio University’s Dublin campus, said.

One question, of course, can churn a maelstrom of “maybe.” No problem has an easy beginning, nor an easy end.

That’s what Brandeberry explained to first-year medical students via video chat during OU’s Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine Health Policy Day in February. The theme was “healing Ohio’s opioid crisis,” and she was trying to serve as a relatable face to an immeasurable epidemic.

Her relatability was two-pronged: here was a student, grappling with the complexities of knowing whether to prescribe or not prescribe sometimes helpful medication to a patient who says he or she is in pain, in addition to her mother’s own addiction to opioid painkillers.

The latter wasn’t something she was particularly used to talking about.

Bringing it up, she originally thought, might garner unwanted sympathy or attention, or imply that her successes were a product of her mother’s addiction. Brandeberry, who earned her undergraduate degree in biology from the University of Findlay after growing up in Fostoria, said her career in medicine has been a way to accomplish something with her life and to have an impact on others.

Maybe talking about her mother’s addiction could make a difference.

Maybe there were hundreds of thousands of people like Brandeberry out there: the sons and daughters of addicts, who deserved an answer.

A CRISIS IN TRAUMA

It only took a month on the job for Travis Boggs to come across a toddler intertwined in a parent’s drug abuse and neglect.

That was in 2008. The alternative response caseworker with Athens County Children Services said that was his first glance at the severity of the opioid epidemic. A deputy with the sheriff’s office stopped counting after more than 30 needles were discovered in the home. There were small amounts of heroin on the tables and countertops, and several knives were on the floor within the child’s reach.

As a result of the ever-rising prevalence of addiction and overdose deaths, children have quickly become the invisible victims of the opioid epidemic, Catherine Hill, executive director of Athens County Children Services, said.

If that population isn’t considered for the resources it needs now, the federal and state government will be faced with a generation devastated by an addiction crisis that wasn’t their own.
And where there’s addiction, there’s often underlying trauma, Ron Luce said. Some people just don’t have hope, Luce, the executive director of the John W. Clem Recovery House in Athens County, said. Society lacks a sense of faith in the American Dream. People feel disposable.

Some of that is a result of trauma, and often, it breeds more. Without resources to address that trauma, we’ll be in “absolute crisis,” Luce said.

Luce first saw the intersection of opioid addiction and trauma through his role as a guardian ad litem for the Athens County Juvenile Court about five years ago, when he met children whose toys were sold for drug money or families that experienced generational addiction, poverty or sexual abuse.

He encountered the impact of trauma again when he became the executive director of the Clem House, where he and others provide help for men suffering from addiction in a residential setting.

Men came into his office, he said, and shared secrets they held in for years. Some had been sexually abused by a family member. Others had grown up in poverty or with family members who also suffered from addiction.

“I don’t think that people recognize that for many people who are addicted, it’s not just the drugs or alcohol,” Luce said, sitting within the blue walls of his office at the Clem House. “They are buring a world of pain and horror that exists in their past, and then there’s the shame and guilt.”

He has seen the effects of something called the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study carried out in real-time.

The ACE study assigns its users a score, based on the level of trauma they may have experienced — whether through abuse, neglect or household dysfunction — to determine what their future health determinants might be. One of those risks includes addiction to drugs or alcohol. Children who are assessed by mental health professionals are often evaluated for such experiences to determine the level of care they may need.

“Certainly, addiction of a parent for any substance is really traumatic for any children who are in a home,” Hill said.

Now, children have higher needs than they used to, she said. Trauma can have a terrific impact on their lives, and they often have psychiatic or behavioral needs that need to be attended to.

There are factors that build resilience despite such experiences, though, such as love and encouragement from caregivers and family members, or access to education and financial help. Resources being available such as trauma-competent mental health services, campaigns that generate awareness and support for additional resources can help as well.

“A lot of these children and parents we work with, just knowing them and knowing what’s on their ACE score, you can almost see what can happen if treatment isn’t implemented right away,” Boggs said.

ENSURING CARE

In 2015, approximately 33,000 Americans died from overdose deaths related to prescription or illicit opioid drugs, and it’s estimated that millions more are suffering from substance abuse disorders relating to drugs. Unquestionably, such addiction has contributed to the 11 percent increase of children in state custody within the past six years, Angela Saussy, executive director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, said. Athens County has seen a 23 percent increase of children in state custody.

Such children are not just entering foster care at higher rates — Athens County had 97 children in custody as of April 10, up from an average of 70 children in 2012 — they’re entering at a younger age than was once typical and they’re staying in foster care longer.

Too many children in Ohio just aren’t able to safely return home to their natural parents, Hill said, and end up being cared for by family members. In other cases, the agency is awarded custody so a child can be placed with an adoptive family.

A survey from the Public Children Services Association of Ohio found that in 2015, nearly half of children taken into state custody had parents who were using drugs.

Such cases are necessitating higher costs for county agencies; Athens has experienced a 35 percent increase in costs since 2010.

Meanwhile, state funding to counties for children services agencies has dropped by 21 percent since 2008, despite an increase of children in custody. Nationally, Ohio is ranked last for the state’s share of funding for children services agencies.

That’s why Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine’s office awarded a $3.5 million grant to the association to be divided among 14 agencies in southern Ohio for a pilot program, which includes Athens.

The program will provide more resources for children services agencies to form care teams that will establish collaborative support for addicted parents and their children, modeled off a similar program in Kentucky.

If successful, DeWine said the program will be considered for statewide implementation.

“The idea would be to try to help the parents with their addiction problem, help their children recover from the trauma of living in a house where there’s a drug-abusing parent, with the ultimate goal of getting the kid reunited with their parents at an earlier stage,” DeWine said.

But those are the resources that are being allocated now. Those programs might have existed while Brandeberry — who was primarily cared for by her father — was growing up, but they were not well-advertised.

She hasn’t spoken with her mother outside of a few texts and Facebook messages in the past few years. She has often considered whether her mother’s addiction was a product of a previous traumatic experience or mental illness, too.

“I think we’re going to have bigger problems down the line,” Hill said of the level of funding for children services. “You either pay now or you pay later.”

STARTING WITH THE MOTHERS

Sue Meeks said the children and mothers affected by the opioid epidemic started as a slow trickle into her Family Navigator Program a few years ago, housed within HCOM. Then it became a flood.

Met with grandparents who were the primary caregivers for some of her youngest clients, she often asked “Where’s Mom?” Their mothers, she was told, were increasingly addicted to drugs or in jail as a result.

The next steps she and her fellow nurse navigators took were not only about empathy and understanding a mother’s addiction, but also the underlying causes for why she may have turned to drugs.

“Once people can understand that, there can be a bit more compassion,” Meeks said. “It doesn’t mean we support addiction, it means we understand how you may have gotten there.”

It took a small, collaborative army to develop a novel approach that would involve high-risk mothers in non-judgmental, wraparound care. That team — communicating across a variety of resources outside of the Family Navigator Program — pressed its thumb to the pulse of southeast Ohio’s epidemic of opioid addiction, and hasn’t taken it off since.

In Parks Hall, Stacy Lee and Kristin Kerwin, registered nurse navigators who work with the Pathways to a Healthy Pregnancy program, show how that pulse continues to beat with pressing, unmet needs. More than half of their clientele has suffered from opioid addiction, Lee said, though they assist women who are not drug-addicted as well.

The Pathways initiative is run through the Family Navigators team, and it’s where Lee, Kerwin and Meeks connect a web of resources with Medicaid-eligible, at-risk pregnant women. The aim is to ensure that they receive the care necessary to deliver and raise a healthy baby, minimizing that child’s risks for trauma or being born addicted to opioid drugs, also known as neonatal abstinence syndrome.

The nurse navigators link pregnant women to services such as medication-assisted treatment if they are suffering from addiction. Lee and Kerwin also follow the women to many of their medical appointments and visit them after their baby is born, all while addressing the social determinants of health that clients might be facing.

During a client’s intake, Kerwin said, they will also complete an Adverse Childhood Experiences survey.

The registered nurses have grown frustrated together, cried together and celebrated the smallest of victories together, Meeks said.

The program’s nurse navigators manage the caseload, while Health Recovery Services provides counseling and OhioHealth O’Bleness Athens Medical Associates assists with obstetric care and medication-assisted treatment.

SEE CHILDREN P14
Because of the Maternal Opiate Medical Support (MOMS) pilot project in Ohio—primarily initiated to prevent further diagnoses of neonatal abstinence syndrome—Athens was one of four locations to receive grant funding to create the collaborative team. But the care model in Athens was mostly in place beforehand, Dr. Jody Gerome, who practices obstetrics and gynecology at AMA, said. The grant just helped to solidify existing relationships.

With more than 100 babies hospitalized for NAS in Athens County from 2011 to 2015, county officials couldn’t sit on their hands and wait, Gerome said. And though the MOMS grant has since expired, the team has continued its work. About 12 percent of the 500 babies delivered at AMA each year are born to opioid-addicted mothers, Gerome added.

From January 2015 to January 2017, Lee said, the Pathways program helped more than 1,000 clients. It’s just one method of improving the life of a parent and child, but it’s been one that Meeks’ team has found successful.

Meeks, too, has learned that if there’s any route to pull a child out of a path toward an unhealthy lifestyle, it’s in trauma-informed care.

“We're treating the addiction, we're doing all the other things to treat the outcome of that, but we're still doing a really poor job of adequately treating childhood trauma,” Meeks said of the resources available locally.

**AN EMPATHETIC APPROACH**

Normal can be defined a little differently for everyone, Allana Cottrill, a 26-year-old from Chauncey and a mother of three young children, said.

Growing up, it seemed normal for her father to be sticking needles into his arm, or for pills to be lying around the house.

Cottrill stressed that her childhood was happy. She was never totally conscious of her father’s opioid addiction until he died from an overdose death when she was 10 years old. But her children will know their grandfather died of a drug overdose.

“Tell kids what they need to look for,” Cottrill said. “I had no idea that it was not normal for my dad to have all these pills and stuff, or to be giving himself shots—which is what it looked like—that’s just how we live our lives.”

That subjective definition of normalcy is key in trauma-informed care. Many do not recognize that it’s a luxury to feel safe in your own home, Joseph Bianco, an assistant professor of social and behavioral medicine in HCOM, said.

To go home and relax in your own house is something people take for granted."

- Macey Brandeberry, second-year medical student

Working in the residency clinic, he said he would sometimes see clients who, during their intake process, would not report trauma even if they had been physically abused or had been part of the foster care system.

“The reason that they're not making the connection is not because they're not under-reporting, it's because that's the only normal that they knew,” Bianco, who has researched behavioral health interventions in primary care and the effects of childhood trauma on adult health, said.

So, faced with a generation afflicted with trauma as a result of the opioid epidemic, Sausser said it's critical that the state allocates funding to address it. That's why the grant for children services agencies from the Attorney General’s office is so important, she said.

That's also why collaborative models like Meeks' tend to work better than those that operate in a bubble.

Meanwhile, Brandeberry is preparing for a field in which she'll often encounter people who have faced traumas of their own: emergency medicine. Though she was hesitant to tell her story to a room of first-year medical students, she's glad she did.

If a pediatrician or any other physician takes the time to delve deeper into their patients' home lives, the impact on children could be tremendous. Not only may children feel less alone, she said, they also might be connected with counseling or legal authorities if they feel unsafe.

“To go home and relax in your own house is something people take for granted,” Brandeberry said. “It's just sad how many people are suffering.”
Teacher training for opioid abuse cases rare

Abbey Marshall
Staff Writer

As the opioid epidemic persists, children are oftentimes left in the wake of their parents' addictions. With the well-being of their families on their minds, elementary-aged students are bogged down at school and can't perform academically to the best of their ability, forcing teachers to adapt to the changing climate of educating in southeast Ohio.

A "significant" number of children in the Athens City School District have lost a parent from addiction due to death, incarceration, abandonment or legal loss of parental custody, said Diane Stock, a social worker from Athens County Children Services at The Plains Elementary School.

"For some, students, teachers and school staff become those trusted, safe adults that can foster resiliency through positive interactions," she said in an email.

Addressing the effects of familial opioid abuse in the classroom is essential to instructing students in this area, but Ohio University's Patton College of Education does very little to train teachers to combat the problem, Eugene Geist, an associate professor of early childhood education, said.

"We don’t do enough of preparing our teachers for dealing with some of these issues," he said. "It’s not just here. In general, colleges of teacher education aren’t doing as good of a job as we should."

Geist said the school offers courses on dealing with family issues and classes about diverse students, but OU does not offer education courses specifically dealing with drug abuse and the neglect that often goes along with that problem.

A strong suit of the education program, however, is the ties to the child and family studies program, Geist said. Through programs like that, students are trained to look for signs of neglect, which could indicate further problems, such as drug abuse.

"Sometimes, as educators, we don’t always think as much about the child’s home life as we should," he said. "What we end up having are instead of finding out about what's going on in a child's life, we might see for example, certain behavioral manifestations in the classroom. ... Instead of being a behavioral problem, you look at it as a symptom of their home life."

Schools in Athens County are already having to deal with issues of opioid abuse, but, similarly to training future educators, Athens City Schools does not have a program in place specifically to address drug abuse because the state of Ohio does not require it.

Athens City School District does provide state-required training sessions on identifying and responding to abuse and neglect annually through Athens County Children Services, though Athens City School Superintendent Tom Gibbs called it a "hit or miss."

"It’s obviously a very difficult issue to address from the perspective of working with school age children," Gibbs said. "Part of it is that we don’t necessarily know. ... It’s hard for us to ascertain if what we’re seeing in school is a result of opioid abuse or something else."

Beyond required training, Gibbs said Athens City Schools tries to offer additional training but finds it difficult because of the lack of time and resources public educators have access to.

“We have so many trainings now, to be quite frank it’s difficult to get them all scheduled in the time they have," he said. "To expect teachers to give up more and more unpaid time for training is an unrealistic expectation. I’d like to see more training, but I’d like to see the state put more funding for that training to pay professionals for their time.”

Athens City Schools does provide in-school mental health services because students who need those services are more likely to get to their appointments if the school can provide it, Gibbs said.

Though local schools provide some services, Stock said there is room for improvement.

"Ideally, I would like to see lower student to teacher ratios so struggling students could get more of that positive adult interaction that encourages brain development," Stock said in an email. "My big dream is a district run school that provides intensive trauma informed therapeutic interventions while still maintaining academic instruction."

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HCOM teaches risks of prescribing opioids

Educators push for pain treatment alternatives

MARGARET MARY HICKS
FOR THE POST

During the rise of the opioid crisis, the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine found it easier to comply with the 2016 White House request to be teaching opioid prescribing because it was already doing it.

The medical school was one of the first of a “small number” of other schools to respond to the 2016 White House request to educate medical students on prescribing opioids, HCOM Dean Kenneth Johnson said.

“The opioid abuse epidemic is an issue that’s deeply important to the medical school and to the citizens of Ohio, and it’s something that we have been working on consistently for years,” Johnson said in an email.

Some of the topics educators taught before the request included opioid prescribing, addiction medicine and non-opioid alternatives for pain management. Some interventions included osteopathic manipulative medicine, which is a system that focuses on the musculoskeletal system.

Alex Myers, a second-year medical student at HCOM’s Cleveland campus, said he has lost friends and classmates to heroin overdoses in his hometown of Painesville.

During Health Policy Day, a mandatory exercise for first-year medical students to show how such issues are broader than healthcare, Myers spoke about losing a friend in December to a heroin overdose.

“She was someone that I used to hang around with when I was in high school, and it didn’t make it hurt any less, because she was ... four years younger than me ... same as my sister,” Myers said. “And it was kind of startling to see someone that young slip into that and overdose and die.”

A deeper understanding of prescribing practices that aided the epidemic is crucial for medical students, Nicole Wadsworth, associate dean of academic affairs for HCOM, said. Through training students about situations in which a patient may be requesting opioid drugs, they must face potential risks with great responsibility.

“(Patients) may come to a doctor and say, ‘Look, I am having all of this pain. I just need this pain medicine,’ and it’s not that simple.”

- Nicole Wadsworth, associate dean of academic affairs for HCOM

HCOM focuses on manual medicine, which is a core belief that the body is capable of self-healing and combating disease without medication.

“Since all of our students are trained in manual medicine, that is a better therapy that they are trained in to treat pain,” Wadsworth said. “So (it is) certainly an alternative to opioid pain medication.”

Joseph Bianco, assistant professor of social and behavioral medicine in HCOM, said when he teaches his addiction class, the first thing he does is confront stereotypes.

“This idea that we tend to judge, and think that the face of addiction is just poor, or people with low morals,” Bianco said. “But really it’s affecting everyone and we need to figure out how we can all work together and change that.”

Additionally, Bianco said he builds awareness, so students can go into those situations with a trauma-informed approach and start from a place of compassion.

Myers and Wadsworth both believe it is vital to treat those patients as people who are struggling with a treatable illness.

“We preach a lot about empathy, but it’s one thing to speak it and it’s another thing to live it,” Myers said. “I don’t necessarily blame physicians directly for that, but ... it’s something that we could definitely work on.”

Bianco said HCOM is in the process of revising the curriculum to have an emphasis on interprofessional competencies.

Myers said the most important thing he has learned is that doctors should treat people as human beings, not addicts.

“There is a lot of stigma associated with addicts and it’s on us,” Myers said. “It’s our job to fight against that.”

Emma Ockerman contributed to this report.

Paid Summer Internships for Writers

Hocking College is looking for writers to create content for e-books for various programs at the College (firefighter, medical assistant, etc.).

Successful candidates should be currently enrolled in a college writing program such as journalism, creative writing, English, etc.

Writers should be proficient at basic research and copywriting. Writers will be working onsite at Hocking College, meeting with content experts for research and subsequently produce content for the e-books.

Requirements

Excellent writing, editing and proofreading skills
Proficient in grammar and punctuation
Must be willing to work onsite at Hocking College
Must be creative and have the skill to write for a specific audience

To schedule an interview, contact:
Tim Brunicardi
Executive Director of Marketing,
Public and Community Relations for Hocking College
PHONE: 740-753-6523
EMAIL: brunicardit@hocking.edu
Addiction can be tied to poverty rates

ALEX MEYER
SENIOR WRITER

Though the opioid epidemic has not been unique to Appalachian communities, the effects of addiction might be more wide-sweeping in a region like southeast Ohio where resources are few and budgets are slim.

“IT'S POVERTY, DRUG ABUSE AND MENTAL ILLNESS,” BILL DUNLAP, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE 317 BOARD, WHICH PROVIDES AND FUNDS MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS OF ATHENS, HOCKING AND VINTON COUNTY, SAID. “THOSE ARE THE THREE MAIN PROBLEMS THAT WE SEE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEALING WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO MOVE AHEAD.”

Dependency can be tied to the availability of jobs, Ron Eller, professor emeritus of history at the University of Kentucky, said. “One has to look at the historical, economic and political conditions that have shaped life in the region today, not in the culture and attitudes in the people,” Eller, who has studied and written about Appalachian history and economic development, said.

Company mining towns, which once flourished in southeastern Ohio, gradually declined and took accompanying industries with them. That left Appalachia with considerable poverty and a lack of opportunity, Eller said.

Notably, poverty rates have steadily increased in Appalachia in past decades, rising from 14 percent in 1980 to an average of 17.2 percent at the beginning of 2010, according to the Appalachian Regional Commission.

An average of 31 percent of Athens County residents were living in poverty in 2015 according to a report published in February by the Ohio Development Services Agency. The county’s economic status was also listed as “at-risk” by the Appalachian Regional Commission for the 2017 fiscal year.

Out of that poor economic environment, Eller said, comes a tendency for people to turn to substances based on dependency, such as alcohol and tobacco, historically.

Coal mining, for example, is linked to admissions to substance abuse treatment centers for opioid abuse, according to a 2008 study published by the Appalachian Regional Commission. The study showed that coal mining areas in Appalachia demonstrated higher rates of heroin and opioid abuse as reasons for receiving treatment compared to other parts of the region.

Still, that does not mean that addiction can be cast as a choice made by those living in poverty to avoid confronting deeper problems.

“The conception that (some people are) giving is that these people are lazy, they won’t work — that’s not the truth if in the vast majority of cases, Reggie Robinson, program manager at Health Recovery Services in Athens, said. “Even the people in poverty, sometimes, self-blame. That’s not constructive.”

Those who are suffering from addiction in southeast Ohio might face additional barriers to recovery, such as a lack of transportation, additional health problems or basic skill deficiencies, Zielinski said.

The Department of Job and Family Services helps people work to overcome such obstacles, though he added that the prevalence of addiction can increase the difficulty in providing services to families.

“LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITHOUT A SAFE PLACE TO LIVe ARE HIT ESPECIALLY HARD WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER BECOMES ADDICTED,” ZIELINSKI SAID. “IT BECOMES EVEN HARDER FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES TO MOVE FORWARD.”

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EMAIL
eb823313@ohio.edu
From student activists to the administrative level, Ohio University is home to many who work to create a culture of environmental consciousness.

On April 5, Winter Wilson woke up fueled by her passion for environmental activism.

At 5 a.m., she and other members of Ohio University’s Sierra Student Coalition rolled out of bed. As the sun started to creep into the sky, the activists hung banners reading things such as “Climate change is real” and “Divest for our future.”

Wilson, a freshman studying journalism and environmental studies in the Honors Tutorial College, gave new life to OU’s Sierra Student Coalition this semester. The student organization is a branch of the Sierra Club’s national network of students who advocate for environmental justice.

“I think it’s important ... that there is a collaborative student organization to push for greener initiatives to ensure that everybody has a future,” Wilson said.

The small band of activists are doing what they can to make their voices heard in regard to environmental problems at a large university. Athens is home to many people who dedicate much of their time, energy and resources into creating a greener campus environment.
INSTITUTIONAL INSTRUCTION

In 2005, OU added a new department to its campus called the Office of Resource Conservation. The office worked to promote sustainability across campus, and it was eventually renamed the Office of Sustainability.

The Office of Sustainability writes the Sustainability Plan for the university. The office then uses the plan to outline its courses of action to achieve its goals in coordination with other departments across campus.

The office considers its actions with three things in mind: the community, the environment and the economy. The office works to foster relationships with groups across campus, including the College of Business and Culinary Services.

“Sustainability is a holistic conversation,” Annie Laurie, director of sustainability, said. “It’s not just for environmental studies students. ... Every single student can relate to this. For me, that has been a really exciting change.”

Another institutional level program aiming to spread ecological friendliness is the Common Experience Project on Sustainability. Its mission is to educate faculty and staff across all disciplines on how to “green” their curriculum and teach students on how to implement sustainable habits.

A myriad of events are hosted each year through the project, including lectures by speakers from environmental organizations, a “green jobs” panel and the annual Sustainability Film Series.

“We try to make it inviting, educational, but also engaging for students,” Loraine McCosker, coordinator for the Common Experience Project, said. “There’s a lot to show. There’s a lot to do. The opportunities are endless.”

WISDOM WITHOUT WASTE

Each August, OU welcomes a few thousand new faces and each spring sends a few thousand on their way. That presents a particular challenge to those who teach and promote sustainable habits on campus.

“It’s a constant challenge because you’ve got new students coming in every year, and you have to sort of convince that group ... that we want to have this particular type of environmental culture on campus where we’re not going to be wasteful,” Geoff Buckley, a professor of geography, said.

Buckley teaches an introduction to environmental geography class, during which he uses some innovative activities to encourage students to be more mindful of their personal environmental impact. For instance, in one assignment, students must keep a “waste journal” in which they record everything they throw away for an entire week.

Nicole Kirchner is an environmental specialist who works on the Ohio Zero Waste Initiative. Her organization’s mission is to help the university become an institution that produces zero waste. To achieve that, OU must divert 90 percent of its waste from the landfill through recycling, upcycling, composting and other similar practices.

The Zero Waste Initiative has a wide range of programs to promote waste reduction in coordination with several other campus organizations. Kirchner said the biggest challenge is making students and staff aware of those opportunities.

“At a university, it might seem kind of counterintuitive, but we need to do a lot of education,” she said. “We have a lot of services available, but making sure everybody knows how to use them and also where they’re at is important.”

Kirchner said students can play an important role in helping their peers to live more sustainably at school.

“You’re going to get positive peer pressure for doing good things, so I think there’s a lot of interpersonal learning on campus,” she said.

CALLS FOR ACTION

On a politically active campus like OU’s, students play a role in pushing the university to make the changes they want to see in regard to sustainability.

Sarah Pinter, Student Senate’s environmental affairs commissioner, used the student body’s interest in social justice to spark an interest in environmental justice as well.

In late March, Student Senate hosted the Environmental Justice Summit in coordination with several other organizations, including the Common Experience Project and the Zero Waste Initiative. The summit included several speakers such as a renowned environmental activist, a film screening and an “Eat Local for Food Justice” fair.

“I think [Student Senate has] this advantage of being somewhere between the student activists and being a university office,” Pinter, a senior studying mathematics and specialized studies with a focus in statistical environmental science, said.

“We can’t necessarily be in the streets marching for anything, but we can also say this is what we want to see and put forward a bill to the university that says this is what we expect you to do now.”

The activists of the Sierra Student Coalition’s mission is primarily to encourage the university to divest from fossil fuels. With their banners and other future demonstrations, Wilson said the group hopes to inspire the university to take a stronger stance against non-renewable energy.

“We have many ties to fossil fuels, but at the same time I think a lot of students on campus recognize that climate change is really an important issue,” she said.

ROOM TO GROW

Despite the years of work that various organizations have put in, the university’s efforts aren’t quite meeting the mark for some people. A particular point of concern is the set time limit for carbon neutrality, or releasing no carbon dioxide into the atmosphere unless it is offset by practices like planting trees, which is currently set for the year 2075.

“I do have faith in younger people that there’s potentially a brighter future,” she said.

Wilson said that year is much too far off and that it is imperative that total divestment is set for a sooner date.

“There are many more things that the university could be doing to improve and to make green initiatives happen,” Wilson said. “I think with this kind of organizing, hopefully we can push Ohio University to maybe attack some of those issues sooner.”

Buckley was part of the team that developed the first version of the Sustainability Plan in 2011 and is unsatisfied with the 70-year time frame the university chose in 2005.

“Who’s going to be around in 2075?” he asked. “That’s kind of an easy date to pick. Let’s say 2030 and if we miss it, we miss it. But we really gotta move in that direction.”

Buckley is optimistic. Each year, more students enter his class already knowing the basics of sustainability and the importance of environmental consciousness.

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— Geoff Buckley

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International Street Fair to bring culture to Court Street

The annual event will feature traditional food, performances and activities Saturday.
Friday

Spirits in Unity illusion show 6:30 p.m. at ARTS/West, 132 W. State St. A cast of 10 female illusionists from Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania will perform an illusion and magic show at ARTS/West. The show’s proceeds will benefit Unity of Southeastern Ohio, a local non-profit organization. Admission: $10 in advance, $15 at the door.

Fridays Live Season Finale with Newstime 8 p.m. at Studio C, Radio-Television Building. Student comedy groups Fridays Live and Newstime will host an hour-long year-end sketch comedy show. Admission: free.

’80s Dance Night with DJ Barticus 10 p.m. at Casa Nueva, 6 W. State St. Local legend DJ Barticus will spin the best songs from the 1980s at Casa Nueva on Friday night. Admission: $5 for ages 18-20, $3 for ages 21+.

Saturday

Community Easter Egg Hunt 11 a.m. at Life Point Pentecostals, 8076 Rolling Hills Drive. Children up to age 12 are invited to participate in this Easter egg hunt. There will also be giveaways, games and bounce houses. Admission: free.

Southeast Ohio History Center Grand Opening 2 p.m. at the Southeast Ohio History Center, 24 W. State St. The Southeast Ohio History Center will host a grand opening ceremony and the centennial celebration of its building. Admission: free.

The Come On Come Ons 6 p.m. at Casa Nueva, 6 W. State St. Athens-based fusion four-piece band The Come On Come Ons is scheduled to perform the early show at Casa Nueva on Friday. The band blends rock, funk and soul to create a dance-heavy, jazzy sound. Admission: free, food and drinks for sale.

Janice Paris 8 p.m. at Athens Uncorked, 14 Station St. Pianist Janice Paris will perform at wine bar Athens Uncorked on Saturday night. Paris is the instrumental music director at Nelsonville-York, a 2003 graduate of Ohio University and a long-time Athens County resident. Admission: free, drinks for sale.

International Dance Night 10 p.m. at Casa Nueva, 6 W. State St. Casa Nueva will be hosting another iteration of the International Dance Night. The Mexican-inspired restaurant will fill with music from across the world Saturday night. Admission: $5 for ages 18-20, $3 for ages 21+.

Sunday

Little Fish Easter Egg Hunt 2 p.m. at Little Fish Brewing Company, 8675 Armitage Road. Local microbrewery Little Fish Brewing Company will host its second annual Easter egg hunt. Eggs will be hidden across two acres, and the Cajun Clucker food truck will be open from 1 to 8 p.m. Admission: free, food and drinks for sale.

Sakura Festival 2017 2:30 p.m. at Baker Ballroom. OU’s Japanese Student Association will host its annual Sakura Festival to celebrate the end of the year and the blooming of the cherry blossoms. A skit and a J-pop performance will be just some of the entertainment, and a traditional bento box lunch is included in admission. Admission: $8.

Klinder Quartet Recital 6 p.m. at Glidden Hall. The Klinder Quartet, comprised of four of OU’s top string instrument performers, will perform two songs Sunday evening. Admission: free.

Bar Deals in Athens

Cat’s Eye Saloon - Happy hour daily, 4 to 9 p.m., Friday: PBR special, 30 cents a glass starting at 4 p.m., price goes up 5 cents every half-hour until 9 p.m.; $3 PBR pitchers until 9 p.m.

The C.I. - Friday and Saturday, $2.75 well drinks and domestic bottles, $5.50 pitchers; Sunday, $2 well drinks, $1.75 domestic bottles, $5.50 pitchers

Jackie O’s Public House & BrewPub - Friday: $2 FAF Pints. Power hour daily 8 to 9 p.m., $2 select house pints

Lucky’s Sports Tavern - Friday, 4 to 9 p.m.; $1.75 well drinks and domestic bottles, $1 short domestic drafts

The Pigskin - Happy hour daily, 7 to 9 p.m.: $2 domestic beers and well drinks, $2.50 call drinks

The Pub - Friday, Saturday and Sunday: $2.75 domestic bottles, $3 domestic pints, $5 domestic aquariums

Red Brick Tavern - ‘Brick Break’ daily, 6 to 9 p.m.: $1 well drinks, domestic bottles and domestic pints

The Smiling Skull Saloon - Friday, 5 to 7 p.m.: 50 percent off domestics

Stephen’s On Court - Sunday: beer buckets five for $10

Tony’s Tavern - Sunday: $1 PBR and Miller High Life, $1.75 Hot Nuts
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Hockey players return from injury P19
FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

‘Post’ staff learns week by week

Though the academic year is not over quite yet, The Post is taking some time to reflect. This is our last regular issue of 2017. Next week, we will have our special “Post Picks” issue before winter break.

The first paper of the academic year included a cover story about Javon Hagan and a breakdown of Ohio University’s budget. It also had a handful of black and white photos and some misplaced pages due to a printer error. We’ve come a long way since then.

The people who pick up our print product each week saw a few special issues, including one about OU President Duane Nellis, another one specifically for Homecoming and our issue dedicated to elections. We also had a ton of spooky content for Halloween.

Our design staff illustrated a handful of covers and created graphics and illustrations to go alongside reported content. Post photographers covered sporting events, celebrations Uptown and so much more.

The core section staffs — news, culture, sports and opinion — produced content both for the print edition and online every week. We had updates on two-legged dog Tumbles, coverage of Parents and Dads weekends, an in-depth feature story on the announcer at Bird Arena and some hot takes about Quentin Tarantino’s films.

We connected with our audience online. Throughout the course of the semester, we published more than 300 blogs, which include social media reactions to notable events, news explainers, reviews and more. We created nearly 20 videos and kept our social media platforms updated every day. Digital Production Editor Taylor Johnston has also been coding projects every week, including landing pages and special projects.

The start of the academic year marked a new beginning for our entire staff. Almost every Post staff member had to take on a new role and face different challenges. We have had the chance to learn a lot along the way.

We’re all proud of the work we put in this semester, and we are excited to see what next semester has in store. We have some plans for some changes and updates going into next semester, so we can continue giving our readers the best experience possible.

As always, we appreciate any feedback and are always happy to have a conversation about what we’re doing well and what can be better.

Elizabeth Backo is a senior studying journalism and the editor-in-chief of The Post. Want to talk to her? Email her at eb823313@ohio.edu or send her a tweet @liz_backo.
Many of Ohio University’s students are native to the state, but some counties house more than others with students who come from an array of backgrounds. Ohio has 88 counties. Approximately 19,000 students from those counties attend OU.

**THE LARGEST COUNTIES**

The top two Ohio counties for OU students include Franklin County, with 2,084 students, and Cuyahoga County, with 1,970 students, according to data from OU’s Office of Institutional Research.

Franklin County has approximately 1.25 million people living in the area. The largest cities within this county by population include Columbus, Dublin, and Westerville. Cuyahoga County is the largest county in Ohio and has approximately 1.26 million people living in the area. Cleveland, Lakewood, and Parma are the largest cities by population in the county.

In 2015, Franklin County’s median household income was approximately $52,000, and in Cuyahoga County, the median income was approximately $44,000. Popular occupations in both counties include positions in management, administration, sales, and food service. The median income in Ohio is approximately $49,000, according to the Census Bureau.

The high school graduation rate between the two counties is also similar.

According to Open Data Network, in 2013, approximately 90 percent of the population in Franklin County graduated from high school, and in Cuyahoga County, about 88 percent graduated from high school.

While OU has the most enrollment of students from those counties, some students rarely see those from their high schools.

Kyndra Rush, a senior studying exercise physiology, is from Shaker Heights, a city in Cuyahoga County.

“A fairly decent amount of kids from my high school go to OU,” she said. “I don’t really see that many (on campus), maybe one or two a week.”

Shanelle Solgos, a senior studying exercise physiology, is also from Cuyahoga County and had a similar experience.

“I don’t see that many kids from my high school on campus at all,” she said.

**THE SMALLEST COUNTIES**

The counties that have the fewest number of students attending OU are Paulding County in northwest Ohio, with nine students, and Adams County in southern Ohio with 15 students.

Paulding County has approximately 19,000 residents. The largest cities within the county by population include Paulding, Antwerp, and Payne. Adams County has nearly 28,000 residents. West Union, Manchester, and Peebles are the largest cities by population in the county.

When comparing the median household incomes of those two counties, Paulding County was approximately $46,000, and Adams County was approximately $36,000.

As of 2013, approximately 89 percent of the Paulding County population graduated from high school, and approximately 77 percent of the population in Adams County are high school graduates.
**I’m a hypocrite, and I know it**

It’s not uncommon for me, regardless of what moot point or tired argument I’m trying to make, to be called a hypocrite.

Indeed, you’d just have to browse my Twitter feed for a few minutes to find some angry, melodramatic complaints which I’ve railed against in this column.

And while browsing, you’d probably find a few mentions of parties or other excursions that I’ve repeatedly claimed no one cares about.

In furthered blatant hypocrisy:

- I frequently revoke my anti-fall ways to enjoy the season.
- I sometimes mourn the death of the classic rock I consider so pretentious.
- I often hate the overly hot summer weather I claim to love.
- And I’ve embodied the students I loathe by braggling about my grades.

It took me a while to realize it, but all of my complaints this semester — aside from my hatred of Rick and Morty fans — have just been things that, at some point or another, I’ve caught myself doing.

The only difference between my own self-annoyances and everyone else’s is that I’m loud and pretentious enough to write a column attempting to project those annoyances onto other people.

Make no mistake, if you’ve read my column this semester and had your feelings hurt, that’s a good thing. Every behavior I’ve targeted in my column has been unrelentingly annoying, and you should probably stop.

Just know that I’m in the same boat with you. Some people beat themselves up over a bad test score, and I write seven self-indulgent — and equally self-loathing — columns over my annoying habits.

When someone complains about something trivial and stupid, it’s usually a safe bet to assume they’re complaining about themselves. We’re our own worst critics — and that’s especially true in opinion writing.

Please note that the views and opinions of the columnists do not reflect those of The Post. Want to tell Bennett he’s a hypocrite, even though he already knows? Tweet him @LeckroneBennett.

**CINEMA AND SYNTAX**

By accurately portraying Mexican culture, ‘Coco’ became one of the year’s most important movies

Disney/Pixar’s latest film, Coco, takes place in the fictional small village of Santa Cecilia, Mexico, during Dia de Muertos, the Mexican celebration in which families lay out photos of deceased relatives and place their favorite foods and items. During Dia de Muertos, it is believed that those who have died are able to cross the bridge from the dead and come back to the living.

As a Mexican who holds his country and culture near and dear to his heart, I will admit that I was really worried when I heard that Pixar would be making a movie that centered on something that is so revered in Mexican culture. For so long, we’ve seen our country portrayed in such a negative light, and when there are characters who are Mexican, most of the time we are reduced to nothing more than a stereotype. I’m looking at you, El Macho in Despicable Me 2.

When the first official trailer for Coco was released — despite all the backlash I had heard and read about (especially when Disney made an attempt to trademark the phrase “Dia de los Muertos”) — I was excited to see what they had come up with.

The trailer introduces us to Miguel Rivera, a young boy who aspires to be a musician, just like his hero Ernesto de la Cruz, a singer inspired by Mexican legends Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete and Vincente Fernandez. Just those few minutes of the trailer had me feeling happy and emotional, so I got more and more excited as the release date got closer.

The opening shot of the movie begins with the camera panning on cempasuchil (marigold) petals, and then we see the cemetery where families are placing ofrendas on the graves. The cempasuchil is the traditional flower used to honor the dead and is thought to attract the souls of the dead to the offerings. It is commonplace to leave a trail of petals from the house to the family graves.

The best part of this movie is that Mexican culture is not made to seem exotic or strange — it is normalized. The filmmakers and Pixar have created a movie that is a beautiful homage, and it is enchanting, heartwarming and downright fantastic.

While those who are not Mexican and are unfamiliar with Mexican culture will miss out on the little details, it won’t matter in the big picture. This movie is a wonderful achievement that will live on and be referenced as a turning point in the future when it comes to making movies that honor cultures and traditions in other countries.

I’ll admit that there were many times throughout the movie that I teared up; from hearing the ballads and music, to seeing that Miguel’s dog is the Xolo (the Mexican hairless dog and revered to be a spirit guide to the underworld) to seeing the Land of the Dead, Coco captures everything that is beautiful about Mexican culture.

When I saw the movie, I saw people on screen, in a movie from Pixar, that looked like my friends, my family members and me. I heard a genre of music that I have listened to for years on full force. I saw brown people beautifully portrayed and in a light that I was so proud of.

I was a sobbing mess at the end of the movie — not only because the emotional storyline will tear you to pieces in the best way possible, but also because this is a movie that hit me right in the corazon.

From the song “Remember Me,” with lyrics that will serve as a touching gut punch — especially when sung as a lullaby between Miguel’s great-great grandmother Coco and her father — to the fact that this movie is unafraid to highlight aspects of our culture in a day and age when we often aren’t portrayed positively, Coco is sure to have you feeling every kind of emotion by the end.

Director Lee Unkrich has called this movie “a love letter to Mexico,” and he couldn’t be closer to the truth. Since opening on Oct. 27 in Mexico, it has gone on to become one of the highest-grossing films in Mexican history and is making waves here in the U.S. as well. The cast has actual Latino voice actors; the soundtrack is gorgeous, and so is the animation. This is possibly the best movie of 2017, so much so I’m probably going to go back and see it a few more times by the end of the year.

One word of warning though: Unless you want to sit through an absolutely excruciating 21-minute long Frozen Christmas special, Slate has estimated viewers should arrive to the theater 37 minutes after it is slated to start to avoid the special.

Go see Coco. Laugh, cry and enjoy a wonderful homage to the greatest country and culture on Earth. Qe viva Mexico.

Please note that the views and opinions of the columnists do not reflect those of The Post.
‘The Christian Life’ isn’t a song for just Christians

Country music has always been intertwined with Christianity, which serves as one of its foundations. But unlike contemporary Christian music that tends to preach to a niche market, country music took a more digestible and gospel-influenced approach that skewed more Evangelical than Catholic.

For instance, in 1959, Charlie and Ira Loudermilk, better known as The Louvin Brothers, released the acclaimed album, Satan Is Real, which features some of the most entertaining cover artwork in music history. Aside from the unconventional cover, the songs found within follow a soulful brand of country gospel music that has grown in popularity since Ira’s death in 1965.

One song from Satan Is Real in particular would take on a life of its own, nailing the status of a country music standard.

Upon first listen, “The Christian Life” comes off as a straightforward ballad about following the path of God and not worrying about judgment from thy fellow man. The Louvin Brothers often penned songs from the perspective of the-down-and-out, but “The Christian Life” is different. The song unspools as an ecclesiastical celebration of walking in the Light.

Perhaps that’s why the song’s fervent message, defiant lyrics and vocal harmonies appealed to The Byrds, who recorded the most famous version of “The Christian Life” on their phenomenal 1968 country rock album Sweetheart of the Rodeo.

The Byrds’ mostly sincere foray into country music consisted of nine covers – ranging from Woody Guthrie to Merle Haggard – and two original compositions by Gram Parsons called “Hickory Wind” and “One Hundred Years from Now.”

Never before Sweetheart had a rock band so deeply adapted to a different style of music than its own, throwing out the flanger pedal for a steel pedal guitar. Only Ray Charles’ 1962 Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music could compare to the inventiveness of non-country musicians cutting a country music record.

The floating steel pedal guitar by Jay Dee Maness that opens “The Christian Life” signifies the first improvement made from the original rendition. The Byrds’ version of the song was recorded with better production and better players like Maness and the legendary bluegrass guitarist Clarence White. The vocal harmonies between John McGuinn and either Chris Hillman or Parson – the credits are unclear in this case – invoke a clean-sounding choir standing on risers near the altar.

Most of The Byrds’ music centers around psychedelia, 12-string guitars and 60s counterculture, but Sweetheart makes an honest attempt to touch on each longstanding theme in American music.

With “The Christian Life,” The Byrds choose to cover an overtly religious song and elevate it to something that can be enjoyed by the masses, believers and nonbelievers alike. And upon repeated listening, the track becomes an unshakable country-tinged earworm difficult to forget.

Throughout the final product and rehearsal takes, McGuinn pushes his voice with emotion preaching the song’s chorus, “I won’t lose a friend by heeding God’s call/For what is a friend who’d want you to fall,” to a point where it’s hard not to take him seriously. The performance not only matches The Louvin Brothers, but exceeds them.

When boiled down, “The Christian Life” is about following one’s heart and beliefs instead of giving into peer pressure and popular demand. In a way, The Byrds lived out this credo when its members decided to move away from their legacy of psychedelic music. But, unlike many outwardly Christian rock songs, this song can be universally enjoyed for its universal application and unmatched musicianship.

It doesn’t matter if The Byrd’s actually believed the song’s lyrics themselves or simply revered The Louvin Brothers’ work. The primary message is clear for anyone who listens.

And when it comes down to it, I have to admit, I like “The Christian Life.”

Please note that the views and opinions of the columnists do not reflect those of The Post. Do you like “The Christian Life?” Let Luke know by tweeting him @LukeFurmanLog or emailing him at lj49143@ohio.edu.
News Briefs

Alumnus Matt Lauer fired from NBC; first-year retention rates slightly down

Kaitlyn McGarvey  
For the Post

After a long weekend, students returned to campus to begin preparations for final exams and winter break. Here’s what is happening:

Ohio University sees small drop in retention rates

Ohio University has experienced an increase in the retention of international students as well as a slight decrease in the retention of underrepresented students.

In 2015, the retention rates of international students was approximately 83 percent, but this year, the rate is about 89 percent. The multicultural retention rate at OU went down from approximately 81 percent in 2015 to 78 percent in 2016.

The Office for Multicultural Student Access and Retention, or OMSAR, assists approximately 1,500 multicultural and Appalachian students, Marlene De La Cruz-Guzman, director of OMSAR, said.

“The office provides academic support and enrichment to Templeton, Rankin, Urban, Appalachian, Ohio Reach, and Promise scholarship recipients throughout their undergraduate careers,” De La Cruz-Guzman said in an email.

For each course an OMSAR scholar takes, OMSAR pays for two hours of tutoring per week at the Academic Achievement Center, De La Cruz-Guzman said.

Nurses to receive additional sexual assault training

OhioHealth O’Bleness Hospital is offering additional training to nurses about collecting evidence from patients after a sexual assault.

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examination, or SANE, program teaches registered nurses about the culture surrounding sexual assault, court proceedings, and the role of advocates and police, Teresa Mowen, SANE coordinator and clinical educator at O’Bleness, said.

There are four nurses trained in SANE at O’Bleness, but the training is not required by the hospital. However, O’Bleness does require registered nurses in the emergency department to be trained in Sexual Assault Forensic Examination, or SAFE, Lianne Dickerson, director of the emergency department at O’Bleness, said.

SAFE only takes a few hours to complete and teaches nurses how to collect forensic evidence.

Ohio University reckons with news of Matt Lauer’s termination

Ohio University alumnus and leading move to 1 for internship program, which began in 2000. Leatherwood said Lauer was “instrumental” in the development of the program.

In January, four more OU students will travel to New York to intern with “Today” for Spring Semester.

Police Blotter

Woman gets threatening text from stranger; 6-year-old girl carries shotgun down street

Elleen Wagner  
For the Post

Residents of a West Washington Street apartment found themselves in a somewhat crappy situation.

On Nov. 17, the Athens Police Department responded to a call about an inactive burglary. When officers arrived, it seemed that nothing was missing or damaged.

However, there was feces spread throughout the home, according to an APD report.

The residents of the apartment said that they did not know who might have done this. The case is closed pending any new leads.

Twist and Shout

The sheriff’s office responded to a call about a threatening message from an unknown number.

According to the deputy, the message was sent by mistake. Her phone number had been recently changed, and the message was meant as a joke for the person who previously had that number.

New Phone, Who Dis?

On Thursday, the Athens County Sheriff’s Office responded to a call on Barnaby Ridge Road about a woman receiving a threatening message from an unknown number.

After further investigation, the deputy found the message was sent by mistake. Her phone number had been recently changed, and the message was meant as a joke for the person who previously had that number.

All Choked Up

The sheriff’s office responded to a call about a 6-year-old girl walking around with a shotgun on Bate Road on Nov. 18.

Deputies talked to the girl, telling her about safe habits of firearms and told her it was very dangerous to be carrying a shotgun, according to a sheriff’s report.

Deputies got in contact with the girl’s parents, who said they would talk to her and would secure the shotgun away from her.

You’ve Got Mail

Deputies responded to a call about a suspicious person on Stone Road on Nov. 15.

The caller said they saw a man get mail out of a mailbox on the roadway and then watch him walk up a driveway to an abandoned house, according to a sheriff’s report.

Deputies patrolled the area and checked the abandoned house but couldn’t find the man, according to the report. Since deputies saw no other issues, the case was closed.

Ellen Wagner  
For the Post

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However, there was feces spread throughout the home, according to an APD report.

The residents of the apartment said that they did not know who might have done this. The case is closed pending any new leads.

Twist and Shout

The sheriff’s office responded to a call about shouting coming from a neighboring apartment in Chauncey on Nov. 23.

The residents in the apartment said everything was well and they were yelling out of excitement for the game they were playing, according to a sheriff’s report.

Since there was no crime to report, no further action was needed.

New Phone, Who Dis?

On Thursday, the Athens County Sheriff’s Office responded to a call on Barnaby Ridge Road about a woman receiving a threatening text message from an unknown number.

After further investigation, the deputy found the message was sent by mistake. Her phone number had been recently changed, and the message was meant as a joke for the person who previously had that number.

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5 pm Cash bar with
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6-8 pm Make drawing gift bags:
Fiber Arts Studio

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**Newsday Crossword**

68 ACROSS QUARTET
Edited by Clive Probert
www.stanxwords.com

**ACROSS**

1. Last word of The Wizard of Oz
2. French land
3. Temperamental mood
4. Anatomical projection
5. Rolex rival
6. Pinnacle
7. Work with a word processor
8. Taiwanese PC maker
9. Oracle
10. Informal instants
11. Unrestricted period
12. Jinxes
13. Prefix for oxidant
14. Scale note
15. Dallas suburb
16. Supplementary material
17. Singable
18. Go back (on)
19. Fight stopper of a sort
20. Superior to
21. Sidelong look
22. Ireland or Iceland
23. Mammalian pollinator
24. Bubble’s exterior
25. The Nazarene author
26. Resulting from
27. "Science Kid" toon
28. Converting
29. "Science Kid" toon
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Mary Morgan’s quilts
5 pm Cash bar with
complimentary hors d'oeuvres
6-8 pm Make drawing gift bags:
Fiber Arts Studio
Ohio University students—particularly teaching assistants, research assistants and resident assistants—could face higher taxes and a more expensive education if the proposed GOP tax plan becomes law.

Currently, Americans in low- and middle-income tax brackets are eligible for up to $2,500 a year in student loan interest deductions. Under the proposed House legislation, that provision would no longer exist by 2018, meaning the cost of a college education could increase for many students.

It's graduate students, however, who would feel the brunt of the plan's impact. Under the plan, which passed through the House on Nov. 16, tuition waivers—typically provided to graduate student employees and resident assistants—would be taxed. Currently, graduate students only pay income taxes on their stipends.

According to a report released earlier this year by the OU Graduate Employee Organization, the minimum stipend for a graduate assistant at OU who works 15 to 20 hours a week is $7,200 per year. The organization is pushing to nearly double that amount.

As of 2012, nearly 55 percent of graduate students in the U.S. made about $20,000 or less, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Education. Nearly 87 percent had incomes of $50,000 or less.

An estimated 145,000 graduate students and 27,000 undergraduates, most of whom work as resident assistants, currently receive qualified tuition reductions, according to the College of University Professional Association for Human Resources.

The tax plan has drawn criticism from OU students and faculty.

OU Graduate Student Senate members participated in a mass phone call event in early November during which they called elected officials, urging them to oppose the legislation.

“We would be paying double taxes, basically, and that's kind of why we're calling,” GSS Vice President for Legislative Affairs Zachary Watts said in a previous Post report. “We're trying to make people understand that we don't get paid a lot, so now you're going to be asking us to pay the majority of our salaries in taxes.”

OU Student Senate passed a bill at its Nov. 15 meeting opposing sections of the tax plan—specifically those that would tax tuition waivers, which senate believes would adversely affect graduate students.

“Given the average stipend of a graduate or professional student, the proposed policy will lead to a situation where students can barely survive on their stipends,” the letter reads. “This will also make it difficult for universities to recruit graduate-professional students. Ultimately, this hinders the progress of research and innovation at these institutes of higher learning.”

OU President Duane Nellis issued a statement Nov. 13 to students and faculty that criticized the plan’s “detrimental” provisions affecting higher education. The current version of the plan, he wrote, would make college education more expensive for students and their families.

“It also would reduce our ability to provide quality education for economically disadvantaged students,” Nellis wrote. “The reforms contain changes that are financially detrimental to University employees.”

Nellis also shared his concerns with U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi, R-Ohio, and Rep. Jim Renacci, R-Ohio, both of whom serve as delegation members on the House Ways and Means Committee. The congressmen are both vocal supporters of the tax plan.
Women vs. Men: Wage Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Tenured Employees</th>
<th>Average Salary of Tenured Employee</th>
<th>Number of Custodial Employees</th>
<th>Average Salary of Custodial Employee</th>
<th>Number of Employees in Psychology Dept.</th>
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On average, female faculty members make less than male counterparts, regardless of position

Despite accounting for more than half the total workforce, many female employees at Ohio University – regardless of rank – make less than their male counterparts.

The university added 72 female employees for the 2017-18 academic year, while its number of male employees decreased by 19. Women now account for approximately 54 percent of the university’s staff, up 1 percent from last year.

According to data obtained by The Post via a public records request, the average salary of a male tenure-track professor is about $94,000, whereas the average female tenure-track professor makes about $86,600, about $7,400 less.

That disparity, however, is evident across the board, not just while examining higher-level positions.

Male custodial employees, for instance, average an hourly salary of $19.26, whereas female custodians, who account for about 60 percent of the department, make an average of $18.72 per hour.

That disparity, however, is evident across the board, not just while examining higher-level positions.

Male custodial employees, for instance, average an hourly salary of $19.26, whereas female custodians, who account for about 60 percent of the department, make an average of $18.72 per hour.

The disparity also does not discriminate based on academic department. In multiple departments, from mathematics to journalism to psychology, the average man makes a higher salary than the average woman.

Of the top 50 highest earning positions at OU, women hold eight.

One of those women is Dean of Students Jenny Hall-Jones, who said there is still much work to be done in ensuring income equality at the university.

“It’s pretty clear across the board,” she said. “I think we’ve made a lot of progress, and we’re continuing to strive for progress … but if you’re looking at where we’re at right now and thinking that (the wage gap) doesn’t still exist, it’s kind of a problem. It’s still there.”

Hall-Jones said although she believes college-aged men are growing up “more egalitarian than ever before” and are seeking equal partnerships, the glass ceiling remains an obstacle for women.

“You can make individual strides. Like it’s awesome right now that Deb Shaffer is our vice president of finance and administration,” Hall-Jones said. “But she’s one person, and you can’t look to the one figurehead to be like, ‘We made it.’ ”

With a salary of $360,000, Shaffer has the fifth-highest salary at OU, just under that of interim Executive Vice President and Provost David Descutner. Shaffer earns about $80,000 more than the next-highest paid female employee.

“Ohio University is (committed) to ensuring fair, equitable and competitive pay for all its employees, including females,” OU Spokeswoman Carly Leatherwood said in an email. “To ensure our compensation practices are working effectively, the University engages an external expert in the area of compensation to conduct a biennial compensation equity review.”

Leatherwood said the last review, conducted in 2016, confirmed that the University’s compensation practices are “working effectively to ensure that employee compensation is being determined on a non-discriminatory basis.”

According to data from The Chronicle of Higher Education, in 2015, female professors at OU made about $3,500 less than the national average of $103,477 for female professors at four-year public colleges. At the time, female professors at OU made an average of $99,909.

During the same period, male professors at OU made an average of approximately $109,000, about $9,000 less than the national average of male professors, $118,918, at four-year public colleges. That is, however, about $10,000 more than their female counterparts at OU.

“It’s all of our responsibility, no matter what gender you identify with,” Hall-Jones said. “It’s our responsibility to make sure people are being treated equally.”

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THEPOSTATHENS.COM / 9
New Ohio law would allow the sale of drilling brine for use on roads

Fahl said she plans to introduce an ordinance that would ban the city from spraying brine on its roadways.

Brine is leftover waste from the drilling process in both fracking and conventional drilling, according to a report by the Connecticut General Assembly. According to the report, the process of fracking involves injecting fluids and chemicals into the earth to fracture shale formations and collecting the fuel.

“The process produces high volumes of wastewater that must be treated, recycled, or safely disposed,” the report reads. “The wastewater is generally classified into two categories: flowback fluid, which is the fracturing fluid (the mix of water, sand, and chemicals) that returns to the surface when production starts, and production brine (also called produced water, formation water, or simply ‘brine’)... Waste from fracking operations is exempt from federal hazardous waste regulations, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.”

While the brine is naturally occurring and is not considered hazardous waste, some experts say brine from deep within the earth can contain toxic elements. According to a report by Scientific American, the brine can even be radioactive.

“A 2014 U.S. Geological Survey study analyzed roadside sediment where produced brine from conventional wells had been spread as a de-icer and found elevated levels of radium, strontium, calcium and sodium,” according to the report. “Radium is radioactive and can thus be carcinogenic. At high concentrations, sodium can be unhealthy for humans and animals.”

The Ohio Department of Transportation does not use brine from oil or gas drilling processes on Ohio’s highways, and it is legal in Ohio, according to the report. A report by Newsweek states using brine is legal in several other states, including Pennsylvania.

The brine can be up to 10 times saltier than regular road salt and comes much cheaper, according to the Newsweek report. The report notes that most brine used on roads comes from conventional drilling rather than fracking, but brine from conventional drilling is almost identical to fracking brine.

Ohio’s laws are vague on fracking, according to the Scientific American report.

“Ohio ... does not require gas and oil well tests for every application before the raw brine is used as a de-icer,” the report reads. “State law does limit where, when and how much produced brine can be spread on roads but leaves it up to local authorities to approve individual applications.”

Councilwoman Michele Papai, D-3rd Ward, said she did not understand why state legislators introduced the new legislation in the first place.

“Surrounding states have had some of this in the past, and many of those states have stopped using brine on their roads,” Papai said. “I’m a little bit confused as to what our state representatives are up to with this. Other than for profit, I can’t think of any other reason. (It’s) obviously not the health and welfare of the people of Ohio.”

BENNETT LECKRONE
SLOT EDITOR

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Athens Police Chief Tom Pyle said his department averages five to 10 marijuana citations a year, but he expects that number to increase after the recent passage of the marijuana depenalization ordinance.

The Athens Cannabis Ordinance, or TACO, set the fines and fees for misdemeanor marijuana citations to $0. The ordinance passed with 77 percent of the vote during the November election and went into effect Sunday, five days after the Athens County Board of Elections certified the election results.

Supporters of the ordinance said it would decrease citations by removing the incentive for local police to enforce marijuana laws. Pyle disagrees. He thinks students will smoke more marijuana under the false belief that the new ordinance legalized weed and that they will argue when his officers tell them to stop.

“I think a lot more people will be smoking marijuana in open public places, expecting that it’s legal,” Pyle said. “And when our officers confront them and say, ‘You can’t do that here,’ I think they’re going to get arguments: ‘Oh yes it is (legal), TACO,’ and our officers are going to be forced to cite them.”

Marijuana enforcement has not been a priority for APD, and individual officers have discretion to decide whether to cite people they find in violation of marijuana laws. Pyle has said that officers’ decisions to cite or not to cite often rest on the behavior of the people they encounter. Thus, if the ordinance causes more residents to argue with officers, it might increase citations.

Pyle doesn’t plan to ask officers to stop enforcing marijuana laws.

“It’s still illegal,” he said.

Although misdemeanor marijuana citations won’t result in fines anymore, they could still come with consequences. Students convicted of drug offenses, including misdemeanor marijuana offenses, could risk losing their federal financial aid.

The Athens Law Department has a standing plea deal with students to amend minor misdemeanor marijuana offenses to minor misdemeanor disorderly conduct so students don’t risk losing financial aid. That plea deal comes with a $50 fine and court costs, according to a previous Post report.

APD still has the option to issue marijuana citations under the Ohio Revised Code. Under the Ohio Revised Code, possessing marijuana paraphernalia or fewer than 100 grams of marijuana is a minor misdemeanor that carries a maximum fine of $150; possessing at least 100 grams but fewer than 200 grams is a fourth-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a fine of up to $250.

The department has chosen in other scenarios to cite under Ohio code instead of local ordinances. Pyle said APD has cited intoxicated drivers under Ohio law instead of city law for years because the penalties under Ohio and Athens law were different.

“It’s always been the case where we could cite under the state section, and, in most cases, that’s what we’ve always done,” he said.

APD and the Athens Law Department will meet to discuss more specific policy options for APD. Athens City Law Director Lisa Eliason said that has not yet happened because TACO only recently went into effect.

“It’s all still pretty new,” Eliason said. Ohio University police officers will continue to cite people under Ohio law.

“We are continuing to review the city’s new ordinance and relevant case law, but unless and until we receive legal guidance otherwise, we will continue to cite under state law for violations on state property,” OUPD Lt. Tim Ryan said in an email.
OU physics, astronomy professor helps study merger of neutron stars

Ryan Chornock was part of the first team to record gravitational waves following two neutron stars’ merging.

On Aug. 17, the Advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory, or LIGO, detected a gravitational wave signal that was consistent with the merger of two stars for the first time. Before that, scientists had detected only black hole mergers. Ryan Chornock, an assistant professor of physics and astronomy at Ohio University, was among the team of scientists that observed the aftermath of a burst of gravitational waves and the corresponding explosion, or kilonova, following the merging of two neutron stars.

"These discoveries are made possible by very large teams," Chornock said. "LIGO collaboration itself has something like a thousand people involved."

LIGO scientists won the Nobel Prize in physics in 2017 after they announced they had recorded gravitational waves after the collision of two black holes. Famed physicist Albert Einstein had predicted the existence of such waves, but LIGO scientists were the first to record them.

"It’s significant, because now for the first time – we can actually see with our telescopes and study the usual ways that we’ve been doing for a long time and connect the properties for the source to the gravitational wave signals that we saw," Chornock said.

He said a challenge for scientists is that gravitational waves may show that an event has occurred, but not where in the universe it happened.

"It turned out to be a rather much easier time this time around because they were able to limit it to an area that you wouldn’t really survey, whereas the previous couple events were these huge sky areas," Douglas Clowe, an associate professor of physics and astronomy, said.

Chornock was in Chile when his team at the observatory detected the neutron star merger using a dark energy camera.

Clowe said Chornock could not discuss his research before the paper on the event was published. Madappa Prakash, a physics and astronomy professor, said even though he and Chornock are close friends, Chornock did not tell him about his findings.

"He’s my best buddy, but he never told me, because they have their own circle," Prakash said.

Prakash said Chornock’s findings are significant because they add to the evidence supporting Einstein’s theory of the activity.

“So now that we learned Einstein was right, Einstein’s theory is essentially one of geometry,” Prakash said. “You can’t do much physics with just black holes mergers. When neutron stars have merged, life begins to get exciting.”

Chornock said the event provides some of the strongest evidence that a neutron star collision has the capability of producing heavy elements such as lead, uranium and gold.

Haley Mitroff
For the Post

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Dr. Ryan Chornock poses for a portrait with a telescope in Clippinger Laboratories. (EMILEE CHINN / FOR THE POST)
HCOM research aims to treat diabetes with therapeutic medicine

The Diabetes Institute was awarded two grants this year to further understand the microbiology of obesity-related diseases

SARAH M. PENIX FOR THE POST

Vishwajeet Puri, an associate professor at the Diabetes Institute at Ohio University, has discovered new genes that could lead to diabetes treatment. This year, the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine received two new grants that will help continue research on the role of fat cells in diabetes.

This year, two Diabetes Institute projects received grants from the American Diabetes Association and the Grant of Growth Innovation. Through research and collaboration, biomedical science professors in HCOM are working to combat the health problems associated with Type 2 diabetes by examining fat cells and genetics. There is a direct correlation between obesity rates and Type 2 diabetes in the U.S.

The American Diabetes Association’s grant is $552,000 over four years, and the Grant for Growth Innovation’s equates to almost $250,000.

“There’s like 200 to 300 pounds of fat tissue on an obese person, so the question is if only some of these fat tissue cells are leading to metabolic disorders, maybe we can actually have a targeted intervention against those specific cells,” Kevin Lee, an assistant professor in the Diabetes Institute at OU, said. “And that we could actually treat a lot of the comorbidities that are associated with diabetes.”

Lee received a Junior Faculty Development Award from the American Diabetes Association for his research, which looks at how fat develops and aims to create targeted treatment for obesity-related diseases.

There are three different kinds of fat tissue, or adipocytes, and Lee’s lab is working to understand how those subpopulations influence the progression from simple obesity to insulin resistance and diabetes.

The grant from the American Diabetes Association funds research on what happens to the different kinds of fat cells during obesity. When a patient continues to eat a high-fat diet, fat cells grow in size and become less efficient in storing lipids, so the “little balls of oil” start to leak, causing low-grade inflammation and then insulin resistance, Lee said.

“We’re going to keep working on these different cell populations, and we’re going to be looking at how different hormones affect these populations and actually really try to nail down the function of all these different populations in mice and, eventually, in people,” Lee said.

Puri is collaborating with Aarhus University in Denmark to find a therapeutic method of improving the breakdown of fatty acids in the body using growth hormones. By winning the Grant of Growth Innovation, the partnership beat 65 applicants from around the world.

Puri is working with mice, while Jens Otto Lunde Jorgensen and his team in Denmark use human subjects to research the storage and breakdown of fat.

“We are reaching toward a mechanism of growth hormone action of lipolysis. ... It leads to therapeutics,” Puri said. “The next step is now we have targets identified, we have a mechanism. We have actually mapped the pathway of how it is happening, and we can target that pathway.”

In the last few years, Puri identified genes that are associated with the storage and breakdown of fat. That discovery has led to an international collaboration and an annual symposium on growth hormones.

“This is not simply a collaboration,” Puri said. “Last December, (the team from Aarhus University) visited us, so we organized a seminar here for them. ... This grant is a product of the symposium.”

The symposium is in February and will be held in Denmark. As part of the grant, a doctoral student from Aarhus University will visit OU for a few months to work on the program and in the lab with Puri’s team.

“It’s just a start. ... It has multiple avenues, and that’s what we are exploring,” Puri said. “Yes, therapeutics, that is definitely there, but think about it. It’s a collaboration – two big institutions are coming together with each other, and what we’re going to do is we’re going to expand that symposium.”

Puri plans to get other countries involved in the symposium to explore treatment.

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Despite hiatus this year, gingerbread contest provides holiday spirit in Athens

ALEX LAFLIN
FOR THE POST

For many, the holiday season is a time to acknowledge traditions, and one tradition in particular has become increasingly popular in Athens: making gingerbread houses. Though it is a fun ritual across the world, it fuels southeast Ohio's competitive, and Christmas, spirits.

Though the annual competition at the Athens County Historical Society and Museum is taking a hiatus this year, it will return in winter 2018 and will be organized by the Southeast Ohio History Center. In the past, both professional and amateur bakers have received $500 for winning replicas of Athens and Athens County landmarks. There are also smaller prizes in other categories, such as children and group projects.

The contest has taken place every year since 2013, and Athens resident Nancy Mingus has built a project each year to commemorate an Athens landmark.

Mingus' first project was a replica of the Mount Zion Baptist Church, 32 W. Carpenter St., a project that she undertook because of her admiration of the stone building's architecture.

Driving past the building one day, Mingus was so inspired by how "pretty the stone is" that she decided to base her project on that landmark.

Mingus said basing projects on Athens landmarks is a process that requires a great amount of preparation.

"For the roofs and everything, I'd have to plan the angles," Mingus said. "To make your own design is kind of like architecture in a way."

She would visit the landmarks she's replicated four or five times during the construction process to measure them to scale to fit on an 18-by-18-inch board.

The next two years, Mingus made "sentimental choices" about her projects.

She constructed a replica of the former Athens B & O Train Station from the 1960s because her dad was a ticket agent there when Mingus was a teenager. The next year, her project was based on the Kidwell Covered Bridge in Millfield that her father-in-law had crossed every day on his way to work at the coal mines.

While many participate in the contest to honor history, Cherie D'Mello and her family have participated in the contest multiple times and enjoyed it "because it allows them to be creative," D'Mello said.

D'Mello once made a pirate ship based on one of her favorite Japanese anime series, One Piece, and her kids focused on their interests as well, constructing a gingerbread Minecraft village.

"It's really all about having fun," D'Mello said.

Seeing kids enjoy the competition brings Mingus great joy, and she even teaches gingerbread making workshops for kids to practice their skills so that they can eventually enter the competition.

"To see all the candy and the decorations used, and getting to build things, these kids' eyes just light up," Mingus said.

Mingus' interest initially stemmed from making a gingerbread house for her grandchildren when they were young, and they were fascinated by it.

Mingus said the event brings Athens residents closer together in a way that allows people to observe an old-fashioned source of Christmas spirit.

Many families in Athens have visited the exhibits to view those gingerbread projects, and Mingus now knows many adults and children who love gingerbread houses.

"It's about tradition more than anything," Mingus said.

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New therapy dog at CPS adjusts to life in Athens, visits offices every Monday

Dug, a 2-year-old golden retriever, took over the position once 10-year-old Buddy partially retired this year after experiencing arthritis from old age.

Ohio University Counseling and Psychological Services hired another furry friend this semester.

Golden retriever Dug — named after the talking golden retriever of the same name in Disney/Pixar's 2009 film Up — began seeing clients this academic year after the partial retirement of Buddy, a 10-year-old standard poodle.

Rinda Scoggan, a senior counselor who trained both Dug and Buddy, said though Dug is only 2 years old and is new to the office, he is making significant progress as a therapy dog.

"Coming here, he wasn't so sure about the size of the building," she said. "But now he comes in, and he's good about coming into the elevator now. He didn't ride an elevator for the first time until the summer."

She described Dug as being a "little shy" because he was raised by Scoggan's son in the country and wasn't used to being around so many people.

"Dug is slowly evolving," she said. "He's still a 2-year-old."

Dug visits CPS offices on the third floor of Hudson Health Center every Monday.

"It's helpful because some students have a dog back home, and they miss it," Scoggan said.

"It just makes their day. They do form bonds that they love to pet him, and he's so excited to see them... He cares about them."

Dug began visiting the offices in lieu of Buddy, who began experiencing arthritis associated with age. Scoggan tried giving Buddy medicines to combat his ailments, but it just made him sick.

"I noticed at that time he had started limping last year," she said. "I wanted him to be able to relax his body and his bones."

"I noticed that at the time he had started limping last year," she said. "I wanted him to be able to relax his body and his bones."

Buddy's much-needed break proved beneficial, and Scoggan noticed a renewed pep in his step.

"He's much better," she said. "I just think he needed to take a break. As long as he is able and as long as he wants to, I'm willing for him to come in once a month."

Since Scoggan now has two dogs trained to assist students, she is toying with the idea of having them come in more than one day a week.

"(Dug) really only sees the students who come in on Monday," she said. "Some people schedule specifically on Mondays to just see him."

Scoggan said as long as Buddy does not face any more medical problems, she would like to continue switching the two out.

"Sometimes dogs that do therapy can get a little depressed themselves," she said. "The trainer recommended definitely switching out the dog."

The therapy sessions are not only beneficial for the students, but also for the canines.

"A few years ago, when my kids all moved out, it was just Buddy and I," Scoggan said.

"Buddy started becoming depressed being in the house all the time... It really helped him. He's one that really needs to be petted, be loved on. Being in the house all day was not good for him. I just could tell there was a major difference."

Other programs on campus exist to connect students to dogs, such as Bobcats of the Shelter Dogs, which allows students to volunteer at the local dog shelter. Alden Library also hosts therapy dog visits during final week. Alden is hosting therapy dog events during finals week, and Dug will be the featured pup at one of the events.

Mia Chapman, a senior studying biological sciences pre-medicine, has been training a service dog named Clary since August through the OU branch program of 4 Paws for Ability. She said having dogs on college campuses is beneficial for not only students, but also all people who interact with the animals.

"As a student, it always brightens my day to see a dog because it’s a great stress relief and break from my daily activities," she said. "Fostering a service dog has helped me realize the value that service dogs have to offer people with disabilities. These dogs are highly trained and help those who need them feel more comfortable out in public, as the dogs can help them physically and emotionally."
Margaret Atwood’s earlier works hold relevance in modern society

The two novels address those gender issues, Heather Edwards, an associate lecturer of English, said.

When the novels first came out, people were aware that there was still sexism and gender roles women still felt restricted to in relation to the generation before them, Edwards said. In different ways, the women in the novels are trying to find a voice in an atmosphere that discourages them from doing so.

Even now, the series brings attention to how gender roles can be restricting in the 21st century.

“Part of the reason people are interested in them now is the way that we are being reminded that we actually haven’t moved that far ahead of the 1980s,” Edwards said.

The Handmaid’s Tale is “super topical” given the current political climate, Eve Ng, an assistant professor of media arts and studies and women and gender studies, said. The women in The Handmaid’s Tale are stripped of their legal rights, and critics have made a parallel between the show and a conservative government coming into power, Ng said.

“Feminist sci-fi writers ... often write in their dystopian world about how gender inequalities continue in new ways,” Ng said. “Even if the Hulu series hadn’t been as well written or as well acted as it was, I think it still would’ve resonated because of the political context.”

Adriana Navarro, a senior studying journalism, watched The Handmaid’s Tale over the summer and said the show is powerful.

The show presents a worst-case scenario that highlights a “fear of society.”

The gender implications in the show highlight real problems in today’s society but in an exaggerated way, Navarro said. The exaggerations are there to make a connection to the viewers.

“It shows that even though we are further ahead in time, we haven’t really changed all that much,” she said. “It’s showing the irony and that in this world, this other world in the show as well, that even though they think they are more advanced, that they are basically stuck in the dark ages in terms of gender, sexuality and ... civil rights.”

Edwards likes Atwood’s mastery of the craft and thinks she is a great storyteller in general — aspects that help translate well to the screen.

“She pulls you into her world,” Edwards said. “I’m always drawn to her too because she does often write about women and thinks through women’s experiences in interesting and nuanced ways.”

Mae Yen Yap contributed to this report.
Walking in heels is difficult enough, so fighting villains in heels can seem impossible.

Many female comic book characters, such as Wonder Woman, Hela and Harley Quinn have taken to wearing heels in their film adaptations despite not wearing heels in their comic book versions.

Costume directors have been questioned about the outfit choices and how that would affect the performances of the characters.

“Few people I know would choose Wonder Woman’s wardrobe for a morning run, let alone an encounter with local villains,” Julie White, an associate professor of political science and director of women’s, gender and sexuality studies, said in an email.

Part of the reason why female superheroes and villains are wearing heels in movies is to sexualize the character, White said.

“It’s harder to figure out why Wonder Woman’s outfit for any other reason than it sexualizes her,” White said in an email. Jack Wallace, an employee at the Wizard’s Guild, 19 W. Washington St., believes having female superheroes and villains wear heels is a part of meeting expectations.

“I think (wearing heels) definitely sexualizes the characters,” Wallace said. “It stems back to expectations in the movie industry. There’s a status quo.”

Female characters wearing heels also stems from what people associate with what looks good, Wallace said.

There are other reasons why costume designers choose to have female superheroes and villains wear heels other than sexualization.

“I think it’s understandable to view wearing heels for these characters as a possible way to sexualize woman, but I think it’s important for creators of these characters to emphasize the femininity of the characters,” Elizabeth Miller, a sophomore studying media arts and studies, said.

Wallace also believes there is more to wearing heels than the sexualization aspect.

“At the best, it’s shows a strong character,” Wallace said. “It’s more of a presence and a bonus in height.”

Additional height also gives an advantage to the superheroines and villains, Miller said.

“I think people often see taller people as a stronger presence,” Miller said.

When it comes to creating costumes for comic book characters, Wallace explained the clothing is all up to the author’s preference. He also believes it is probably harder to draw heels, which is another reason why the female characters do not typically wear them in the books.

“In comic books, you can make a character look however you want,” Wallace said.

Despite the majority of female comic book characters wearing heels in movies and TV shows, there are a few that do not.

“I also think that characters like Jessica Jones do a different kind of work, offer a different kind of challenge and make possible different ways of imagining both superheroes and femininity,” White said in an email.

With comics, the creators are more focused on making their characters are real as possible, Wallace said.

“Comics are in a world of practicalism and are more realistic, movies don’t do that,” Wallace said.
Deb Doseck worked nights, but before she went to work, she'd take her daughter, Dominique, to Alexander High School in Albany.

Dan Doseck, Dominique's father, was the coach of the girls basketball team at Alexander. When Deb arrived, she'd have Dominique in her carrier and would set her on the court.

When Dominique was 2 years old, Deb and Dan got her a Nerf basketball. She was barely walking — but Dominique just wanted a ball in her hand.

“She started early, just enjoyed the game,” Deb said.

As Dominique got older, she started trying to dribble on the sideline as her dad led practice. Sometimes, she'd even hold the practice whistle and have the girls on the team do line sprints.

Dominique, an Athens native, has one of the highest basketball IQs on the Bobcats. She's a starter this season, a new role for her.

“She's so cerebral that she's able to play several steps ahead of everybody else,” coach Bob Boldon said after the game.

Calling out opponents' plays and telling her teammates where to be is not new for Dominique. Her parents said she's been doing that since elementary school.

“You could tell she knew the game early on,” Dan said.

Dominique played Amateur Athletic Union, or AAU, basketball for Team Ohio from third grade through high school.

When she started playing, Dominique didn't play point guard, though.

Not starting out as a point guard allowed Dominique to see what the other positions did on the floor. She's a shooter and a gifted passer, and she has good court awareness.

Recently, Boldon joked that Dominique was coming for assistant coach Tavares Jackson's job.

But after Dominique's career, she probably won't be coming for Jackson's position — she'll likely be coaching her own squad.

When she's finished playing, Dominique wants to coach women's college basketball. She coached a seventh-grade girls Team Ohio squad this past summer to gain experience and implemented Ohio's schemes into her AAU team. Her dad was an assistant.

As a coach, Dominique saw the game differently. She wasn't on the court, so she had to recognize which players were playing well at specific times. She didn't get film beforehand to break down teams, either.

Coaching at the middle school level, she struggled to communicate with her team sometimes. Dominique told Boldon that, and he let her know that would be a challenge.

Still, she enjoyed coaching and the growth process. She plans on coaching again next summer.

“He was like, ‘Well, if you can figure that out, let me know,’” Dominique said. “It's trial and error, and it's trying to get different people's ideas and find out what works best for your group.”

When Dominique started her career, Boldon said she wouldn't be taking many shots like she did in high school.

Now, in the first five starts of her college career, she averaged 12.6 points per game and shot 38.9 percent from behind the 3-point line. She scored a career-high 17 points in Ohio's 74-61 loss last Saturday against No. 25 Michigan.

A player who has so much intelligence, who has grown up around the game, Dominique has lived a hooper's life.

The days of going to practice in her carrier and eventually trying to dribble on the sidelines, then transitioning into AAU ball molded Dominique into the smart player she is.

Her dad instilled a love for the game in her, and she oozes passion for it.

Dominique is from Athens, but her mom said she still comes home once a week. Growing up, Dominique liked watching then-Miami Heat guard Dwayne Wade. She also liked watching Seattle Storm guard Sue Bird.

When Dominique was younger, she always used to watch games with her dad. Now, when Dominique comes home once a week, she's still watching hoops with the man who ignited her passion for the game she loves.

“If they weren't on the court, they were watching it on the television,” Deb said.

Dominique Doseck, a point guard on the women's basketball team, poses for a portrait in The Convo. (KEVIN PAN / SLOT EDITOR)
For the past six weeks, perhaps the biggest weekly questions for an injury-riddled Bobcats team have been how many players they’ll be able to dress and if they’ll have enough energy to last the 120 minutes of game time each weekend.

Those questions, however, will persist no more.

The Bobcats have finally shaken off the injury bug that has plagued them since their weekend series Oct. 20-21 against Stony Brook. During the six-week stretch, Ohio saw five separate players miss time with an injury, with each absence cutting deep into the Bobcats' already thin roster of 19 skaters.

The injuries took its toll each weekend on Ohio's energy — the Bobcats' record, however, remained unscathed.

At 14-3-1, No. 4 Ohio stands in second place in the Central States Collegiate Hockey League. The Bobcats, who were ranked No. 8 on Oct. 20, went 8-1-1 across their ensuing 10 games with an injury-hampered roster.

"What we did with the short amount of guys was pretty great," team captain John Basile, one of the five previously injured players, said. "The record speaks for itself. It's pretty unbelievable."

Coach Sean Hogan, who's been coaching since 2003, has never managed a team as thin as Ohio was during the six-week period. When the injuries grew, the Bobcats frequently played games with as few as 10 forwards and six defensemen. The American Collegiate Hockey Association allows a maximum of 21 players to dress for each game, and most teams frequently have a few extra players as healthy scratches.

Hogan, however, has had previous success with coaching a thin team. As head coach of Oakland in 2007, he led the Golden Grizzlies to an ACHA national championship with just 20 players on the team.

This season, Hogan has led Ohio's limited roster in a similar direction, and the experience over the last six weeks has showed the fourth-year coach that this team's talent is among the deepest he's had since coming to Athens.

"The great thing about this team was that it really showed me everybody's capable," he said. "Everybody's willing to step up and fill in roles that they maybe didn't do before. We have a lot of guts. We're mentally tougher than I thought we were, and we have a lot of guts. I'm just really proud of the group and what they did, for sure."

The injuries forced each healthy Bobcats player to maximize conditioning. The toll it took on any given player could be expressed by the barometer of energy Ohio had across the span of a weekend.

On Friday, it was maximum energy, and the Bobcats looked ready to take on anyone. By Sunday, well, not as much.

"Oh, man, we were gassed," forward Gabe Lampron said. "Especially on Friday, everyone looks like they just went to war or something. Then after that, it's just like, 'Well, we got to do it again tomorrow.' Then we just dug deep, and we do it again. Then it would be a real lazy Sunday, all beat up."

With four full lines of forwards and seven capable defensemen, Ohio's conditioning and ability to conserve energy is now the least of its worries. Players like Lampron, who were slated to be bottom-six forwards before the season, received both increased ice time during games and additional reps in practice, which only advanced each player's endurance.

Moving forward, Hogan expects the Bobcats to out-muscle opponents in late game contests, which Ohio still managed to do with its thin roster. Six of the Bobcats' eight wins across the six-week period were decided by three or fewer goals.

With four of Ohio's next six series coming against CSCHL opponents, three of which are ranked in the top 11 in the nation, the tight-game scenarios will continue to occur.

But the Bobcats deserved to take a step back and appreciate just how improbable their success has been so far this season. Ohio has managed to somehow improve itself among its injuries, and now the Bobcats have won seven of their last eight games and are knocking on the door for a top three position in the national rankings.

"That's pretty damn good," Hogan said.
In the content-creating minority

Social media is everywhere, but the vast majority of the content that people consume on a daily basis is estimated to have been created by a few influential users.

Michael Chaney checks his Twitter feed every free moment he has. When he wakes up, Twitter is the first app he taps. While walking to class, he’s crafting a tweet. Twitter’s open on his lunch break and between classes, and it’s the last app he uses before he goes to bed.

Social media comes full circle for some people — it is the first app they check in the morning and the last they check before they go to sleep. And while Chaney is one of those users, he is as much part of Twitter than just an observer — Chaney is a content creator.

Of the people that use social media, Laeeq Khan, an assistant professor in Ohio University’s School of Media Arts and Studies, said about 80 to 90 percent of people are passive users or lurkers. Passive users are more interested in consuming content; they like, share, retweet or just observe without any interaction rather than posting any of their own content.

That leaves only 10 to 20 percent of people who produce the content that the majority of users consume. Chaney, a sophomore studying sport management, said he would consider himself part of that number.

Those users choose what everyone else talks about. They are the joke tellers, the trendsetters, the people who go viral that are talked about in 8 a.m. classes and are sent in an email chain at work the next morning. They create the content that everyone’s feeds revolve around. They are the minority of users who produce content for the majority.

RELYING ON THE 10 TO 20 PERCENT

Without the user-generated content that people post, social media sites would not exist, Khan said.

“They’re not producing anything really; they’re just providing us a platform. We are the ones producing everything,” Khan said.

Roughly 2.8 billion people use some form of social media, according to Social Media Today. That is about one in four people. Businesses, people and, at times, dogs or cats have some form of social media account.

Chaney, known to his 2,449 followers as @MChaney317, has, as of press time, tweeted about 21,700 times since he joined Twitter in November 2011. That averages out to nearly 10 tweets a day.

Chaney’s online presence is completely based on humor. He tweets for laughs. He dives into the realm of sports on occasion, but he said he keeps the sports to a minimum because that’s not really what his follower base is looking for. His tone is humorous without being too vulgar or crude. He attempts to keep his tweets semi-appropriate but retweetable.

Although 10 tweets a day is double the national average, Chaney said he used to tweet a lot more than he does now, even though he accesses Twitter more than he ever has.

“I used to tweet a lot, and it was just really random stuff,” he said.

Chaney’s decrease in tweets is for a few reasons. He said he holds his tweets to a higher standard now that he has a larger following on social media. He does not just tweet “random stuff” anymore because he likes to tweet higher quality content that he believes his followers will interact with. But his lack of tweeting could also be caused by what Khan calls a “social media fatigue.”
“A very small minority of people are actually producing something because that requires effort and time,” Khan said.

Khan also said that it’s unrealistic to think social media will shut down due to that fatigue. While those sites do rely on user-generated content, people turn to the sites for entertainment, escapism and information.

“We don’t want to think about other things, so we keep ourselves busy, like television did at one point,” he said. “Even now, TV has this central role, but it’s increasingly morphing into this online role where we’re watching content, increasingly, on our smartphones — and that is why we are engaging.”

OVERSHARING

Oversharing is a relative term. There is no “social media patrol” to inform users they are sharing too much content or too much personal information.

Many active social media users acknowledge and recognize that oversharing can become a problem when they are immersed in their cyber lives.

“Yeah, there’s definitely times where you’re like, ‘Did I say more than I needed to?’ ” Stefanie Tsengas, a senior pursuing a Bachelor of Specialized Studies in sports nutrition with a focus in marketing and entrepreneurship, said.

She gets a lot of positive feedback from her audience, but she also receives some negative comments as well. It is more the negative feedback she receives that causes her to question if she potentially overshares in some areas, Tsengas said.

Tsengas, known on Instagram as @stefaniemariefit, is a personal trainer and uses social media to connect with online fitness communities through Instagram. She has about 9,600 followers and close to 900 Instagram posts. She posted her first photo on Instagram in 2012.

On average, a user who has been on Instagram for the same length of time as Tsengas would have a total of 490.5 posts. She has almost double that.

Tsengas sticks to a theme: Everything is related to fitness. Her page is colorful and full of posts to help anyone that can relate to fitness in any way — or even people who wish to relate to fitness.

“There may be times that she feels she overshares about her life, but she does have a few lines she won’t cross when it comes to sharing personal content with her followers. “If I was dating someone, I wouldn’t put the inside-outs of my relationship on social media because that’s personal,” Tsengas said.

While Tsengas prefers to keep other people out of her own online postings, many people find themselves oversharing because of other people.

Abby Kongos, a freshman studying journalism, said she found herself oversharing on Instagram when she went through a breakup with her boyfriend.

“I was very hurt by (the breakup) and I just wanted him to see it, so I made a post about how I was feeling,” Kongos said. “I was just so focused on getting my feelings out that I didn’t think about who saw it. So I think somebody from my church messaged me and was like, ‘Maybe you shouldn’t put that out there.’ ”

Kongos, known to her about 1,200-plus followers as @sugar.dabby, has nearly 500 total Instagram posts since her first post on Jan. 26, 2014. Kongos has been slightly more active on social media over the past year, with nearly 32 percent of her posts coming from 2017.

She chalks up her posting influx to the many life changes she has experienced over the past year: events during her senior year of high school, graduating from high school, moving away and going to college.

Kongos is strategic about her visual aesthetic. She uses darker tones and admits she tries to vary her posts by never having two photos in a row with faces in them. She maintains a her visual appeal by using similar filters on her photos.

PERSONAL BRANDING

Though many people get embarrassed and think of a much different time in their lives when any of their old social media posts are mentioned, Halle Siegel does not. She thinks that every post has shaped who she is as an online presence, and every old photo that seems insignificant now is just a piece of her online “diary,” she said.

Siegel, who is known to her Instagram followers as @hallesiegel, uses social media to help build her brand. As a junior studying commercial photography, she said she gets many of her photography bookings from people who have seen her work on Instagram.

“I have a business account on Instagram, so I'm able to see my analytics, so I'm able to see how many people see my picture, how many people like my picture, how many impressions that picture has, what the reach is,” Siegel, who is also studying communication studies, said. “Those are just marketing statistics for me, for my business, so I can see how many people go to my website to book photoshoots with me and figure out what pictures are helping me gain the most work.”

Siegel became active on social media her sophomore year of high school when she discovered how many photographers posted their own work. She started posting her own photographs and has not stopped.

She posts a mixture of content between her personal photography and photos with her friends. Her page display is vibrant and colorful; her professional photos break up the pictures with her friends.

Tsengas also uses an Instagram business profile to do similar things as Siegel. She monitors her audience and can see that her ideal follower is between the ages of 18 and 24. She tracks her photo interactions and even has a calendar to map out all of her posts through the end of the year based on the type of content that gets the best responses from her followers.

Pleasing an established audience can get tedious, but Chaney said there are always moments that make being a social strategist worth it to him.

“Sometimes, I go out, and someone will come up to me and be like, ‘Hey, I follow you on Twitter, like, your tweets are awesome, keep it up,’ and it’s the coolest thing that could ever happen to me,” he said.

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600 million monthly users
95 million posts a day
317 million monthly users
500 million tweets a day
1.9 billion monthly users
4.75 billion daily posts
255 million users
760 million photos shared a day

WORLDWIDE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN NUMBERS
Harry Potter Alliance to bring magic of Yule Ball to Baker

ALEXIS EICHELBERGER
STAFF WRITER

The Ohio University Harry Potter Alliance will mix magic and masks this weekend for its third annual charitable Yule Ball.

The yearly dance will feature enchanting style, snacks and dancing with a masquerade theme Friday night. For the first time, it will be held in Baker Ballroom, and proceeds from the event will benefit causes both in Athens and outside of Ohio.

Each year, the Harry Potter Alliance donates its Yule Ball earnings to two charities. In the past, selected charities have ranged from the Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals to the Athens County Child Advocacy Center. This year, the student organization plans to contribute to a hurricane relief fund and the Southeast Ohio Foodbank.

OU Harry Potter Alliance vice president Alexis Bennett is heading the preparations for the Yule Ball for her first time this year. She has been involved in the planning process for each ball and has seen its evolution over time. This year, she is excited to move the event from Central Venue, 29 E. Carpenter St., to Baker Center, which she said will make it more accessible to students.

Bennett, a junior studying English and world religions, said the club discussed the theme of this year’s dance at length. Members wondered if simply making the ball Harry Potter-themed would be enough, but ultimately they decided on a masquerade.

There will be masks available at the event to purchase for a small donation, or attendees can bring their own if they choose. But the ball does not have a specific dress code, masks included.

“We think it’s cute, and we encourage it, but our tagline has always been, ‘Wear whatever makes you feel magical,’” Bennett said. “It’s a good opportunity to just kind of wear whatever you want in a very comfortable, very safe environment and to just enjoy the evening.”

Although the ball will be themed this year, the club wanted to make sure there was still a clear Harry Potter element to it as well. Dayna White, a junior studying electrical engineering, is on the decoration committee for the ball and has been working hard to create magical crafts, such as Howlers and a Whomping Willow, which she is especially excited for.

“It’s a big centerpiece for the room and I think that’s going to be the most interesting thing to see,” White said.

Aliza Ali, a senior studying world religions and biological sciences, founded the OU Harry Potter Alliance and initiated the first Yule Ball. Although she is taking a step back from being in charge of the event this year, she is still involved as co-head of the music and entertainment committee.

The entertainment committee, Ali said, works on providing other activities for ball attendees to do in addition to dancing. This year, there will be darts and Jenga to play and a large, museum-style display of hand-decorated wands to view. Attendees can even add their own wands to the collection which will be silent auctioned at the end of the evening.

Ali said she is proud of all of the club’s hard work that has made the ball a success both in the past and thinks it will succeed again this year. It was not easy to effectively blend both the Harry Potter and masquerade themes while also creating a sophisticated college-level event, but Ali said she is very excited about the results.

“I think my favorite thing about the Yule Ball is I didn’t think after high school was over I would get a chance to dress up homecoming style and just be with my friends and have fun,” she said. “My favorite thing is just that aspect of getting ready and feeling good and being with my friends in that setting.”
WHAT’S GOING ON?

MAE YEN YAP
CULTURE EDITOR

Friday

Holiday Bazaar at 3 p.m. at the Dairy Barn Art Center, 8000 Dairy Lane. Buy one-of-a-kind handcrafted gifts from regional artists Friday and Saturday. There will also be children’s arts and crafts activities, a drawstring-bag-making session and a raffle. Admission is free.

Elf The Musical Jr. at 7:30 p.m. at Stuart’s Opera House, 52 Public Square, Nelsonville. ABC Players will present the musical, based on the popular Christmas film starring Will Ferrell, beginning Dec. 1 and throughout the weekend. Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite. Admission is $12 for adults and $8 for students.

Mens Basketball vs. Coppin State at 7 p.m. in The Convo. Support the Bobcats as they take on Coppin State. Tickets can be purchased through the Ohio Athletics page. Admission is $15; Ohio University students can get in free with their student IDs.

Freak Mythology, In The Pines and Blue Moth at 8 p.m. at Casa Nueva, 6 W. State St. The three bands will perform at Casa with various styles of rock music. Admission is $3 for ages 21 and up and $5 for ages 18-20.

Saturday

Elf at 1 and 3 p.m. at The Athena Cinema, 20 S. Court St. As part of its Holiday Film Series, the Athena will screen popular Christmas movies throughout December, including the 2003 film Elf, a story of a man who was raised as one of Santa Claus’ elves. Complimentary snowflake cookies will be provided. Admission is a minimum donation of one canned or nonperishable food item per person; cash donations are also accepted.

Tone of Life Open House at 4 p.m. at Tone of Life, 12 Franklin St., Amesville. The healing arts center will open its doors to the public for a grand opening celebration. Meet the practitioners at the center, and enjoy refreshments and a music performance. Admission is free.

Word of Mouth Jazz Band at 6 p.m. at Casa Nueva, 6 W. State St. The Word of Mouth Jazz Band will return to Casa and perform its expertise as jazz musicians. Imported bottled and cans of beers will be sold at a discount of $1. Admission is free.

Fire! Friend, Foe and Metaphor at 7 p.m. at ARTS/West, 132 W. State St. Enjoy SATB’s choir concert dedicated to raising funds for the Athens Fire Department. Admission is free, but donations of $10 per person and $15 per family are encouraged.

Gaffes with Gals at 8 p.m. at The Front Room Coffeehouse. Blue Pencil Comedy is hosting a show featuring female-identified performers. Individuals interested in performing stand-up comedy are invited to perform and must attend its pre-show meeting on the same day at 7 p.m. in Baker 341. Admission is free.

Arsenic and Old Lace at 8 p.m. in Baker Theater. The Lost Flamingo Company will perform Joseph Kesselring’s 1939 black comedy play Arsenic and Old Lace. The play follows a man dealing with his homicidal family as he attempts to decide if he should marry the woman he loves. Doors open at 7:30. The play will also be performed Dec. 3 at 2 p.m. Admission is $5.

Benefest at 9 p.m. at The Union, 18 W. Union St. The seventh annual music event will take place from Nov. 30 to Dec. 2 and will feature more than a dozen local artists. Admission is free, but donations are encouraged.

Sunday

Annual Holiday Craft Swap at 3 p.m. at ARTS/West, 132 W. State St. Come join the sixth annual craft swap and buy fun gifts for your loved ones. Attendees are recommended to bring cash. Most items range from $5-10. Snack and drinks will be provided. Admission is free.

Advent Festival of Readings and Music at 4:30 p.m. at Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, 64 University Terrace. The church choir will present its annual event followed by a reception and attendees can purchase seasonal items as part of its Holiday House event. Admission is free.

Breakfast with Santa at 9 a.m. at the Ohio University Inn, 331 Richland Ave. Families are invited to enjoy beverages and a breakfast buffet while their children take photos with Santa. Reservations are recommended and can be made by calling 740-593-6661. Admission is $17.95 for adults and $9.95 for children ages 12 and below.
Walk-Ins Welcome!

Fast convenient care. Wide range of services.

The Uptown Clinic powered by Holzer offers a wide range of services treating conditions and common illnesses such as:

- Cold and flu
- Asthma
- Sinus Infection
- Acute Bronchitis/Cough
- Seasonal Allergies
- Sore/Strep Throat
- Upper Respiratory Infection
- Upset Stomach/Nausea
- Urinary Tract/Bladder Infections
- Cold Sores
- Pink Eye
- Common Skin Disorders
- STD Testing
- Pregnancy Testing

The Uptown Clinic also provides primary care services including:

- Preventative health services
- Physicals
- Immunizations
- Women's health services
- Onsite lab testing and screenings

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