



LPC valedictorian conquers mental health issues and academics

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Image courtesy: Sophia Sipe



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STEM dean nominated for vice president

A woman of many hats adds another to her repertoire

By Brandon Byrne and Georgia Whiting

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LPC has eagerly awaited the decision of who will fill Kristina Whalen's shoes as Vice President of Academic Services. Whalen served in this position for almost four years before moving on to become the president of Foothill College in March.

President Dyrell Foster unofficially announced Dr. Nan Ho as the next vice president at the Town Meeting on May 3. Ho will not officially become the VP until she is approved by vote at the Chabot-Las Positas Community College District Board of Trustees meeting on May 16.

Ho has been at Las Positas College for about 27 years. She first worked at the college as a professor and then as a dean. She has also served on many campus committees and as an officer in the Faculty Association.

Prior to Foster's announcement, a forum was held on April 20 in the 2400 building to give the three final candidates a chance to speak for why they should have the position. In attendance were primarily staff and administrators. The finalists were two deans from Las Positas: Dr. Stuart McElderry, Dean of

Business - Social Science and Learning Resources and Dr. Nan Ho Dean of Science - Technology - Engineering and Math. The third was a dean from Chabot: Dr. Safiyah Forbes, Dean of Science and Math.

At the forum, Ho described how she would be inclusive of student's voices and rights as VP.

"One of the great things we have is rights and responsibilities for students, and we have rights and responsibilities for our employees. When students' voices come up, and they have issues they raise, you pay attention to them, and you begin to work through the processes we've developed at our campus and administrative policy to make sure those voices are captured," Ho said.

She also spoke about her unique background as a child of immigrants and learning English as her second language.

"I've always been very interested in voice, in elevating voice. I want to know who's at the table, who isn't at the table and how we find those people that do not have a voice and I want to elevate those voices," Ho said.

After considering the candidates and receiving feedback from the campus community, Foster nominated Ho for the position. Kristy Woods, an LPC math pro-



ALAN LEWIS/THE EXPRESS

Dr. Nan Ho, an LPC dean and former professor, sits in the 2400 building on May 11, 2023. She has been nominated to fill former VP, Kristina Whalen's shoes.

fessor, looks forward to working with Ho in her new role.

"She challenges herself and everyone to put students first. Nan truly arrives at every table with the best intentions, complete participation and insights that elevate the conversation and

work to higher heights," Woods said. "I am truly excited to have her as our next Vice President of Academic Services! Her dedication to our students, our college and commitment to professional growth and equity will benefit our campus in the years to come!"

Tuition-free promise to come next year

By Alan Lewis

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New students struggling to pay tuition will have a break for the 2023-24 school year. Las Positas College will not charge tuition to new full-time students.

The free tuition is funded by the California Promise Grant. Since 2019, the grant was used toward funding the Guided Pathways program and a textbook program for those who could not afford textbooks. In the next school year, the grant will be used to offer free tuition to all first time students.

To be eligible for the grant, there are qualifications that the student must meet. The student needs to be a first-year student and never have attended college, enrolled in at least 12 units and be a California resident or California Dream Act student.

Students who received college credit prior to high school graduation or enrolled at LPC during the summer immediately prior

to the fall semester 2023 are still eligible to receive the Free Tuition Promise.

The purpose is to open the college to more students, to help make college affordable to all students and to increase enrollment. Higher enrollment could increase the number of classes and sections, helping out struggling classes, says Dionica Ramos Ledesma, the Chabot-Las Positas Community College district Director of Public Relations, Marketing and Government Relations.

"Las Positas College has chosen to partner with the district office and Chabot College to make a greater push to promote the availability of financial assistance to encourage more students," Ledesma said. "In particular, those who might otherwise feel that a college education is not within reach—to register for classes"

Some continuing Las Positas students are disappointed the promise is only available to first-

timers.

"This is a positive move but I am sour I am not eligible," first-year Fire Tech student Mason Purnell said. "I do question if it would affect the budget of the college."

The Promise will cover the \$46 per unit enrollment fee (tuition). At the minimum, each student that receives the Promise could save up to \$552 each semester, and \$966 the most. The free tuition promise only covers tuition and fees, not textbooks or living expenses.

"The free tuition will be beneficial to those who cannot get scholarships," Middle school student Geneva Ollendorf said.

There is no income limit for the free tuition Promise, nor minimum high school GPA. Students who qualify for the California Community College Promise Grant fee waiver, which is different from the Free Tuition Promise, may receive additional funding.

April Edition Corrections

Express wants to clarify mistakes made in the Express April edition.

In "Xanadu was priciest LPC musical yet," the headline and facts about the musical budget were misrepresented. The budget was not the largest of any recent LPC musical. In addition, John Kelly's position is "technical director," not "stagecraftier." These changes are reflected online.

In "LPC safe from shooter threats?," Sean Prather has worked as the head of security for five years, not worked at the college for five years overall.

Talk Hawks soar above the competition

By Brijae Boyd

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The anxiety inducing minutes before you go on stage. The final minutes to make alterations to your speech. The final minutes panic and adrenaline. The clock continues to count down the seconds until you present on stage.

For the first time in 59 years, LPC's forensics team, the Talk Hawks, competed in the large school division, and secured two huge wins at the nationwide Phi Rho Pi National Championship Speech Tournament in Washington D.C. Most community college speech teams have fewer members than comparative four-years, so this is a feat for Las Positas. The team competed with 15 members against universities like El Camino College, Mt. San Antonio College and Orange Coast College.

And despite it being their first time competing in the division for nationals, the Talk Hawks took home the Bronze Medal Sweepstakes Award for Overall Tournament Performance and the Silver Medal Sweepstakes Award in Individual Events.

Tim Heisler, one of the four Talk Hawks coaches was elated at how well the team performed this year. According to him, there were three key components that contributed to their success.

"Good people, teamwork and good coaching. We had talent AND camaraderie. They were a team, a true team," Heisler said.

The forensics team also competed out of country in the 2023 International Forensics Association's Championship Tournament in Tokyo, Japan. The Talk Hawks beat out Vanderbilt, University of Alabama, the United States Air Force Academy, Marshall University and Point Loma Nazarene University. Winning 6th place overall in the competition.

Mikiah Aubert is the bronze medal winner for informative speaking and the gold medal winner for impromptu speaking at nationals. She's a second-year communications major transferring next fall, which makes this semester her last season on the forensics team. Though her time on forensics was short, it was nothing short of remarkable.

"I didn't believe them when they told me, 'This is gonna change your life, you know. A lot of people say that. But this is actually something that changed my life,'" Aubert said.

Aubert learned she had a talent for speech. Something she never would have known if her counselor hadn't suggested she join the Talk Hawks. They both agreed it would be perfect for her because she is a communications major.

"I always joked, 'I was born to communicate' and this semester it kind of came true," Aubert said.

She goes on to detail her first speech tournament. She won first place on the first day for extemporaneous, and an additional first place for impromptu and two third place wins in the extemporaneous and prose categories on the second day of competition.



IMAGE COURTESY/TIM HEISLER

The Talk Hawks pose with the awards in Washington D.C. on April 15, 2023 at the nationwide Phi Rho Pi National Championship Speech Tournament. The most notable awards won by the Talk Hawks include a gold medal for Duo Interpretation of Literature, and a bronze medal sweepstakes award for Overall Tournament Performance.

Aubert said, "After that, I was like, 'Whoa, am I good at this?' And so then I just kept doing it. And here I am."

Between the west and east coasts of America, Aubert's most memorable moment was her extemporaneous speech in New York. Extemporaneous speeches are where a participant chooses one of three topics to speak about at the competition. The participant is given 30 minutes the day of the competition to prepare a thirty minute speech about their selected topic.

"Both final rounds I got the whole crowd to erupt. It was like a SNL skit. I went as the closer on Sunday, (and) the people before me were really good. I decided to be myself and do what I had to do. I didn't think I was that funny, but it affirmed to me that I was!" Aubert said.

Her speech was about the upcoming 2024 presidential elections. She shared her opinions and predictions about who was to be elected for the republican and democratic parties. The speech earned her 1st Place days one and two of the competition.

Aubert's achievements this season are impressive, not just for a rookie, but for any speech and debate team. Her teammates Leah Ananuevo and Anna Wolde had a noteworthy win as well.

Ananuevo and Wolde had an unorthodox speech to put it simply. "Jim brought us together since he knew we were both singers and was like, 'I have an idea. It opens with Fat Bottomed Girls in harmony,'" Leah Ananuevo, second-year music major, recounts. "And I was like, Okay, so that's how it started."

It was an "Interpretation of Literature" speech about butts. The cultural impact of butts. It had singing, harmonies and audience participation with the historical and cultural connotations of how butts became

a staple in pop culture, all molded into one.

"I didn't realize that until along the way. When I was deep into speech. I was like, oh, this is a performance. Because I was realizing during these tournaments, you're going in and out of rooms, listening to a bunch of speeches, but they're all little performances" Ananuevo said.

Her experience in theater arts and performance gave her an edge in the competition. The duo's creativity in crowd involvement and song choices is what bolstered them to the number one spot in nationals and a gold medal for their Duo Interpretation of Literature.

"I think it was my best performance ever. That final round, the room was packed, and the energy was up," Ananuevo said. "We just gave it our all, it was magic" Ananuevo said.

"Every time that somebody broke, the whole team kind of rallied around them. And (the) awards (ceremony) was just wild," Sean McGory, returning Las Positas student said. "It's hard not to kind of lose your cool."

They really do think of themselves as a team. Despite the fact presenting is a solo activity, they collaborate closely with each other to become the best they can be.

"I think a lot of times, like groups in sports where you're doing these very individual activities, you don't really feel the need to bond with people. But through even just peer coaching or even just time spent in the forensics room, maybe doing other stuff together, it creates a bond," Mackenzie McDonald, a Middle College communications major, said.

"This was a special year. I've been coaching here since 93, and this is one of the only teams that I've seen that has been this, awesome," Heisler said.

2023-24 Student Government Election Results

President

Brody Price

Vice President

Alexa Sumitra

Director of Finance

Nada Ibrahim

Student Trustee

Omar Au

Director of Events

Mehrsa Gholikhamseh

Director of ICC

Armina Rahman

Director of Communications

Lena Munad

Director of Programs and Services

Aayan Ahmad

Director of Legislation

Jai Puli

Swimming Hawks close season with state wins

By Gabriel Carver

@CUP1DCO

After a season of hard work and triumphs, the swimming Hawks faced their final battle.

The season has been drawn to the end for the Las Positas swim and dive team but it ended at the biggest meet of them all. The 2023 California Community College Athletic Association swim and dive state championship was held at East LA college from May 4 till May 6, a three-day showing of the best community college athletes in swim and dive. The Hawks showed out with their performances, and a couple took the podium.

Las Positas had a total of 13 athletes qualify for the state meet this year. For their women they had Ashley Sand, Samantha Dorn, Sarah Thompson, Monica Ureno and Jayme Helm. Not only competing in their solo events but all belonged to a team relay. The Hawk's men team consisted of Ross Brown, Ryan Ridosko, Marcu Holunga, Zach Zauhar-Kurr, Zach Perry, Steve Ragatz, Ryan Clark and Zach Ulrich.

Las Positas participated in an abundance of events. From short distances like the 100 breaststroke and 200 free swim, to even longer distances like the 500 free swim and the 1650 yard free swim. The male and female team participated in medley and free relays.

With over a dozen representing Las Positas college, it can be said that the Hawks' presence was felt.

"I thought our whole team did really well, it was probably our best meet by far," said Ashley Sand, Las Positas swimmer for the 200 IM swim and both 100 and 200 breaststroke.

The meet was filled with competition but the pressure only turned the hawks to diamonds since a few placed fairly high at this big meet. Holunga was able to win first place for the 1650 yard free event and the 500 yard free event. For the 1650 yard, he had a time of 15:53.52 and in the 500 yard, a time of 4:35.09.

"At every single meet, at least in the mile, he's dropped time from the beginning of the season," Sand said.

That he did. At the very start of the season at the coast conference kick-off back on Feb. 17, Holunga had swam the very same race but did it a minute and 29 seconds slower. Clocking in at 17:23, Marcu took only 3 months to get his time down to a winning time.

Sand would also take home her own medal as she placed 3rd in the 100-yard breaststroke event with a time of 1:07.78.



Ashley Sand competes in a butterfly event at the Coast Conference Championships on April 21, 2023. She has recently placed third overall at the state championships.

ALAN LEWIS/THE EXPRESS



Marcu Holunga, Zachary Zauhar-Kurr, Ross Brown and Ryan Ridosko stand with swimming coaches, Coach Craighead and Coach Faixon, at the Coast Conference Championships on April 21, 2023. Each of these swimmers won medals for their efforts at the meet.

ALAN LEWIS/THE EXPRESS

"It was a close race between three and four, but I really wanted to get that third place," Sand said.

Not only that, but she dropped three seconds off her time in the 200 yard breaststroke, placing fourth overall in her race.

The men's team would see a couple more high finishes. Zachary Zauhar-Kurr placed third overall in the 100 yard breaststroke swim with a time of 57.01. He also received fourth overall in the 200 yard breaststroke, clocking in at 2:04.12. In the 800 free relay, Zauhar-Kurr won another third-place medal accompanied by Brown, Holunga, and Ridosko. They were able to get a time of 6:52.85, securing

the third place spot and bringing another medal back to Las Positas.

At the meet, plenty of school records had been broken too. Both of Marcu's times beat the previously held school records for the 500 free (previously 4:35.30) and the 1650 yard free swim (16:32.07), the 800 free relay team as well set a school record (previously 7:11.46). Ashley Sand would also break her previously set record in the 100 yard breast (1:07.60) and 200 yard breast swim event (2:28.00).

"I'm hoping they can have a big team. I am hoping Craighead can get some more swimmers and they can continue to go to state.

Because I really enjoyed my time on the Las Positas swim team and I hope there can be more swimmers that have the same experience as me," Sand said.

With the season coming to an end, the question is how will Las Positas follow up this stellar year at state. With coach Craighead leading the team and plenty of athletic talents, Las Positas made their name known and the team's growth in only the last year only raises the question of how many more can they get into state next year. With five medals now added to their trophy case, the future of the team is bright.

HAWK SQUAWK

Swimming

The Hawks took on the best talents at this year's CCCAA swim and dive state championship. 13 athletes qualified.

MEN'S TEAM

Marcu Holunga placed first in two separate events. The 500 yard freestyle (4:35.09) and the 1650 yard freestyle (15:53.52). Zachary Zauhar-Kurr placed third in the 100 yard breaststroke (57.01).

The Hawks got third in the 800 free medley relay (6:52.85), setting a new school record from the previous time (7:11.46).

WOMEN'S TEAM

Ashley Sand placed third overall at the meet. She clocked in a time of (1:06.78) for the 100 yard breaststroke.

In their best team performance, the women placed 11th in the 400 yard medley relay (4:18.10).

Las Positas placed 16th overall at the meet.

Diving

Steve-o Ragatz placed 14th in the 1 M diving. Zach Perry placed 12th in 1 M diving and 14th in 3 M diving. Lastly Ryan Clark received 10th in 3 M diving and 13th for 1 M diving.

Fencing extraordinaire puts LPC fencing on the map

By Lizzy Rager

@RAGERWRITER

In the year 2014, the screen lit aglow with shadowy figures, a cautionary horn sounding in the background. From a tiny metal hilt, blue plasma energy emitted into a sword, grasped in a scrappy boy's hands. Towering over him, a man with black robes grasped the same sword, but in red. The two force wielders emerged into a clash. Drums rising, the two blades crashed against each other with swift power.

Outside the screen, young brothers held their breath as their eyes filled with admiration and wanting. They shook their plastic lightsabers — careless, clumsy.

For 8-year-old Ethan Logue, Star Wars initiated his path toward fencing excellence.

“We did lightsaber fighting with just plastic lightsabers. And I guess my mom got a little bit tired of it, and she wanted to find a better outlet to put that into,” Ethan said. “So somehow, she found fencing.”

Now, at 17 years old, the fencer has taken the No.13 spot in California and is ranked top 100 nationally for Junior Epee. Ethan, a Monte Vista High School student, walks the halls of the Las Positas gymnasium as if it were home.

It is a second home. A place where he can unwind and give all his focus toward his sport. And that's thanks to the fencing club at LPC.

The Las Positas Fencing Club was founded in 2005, with Coach Sophie Rheinheimer at the helm. Near the top of the campus hill, inside the towering walls of the Tony Costello Gym, fencers from just 8 to retirement age share a space. It's a mirrored wood-slatted room, designed for dance practice. Unlike other clubs that might have over 100 members, there are



GABRIEL CARVER/THE EXPRESS

Ethan Logue holds his mask, April 13, 2023, in Livermore CA. He's ranked No. 13 for Junior Epee in California.



GABRIEL CARVER/THE EXPRESS

Ethan Logue spars with teammate Duong on April 13, 2023 in Livermore, CA. The Las Positas student scores a point after making contact during the duel.

only around 20 here.

Every Tuesday and Thursday, the scrape of shuffling across the floor resounds. Two metal points clang. Cheering after the electrical buzz, signaling a fencer scored a point. This is a place of joy, no matter your experience or skill.

Which is unusual. Competitive fencing is a do-or-die kind of world, and many bigger clubs take that approach with their students. Even at 8 years old, competitive fencers feel the pressure. But the fencing taught through the LPC club is different.

“Everybody's super supportive. If anybody tries to talk anybody down, that never flies. So I think a lot of clubs don't have that aspect. Especially because they're so big, they can't care for each individual person,” Ethan said.

Ethan doesn't seem like a national fencing star at first glance. He's a bit timid and unassuming. His brother and coach describe him as quiet. But like a hidden goliath, he shows off on the fencing strip.

“He's a very relaxed, confident, aggressive fencer. He's not wild, but he's very methodical. He works his way in, and he's left-handed, so that's an advantage,” Rheinheimer said.

“He's really good at that, keeping the right distance in order to be able to draw them in and attack them when their guard is down,” Ethan's brother and former fencer for LPC Andrew Logue, said.

“Whenever I fence him, he already has me figured out. He knows when I do something, he knows how to respond and he knows how to counter my attacks,” Shawn Seo, fellow club fencer and Dublin High School student, said.

The stress of championing his titles doesn't show when Ethan speaks about fencing. He is an athlete with a healthy

approach to his sport. He knows it isn't what completes him.

“It doesn't actually matter if I lose or not, like it's not the end of the world. It's just a learning experience,” Ethan said.

He had to struggle to get to that point, though. For the first three years of his competitive fencing career, he lost his bouts in the first round of direct elimination. Sometimes he'd leave the state to compete in a tournament and come home after only fencing one round.

“I didn't really see the progression or where it could really go at that point,” Ethan said.

“When he was younger and he lost, he was just Mr. Grump,” Rheinheimer said. “I knew well enough to leave him alone. Let him wander off, do whatever he needs to do. And he eventually comes back and then we talk.”

It was right before the pandemic when he saw a stark improvement in his fencing.

“He would often lose many times, but then there were increasingly more and more times where he would go up against very, very high rated fencers and he would beat them. They would be really confused,” Paul Logue, Ethan's father, said.

That confusion was in part due to the Las Positas Fencing Club being lesser-known. Other fencers would often underestimate Ethan because the club was small and coached by a woman, Paul said.

When the pandemic started, athletes everywhere panicked. Ethan thought he wouldn't be able to compete again with the same intensity or power. He couldn't attend practices in the gym since the Las Positas Community of Practice, through which fencing classes are taught, didn't allow religious exemption for vaccinations.

But unwilling to give up, Ethan and

other fencers in the club formulated a plan to continue practicing. There came the invention of “barn fencing.”

Ethan repurposed his family barn with rubber fencing mats and scoring boxes, right next to a stall of donkeys and horses. Every Saturday for a few months, the club would meet there with Coach Rheinheimer.

“He just wants his entire club to improve and be ready,” Seo said.

Now, almost everyone in the club has a national rating. Competitive fencing has classifications from “A” to “E,” dictating the skill-level of a fencer. “A” ratings mean a fencer is at the top of their age division, contending at Division I tournaments.

Since 2021, Ethan has been an “A”-ranked fencer. So far, this competitive year he's secured 105 victories and 48 losses.

“One of the hardest parts of training a fencer is to instill that confidence in them. And Ethan finally figured it out,” Rheinheimer said.

Ethan is the first fencer from the LPC club to be accepted into a NCAA Division I college for fencing. Sacred Heart University, a private Catholic school in Fairfield, Connecticut, offered what Ethan wanted. They have a similar nurturing fencing environment like Las Positas.

He plans to major in computer science with a music minor and will join the school with half of his tuition covered by a sports and merit-based scholarship.

“The next step after NCAA, really, the only place you can go, is Olympics, which is a really big jump,” Ethan said. “It's very time consuming and not very well paying, which is just the reality.”

But just like he took a chance on fencing, persisting despite defeat, he'd take a chance on the Olympics too.

Former LPC journalist awarded Valedictorian title

By Peter Zimmer

@PETERJZIMMER

Hunting for new sources. Scheduling interviews for stories. Taking chances in new roles. In room 2409, talent is constantly burgeoning. And every once in a while, a valedictorian emerges.

Sophia Sipe, the former editor-in-chief of the Express News for the fall and spring 2022 semesters and managing editor of Naked 2022, is one of two valedictorians of the 2022-23 school year.

While the title holds much acclaim, it isn't unusual to the gifted storyteller and leader in the newsroom. Her mother, Elizabeth Sipe, was also the valedictorian at Maric College in 2006. It's not the first time an editor for the Express has achieved such a title. Back in 2014, Express editor Bekka Weidenmeyer earned the title as well.

"At the end of the day, someone chooses you and you have to take the opportunity that's handed to you and appreciate it," Sophia said.

This is no surprise to her former classmate and the current editor-in-chief for the Express Lizzy Rager.

According to Rager, as someone who shadowed Sophia in order to become the incumbent editor-in-chief for the Express, Rager believes her greatness will shine.

Sophia's accomplishment speaks of the contributions she's brought to the campus: she has won writing awards for first place in magazine profile writing for Naked 17, first place in a copy-editing contest, multiple awards for her column and many more from the Journalism Association of Community Colleges.

More largely, her contributions live on through the people she's affected. As an editor, she looked to bring out the talents of each and every one of her staff.

"I felt like she was creating a lot of cohesion among the staff there," Melissa Korber, journalism and media studies professor, said. "It didn't surprise me as much as it gratified me."

Sophia's effect on her staff and her advisers at the Express were not only noticed, but admired by Rager. According to Rager, when it came to getting the work done, Sophia was not afraid to set hard deadlines on stories. She made sure staff members met those dates, but she was compassionate in doing so.

Currently, Sophia is a writer for the Daily 49er at California State University, Long Beach. She transferred halfway through the Las Positas school year to pursue a degree in journalism and public relations. The decision to transfer early was thanks to her work at the Express.

Sophia is a gifted storyteller. The beauty of weaving a story, sharing personal anecdotes and using her platform commonly stigmatized mental health topics, all comes easy to her.

Her column, "Sophia's school of thought," began in Fall 2022 and was founded on the idea of making her writing more personal for herself and readers.

"I just wanted an outlet to vent in a way that would help me refine my writing style," Sophia said. "I knew it couldn't be as



GABRIEL CARVER/THE EXPRESS

Sophia Sipe takes pictures on December 7, 2022 at an LPC basketball game versus West Valley. The former Las Positas student took pictures as part of the Express and was the former editor-in-chief.

sloppy as a personal diary entry, so I was excited to continually work on something that would grow. It was sort of like a pleasure project for me."

She was inspired to write columns for the Express based on what the previous editor-in-chief, CJ Flores, had done.

"He talked about various personal prob-

"There's a cathartic feeling of writing ... You just put your pen to paper, your fingers to the keyboard and eventually, the computer. It gets better over time."

- SOPHIA SIPE

lems. Mostly though, I wanted something that was solely my own and a column was perfect because it offered the creative freedom I was looking for," Sophia said.

Sophia's childhood friend, Ella King, was also a contender for valedictorian, but did not apply as she thought Sophia deserved it.

"Sophia is super persistent," King said. "She's a positive individual who gets anything done she puts her mind to."

Growing up, Sophia was determined, decisive and very outspoken.

"She was a Taurus," Elizabeth said. "Sophia wanted to make her own decisions growing up. Unlike her siblings."

There were often times where Sophia

saw writing as an opportunity to tie her stories to childhood memories, and that eventually led her into the bigger story for her columns.

"Almost like a self-help and an advice kind of vibe," King said.

Mental health is one thing Sophia had to master and overcome throughout her life. According to one of Sophia's columns, she had to accept her condition of hyper independence and make mental notes whenever a situation (where she needs to be hyper independent) arises.

Many other students at LPC are battling mental health inside and outside of the classroom. Before the pandemic, 11% of students struggled with thoughts of suicide, according to a 2018-19 Healthy Minds study. In 2020-21, 60% of students struggled with mental health issues, according to the American Psychological Association.

"I just want to say thank you for publishing stories like this," an anonymous student said in an email to Express about Sophia's column about hyper independence. "It's so rare to find examples of my situation least of all from people who would understand and be compassionate."

Even before working on the Express, Sophia enjoyed writing down her inner thoughts and took up journaling in her diary every day. According to Sophia, writing became a habitual practice that she continued throughout her academic career.

"I would write every day after school about nothing," Sophia said. "About childhood drama, my favorite color and my favorite food. Just random things."

Once Sophia reached high school, she was able to sharpen her writing skills and take her voice to a whole new level.

"In high school, I did well in my writing classes," Sophia said. "I just didn't know what I wanted to do when I got there."

Sophia wanted to be a forensics major her freshman year. "I think what I found with forensics is that I liked reading articles about investigative journalism," Sophia said. "I just didn't make the connection that I wanted to write about it rather than do forensics. Once I made the switch from forensics to journalism, I was content with it. It was more of a purpose than being in forensics because I wasn't sure."

She found joy every time she completed an article.

"There's a cathartic feeling of writing. Once you're done, it feels just good because you just put your pen to paper, your fingers to the keyboard and eventually, the computer. It gets better over time," Sophia said.

Having a purpose in life was paramount to Sophia's success not only as a writer but as a student at LPC.

Her first task in getting involved with journalism was taking a class with the esteemed Athletic columnist and LPC journalism instructor, Marcus Thompson II. According to an email interview, Thompson picked up right away on Sophia's purpose in his class.

"She was a student in my online class during the pandemic," Thompson said. "She was like many online students during COVID, detached and mildly interested. But her work was really good, which is why I recommended her for the newspaper."

"When I was in Marcus's class, he would always talk about 'Why aren't you on the newspaper?' That's how I found out there was a newspaper on campus, and I just decided to join it to see what it was going to be like. I really liked it and I liked the team of people I was working with," Sophia said.

Korber also saw her gift in an online intro to media class that same semester. "She was kind of quiet in class and very polite. She would show up on Zoom for class in her pajamas, often from her bed and her dog Chicken became a part of our class," Korber said.

"Sophia definitely had an immediate knack as a columnist," Korber said. "It's hard to write a good column, and hers were very confessional about what had gone on in her life and with her mental health in the past. So I found that not only hard to do but very brave."

In her roles, Sophia sharpened up her delegation skills. According to Sophia, it was a matter of getting better with time and making sacrifices.

"My experience as editor-in-chief was stressful," Sophia said. But it was something I loved to do. I had to learn how to manage and oversee editors. How to delegate work was difficult for me because I felt guilty for giving people work that I wanted to do."

Thanks to her hard work, she's this year's valedictorian and is off to conquer the journalism world.

'Tears of the Kingdom' teases game design feats

By Landon Jansen

@LANDONJANSEEN

The Mighty Demon King Ganon has returned to terrorize Hyrule. The Nintendo fan's favorite role-playing and puzzle game series is back. News outlets and game developers are raving about its innovation and creativity.

"The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom" (TOTK) releases globally on May 12, and invites players to explore a whole new dimension in the sky. Nintendo's sequel continues chronologically after "The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild," (BOTW) around five years in the future, similar to how long Nintendo was working on this sequel.

As the prior installation of the series received much critical appraisal and was voted game of the year in 2017, TOTK has much to live up to. The game comes six years after BOTW, with a major delay from 2022 to 2023 teased all the way back in 2019.

Although these games are demanding on old Nintendo hardware, the Zelda game engine was designed to run smoothly on the Nintendo Switch from the beginning, as used in continuation from BOTW.

The file size is although much larger than the original game's 14.4 GB as compared to TOTK's 16 GB file size in the Nintendo store. Switch games average around 10 GB or less while newer console games, such as for the PS5, average 30 to

50 GB.

On March 28, Nintendo Direct revealed that the fundamental mechanics for TOTK were completely different from BOTW. Of the introduced abilities in the new game, "fusion" stuck out to game developers for its unusual game design. The ability allows players to "craft" new weapons by fusing together inanimate objects, like sticks and rocks, to create new weapons.

David Goldfarb, founder and studio creative director for The Outsiders, tweeted, "New Zelda: making us all look bad," in reaction to the Nintendo Direct gameplay reveal.

Jean Pierre Kellams lead producer for Harmonix and Epic Games responded with another tweet. "Encouraging all aspiring systems designers to seek a new career path" Kellams said.

Although joking, these well respected developers carried a serious undertone of praise for the new Zelda installment for its creativity and innovation.

Miguel Baez, computer arts and information technology teacher at Granada High School in Livermore, was a big fan of the original BOTW. He said that the coding itself was not that atypical, but the idea and premise are very unusual and innovative.

"From my perspective designing games in Unity, attaching one object to another is not that big of a challenge. Innovating this new way of attack points in the weapons while they already had so many weapons

and weapon classes. A cool new thing for an adventure game, it's not really a challenge, but it's more of a balancing challenge," Baez said.

Baez specializes in Unity, one of the largest and most universal cross-platform game engines of modern game design.

The balancing challenge comes from a new large array of new weapons that must all be balanced so that Link is not overly powerful.

Nintendo had to conquer other game design difficulties as well. Nintendo has to prove to players that this sequel is more than an expansion pass of the original game. TOTK reuses the same map, assets and game engine from BOTW.

"Although it is the same world, we want to make sure players experience it with a new sense of wonder. So to achieve that, we had to take a world originally made up of things we'd designed to fit it perfectly, and then bolt a new layer of surprises on top of it, designed from a different perspective. And we had to do so without erasing the familiar world," Satoru Takizawa, a member of the TOTK design management team said during a Nintendo Q&A on May 8.

The original map with the addition of new locations, including sky islands and undergrounds, creates a larger overall map for gamers to explore, without losing the key sense of familiarity and nostalgia.

These games are both massive open-world games, so they are extremely challenging on old Nintendo hardware. Open

world games are set in worlds with few boundaries, usually only consisting of natural world borders surrounding a large fully explorable inner world about as large as a real life city, in this case.

The Zelda game engine was hand-crafted to run smoothly for BOTW, and Nintendo noted in their press release for BOTW that the game engine took a large sum of their development time. Without the game engine to focus on, developers at Nintendo were working on the game itself for a longer period of time than BOTW, without the need to develop a new engine.

Therefore, they spent much more time working to make TOTK a unique fan-requested experience.

Many fans, contrary to the positive reactions, have had concerns with the frame rates, consumer fatigue and unintuitive cooking populating the original game.

"I'm definitely concerned about the lag, my switch always lags out in the (BOTW) Korok Forest because there's too much stuff, so I'm hoping they don't make the whole map too full," Bella Palmer, sophomore law student, said.

"I am so excited about cooking. I heard that there will be recipes so I no longer have to throw random ingredients together and memorize what I just used," Vy Nyugen, sophomore chemistry student, said.

Overall, fans are very excited, but a healthy amount of skepticism and consumer caution are at play.

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EDITORIAL

Student government lacks transparency about budget

At Las Positas, you have to pay an extra \$10 at registration every semester. Wouldn't you like to know where that money goes?

Student government has failed to disclose online the details of their budget, and failed to answer questions about their budget over a 9-week period since the beginning of March. Student Government also raised their own stipends in March 2022 without any apparent input from students. Contrastingly, their mission statement says, "We strive to be as transparent as possible and encourage student involvement in our affairs." However, zero minutes of Student Government meetings this semester have been posted on the website. Without attending meetings, it is impossible to determine what the student government is spending its budget on.

Part of the problem of this lack of transparency, is that the student government votes on its own funding. If they

aren't being outright about how much funding they have and what it is going toward, how is the Las Positas community supposed to hold them accountable? No other student-run program at Las Positas has as much power as the student government.

In March 2022 Student Government increased the stipends of the Executive board from \$1000 for the President to up to \$1300. Each position receives different stipends which range from \$500 to \$1300. The stipends are listed in the bylaws. The updated bylaws were approved in the March 30, 2022 Special Student Senate Meeting.

While student life advisor Josue Hernandez and director of student equity and success Shawn Taylor did not respond to Express communications, a non-elected member of student government gave a response. The increase was to attract more students to student government said Student Government Director of Finance, Brody Price.

This was only after the Express met him in-person, after he did not respond to online communication.

It seems like a conflict of interest that the student government approves increasing their own stipends. Not even a roll call vote is required, just show of hands where in the 2019 student club handbook any expenditure of over \$600 required a roll call vote.

Student Government is funded by the Student Activity Fees that is required at registration for every semester. The fee is \$10, though students can choose to opt-out using a form in class web.

Per Chabot-Las Positas Community College District Board Policy 5030, "Student Activity Fees may be used to support co-curricular activities and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, revenue from student activities fee may be used to compensate student officers for fulfilling their duties per the student government or student senate constitution and bylaws."

Even though the District states that the student activities fee should be used for co-curricular and extracurricular activities plus student government stipends, student government has authorized funds for new furniture for the student life office (\$10,000 approved at Oct 22, 2022 meeting), a golf cart (\$9000 approved at Sept 16, 2022 meeting) and student government retreats (approved \$12,000 for a retreat at June 6, 2022 meeting), in Monterey for the student government, according to the government's fall/spring year meeting minutes.

New furniture and a golf cart may be necessary, but college capital funds should pay for this. A student activity fee is supposed to be used toward student activities.

Student Activity fee funds should be used to benefit all students. Student Government appears to use some the student activity fee funds for items that only benefit student government.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: FROM THE NOTES APP TO A PRINT PUBLICATION

Dear readers,

I've always liked transformations. I tuned into Winx Club reruns on the regular at seven years old. In Winx Club, the fairies glittered and painted their costumes on with little effort. And much like a Winx fairy, I transformed through the Express too.

But my "transformation" has been far less eloquent, refined or pretty like the Winx Club fairies. In my first year at Las Positas, I decided to join the Journalism Club to get more college experience. I wrote for the newspaper, bringing to light what was important to me at the time: video games.

Writing let my confidence slowly crawl out from inside the shell. Talking to the public with my authorship was cathartic.

Even if it was just a video game review or a back-to-school protocol.

Before Express, I always found solace in my English class. Free-write sessions were like therapy for me. Pen to paper. Ink to parchment. Keyboard taps to screen. Different forms, same feeling. Since I was 14, I wanted to be an author, in some sense.

I took to writing poetry, songs and short stories in my notes app. I gave bits and pieces of myself through academic essays as well. It took time to let my mind, with all its scattered parts, bleed bright through typed word.

And thankfully, Express has always been patient with me. It wasn't until my third year at Las Positas that I decided to take the Express class and commit to the paper. But thanks to my mentors, Melissa

Korber and Marcus Thompson, I learned to take chances and see things through.

I became the managing editor and was asked to write about controversial issues. Uncertainty shook my voice when I interviewed protesters on campus. I went back and forth about how to approach a heavy story, losing sleep and stressing out my former editor trying to meet our deadlines. But I learned something very important: fairness.

Now, as the editor-in-chief, I try to give my writers the opportunity to express themselves. To me, writing is the most fulfilling part of my life.

I will miss the late nights working on production, bonding with the staff over this unique experience. I'll miss bothering all my friends to read my last Express

article.

To our readers, thank you for caring about this small print publication. I hope it has been some solace after a long day of class, or the best pairing to a dark roast coffee.

I am sad to graduate, it feels like three years flashed by. I will be continuing my path as a journalist at University of California, Santa Barbara. Thank you Express, for allowing me to embolden my voice and have the experience to back it up. I hope, one day, my writing will help others the way it has helped me.

Signing off,
-Lizzy Rager

EXPRESS YOURSELF

“What was your favorite memory or experience at Las Positas?”



“Picking the classes that I like. For example, I took the botany class which I actually had no prior knowledge on. My teachers were just really, really nice to me and all the topics were pretty new and fun for me to learn.”

– Emily Tang
Biology



“My favorite experience has been my English class, I really like my English teacher. He's just a really nice guy, and I like talking to him. I'm looking forward to moving on and getting stuff done.”

–Mark Richmond
Undecided



“Probably my math two class. With math one I didn't have a great experience because I had to do it asynchronously. I took a math two class with Professor Olavarrieta, and I had a fantastic time with him.”

–Deven Clark
Biology



“I like the flexibility. You can do it how you want. You're not tied down to being here for 7 hours a day, and you can attack any class how you want to.”

—Ahmed Shmara
Engineering



“Participating in music, like choir, working with Ash Walker as my professor and getting into cultural music. I really appreciated getting into different African music that you don't typically get to do in other choir programs.”

– Shirin Alvarez
Kinesiology