

# The Wheaton Wire

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Volume LVI, Issue #6

## Human & chatbot: Wheaton College uses both to draw in donations

By Logan Markwell '28



Graphic courtesy of Version2.ai LinkedIn page  
Version2.ai's announcement of pilot partnership with Wheaton on LinkedIn.

Wheaton will begin its pilot program of an A.I. chatbot named Sarah to help maintain alumni and donor relationships, said an announcement on LinkedIn from Version2.ai three months ago in early December.

Version2.ai's Sarah is called a "virtual engagement officer," and will "help keep donors engaged" near the end of fundraising campaigns. Wheaton is not the first higher education institution to partner with Version2.ai; the website for the A.I. features positive reviews from administrators at Wake Forest University, La Salle University, and Bucknell University, among others.

The mission of Version2.ai is to provide non-profits with a tool that can perform the entire process of finding and communicating with donors, as well as successfully soliciting donations, "all autonomously with no human

intervention." In the announcement, Version2.ai congratulated members of the Alumni Relations and Giving department at Wheaton College for this "exciting milestone." Version2.ai said that this new partnership will allow Wheaton College to "grow their fundraising capacity and deepen donor relationships."

This pilot program arrives with other recent implementations of A.I. by Wheaton College, specifically by Dining Services with the kiosk in Emerson Dining Hall (also known as 1834 Grill), as well as the institutional approval of Gemini in the Google Workspace. However, Wheaton College's Honor Code policies regarding A.I. remain intact, and the extent of A.I. use within classes is up to each individual professor.

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## Wheaton Men's Volleyball plays first ever home game

By Grayce Howe '29

The Wheaton Men's Volleyball Team played their first ever home game on Jan. 27 against Emmanuel College in Haas Athletic Field House.

Despite going co-ed in 1988, Wheaton has gone without a men's volleyball team for nearly four decades. Now, the team of 17 which consists of 12 first-years and five sophomores makes history as Wheaton's first ever men's volleyball team.

The bleachers of Emerson Gymnasium were full of students, families, and even Wheaton administration. Both President Michael Whelan and Dr. Darnell Parker were in attendance, sporting their own Wheaton merchandise.

"Our team has both spirit and talent, and their games are always dynamic," said President Whelan, "It's clear that they support each other as teammates and that translates onto the court."

Although the game against Emmanuel did not bring a win for the team, their energy and spirits persisted and on Thursday, Jan. 29, the team secured their first ever home game win against Emerson College. The team has since defeated opponents from Regis College, Dean College, and Northern Vermont Johnson.

Beginning his role officially at Wheaton this year is the team's head coach, Scott Reslow. Reslow was the head coach for the men's volleyball team at Johnson and Wales University for 12 years where his team placed fourth in the Great Northeast Athletic Conference. When Wheaton reached out to Reslow, he was excited about getting back into head coaching in the college scene, as well as being a part of starting a brand new program.

The team was formed last year with only four students. Current sophomores Cole Arsenault, Connor Lloyd, Jimmy Ciummo, and Jack Kenyon who now have captain roles on the team.

"We would walk around with

recruits, host them overnight, and have meetings with coach to lay out the principles we wanted the team to adopt," said Cole Arsenault '28. "As a collective we came up with the four pillars that hold us to our standard as a new program: D.I.R.T Dependability, Industriousness, Responsibility, and Trust. With these in place we were ready to welcome our first incoming wave of commits."

"As I was recruiting for this first season, I was looking for good volleyball players, but also good culture guys who would want to create something special," Reslow said.

And Reslow's goal seems to be paying off. The boys are a group of players and a team, but they also operate as a family and they take that seriously both on and off the court.

"We always like to support each other and see each other play," said Masiah Prak '29, "There's never a time where people aren't cheering and getting hype to see their teammates play even if they're not the one on the court."

Similarly, that support is visible in the players' families. At each home game many of the player's parents are present, and each player's name is cheered on by



Photo by Grayce Howe '29  
Jeremy Bullard-Smith gets a point for Wheaton.

every parent, even if their son isn't on the court. The culture of selflessness and determination is what is bringing the team to great victories so early on in the team's history.

"It's nice that we have such a close knit atmosphere and I think that is largely due to a lot of our team coming in at the same time,"

said Arsenault, "Feeling the same transitions while spending a lot of time with one another is really good for team bonding."

Arsenault's teammates feel the same way. "We make sure to hangout often even when we're not playing," said Jeremy Bullard-Smith '29, "Whether we're

Continued on page 3.



Photo by Grayce Howe '29  
The team celebrates after a successful block point by Wheaton.

## Professor Ted Nesi returns for 12th year of teaching spring semester journalism course

By Claire Martin '28

Professor Ted Nesi returned to his classroom in Knapton to begin his 12th year teaching his signature journalism course at his alma mater. "It's very special to be back here," he said.

Nesi, an analyst and reporter for Channel 12 (WPRI-TV), helps students learn the fundamentals of becoming a journalist and writing news stories. He originally started teaching the class in 2015, when the changing newsroom atmosphere needed young, properly trained reporters to enter the industry.

Today, misinformation and the rise of artificial intelligence are further changing newsroom attitudes and beliefs.

Listed as DMC 285 in Wheaton's class catalog, Nesi says his course aims to "develop skills that will allow you to produce journalism of your own," and that "the only way to learn journalistically is to write."

Students who take the class write a variety of assignments, ranging from writing simple ledes—like the one in this article—to fuller stories that dive into local happenings or zoom out to larger, broader stories. These pieces require quick, punchy writing to keep the reader's interest. Students also learn how to write news for the real-world outlets, the importance of researching and being impartial before sitting down to write, and how to even

begin looking at journalism and newswriting as a whole.

Nesi views the class dynamic as two buckets: those who aspire to be professional journalists, and those who do not but take the course to improve their writing or research skills. Neither kind of student is better or has an advantage, as all come from different backgrounds. Those with a background in journalism from earlier years or prior experience can still find something to take away from the course. The same goes for interest; "You may not be interested in the news," Nesi stated, "but the news is interested in you."

Nesi covers topics like the rise of social media and the rapid spread of misinformation because, with everyone able to be their own journalist, it's often hard to distinguish what is true from false. "Everyone is their own editor. You have to figure out your own resources," he said. In this spirit, the first major paper for the course is a media comparison essay, which allows students to compare several news outlets—ranging from local to national—on how they report the same stories. When they don't, why does that selection happen?

AI is also a cause for concern in the changing world, and Nesi believes it will be "massively disruptive to journalism." However, he is not just critical of the programs. "I am holding out hope it can be constructive if we're



Photo courtesy of The Wheaton College faculty pages

Ted Nesi '07, mid-broadcast.

smart about it," he noted.

This does not mean that students are allowed to use said technology to write their news briefs, papers, or any assignment without serious consideration. Nesi is adamant about this, as he works to "AI-proof" his students. He believes that once you've developed the skills to use AI as a tool rather than rely on it as fact, then you can use it as a tool.

Certainly, many still fear that junior reporters just entering the professional field will be replaced by artificial intelligence. "What AI can definitely replicate is the basic writing of a basic news report," Nesi explains. DMC 285 offers the chance to develop the advanced writing and research skills one needs to navi-

gate this new era of social media, fake news, political situations, and emerging technology.

Despite these obstacles, students have proven to be incredibly resilient and adaptable, especially those a part of Generation Z. "I'm always inspired by how diligent students are, and how much they care," Nesi commented. "When I read stuff about this generation that's negative, I think how helpful it would be for more people to spend time with [Gen Z] because I think it's much more complex."

Overall, Nesi is excited to be back teaching a new group of students about not only the importance of journalism, but also the immense value of staying informed.

## The Unfiltered Transcript

By Julie Mahoney '28 and Sierra Bausemer '28

Welcome back Lyons! The year and the semester are off to a hectic start with lots of news and campus events, so gear up and sit back.

In athletics at Wheaton, a big piece of news is the first home game ever for the Men's Volleyball team. Being athletes ourselves, we have spent a lot of time at Haas Athletic Center recently and have noticed repairs and maintenance throughout the building. Noticeably, some doors have been replaced on the pool deck and leaks were spotted in the field house/by the roof, with large ice accumulating.

On Jan. 25 a snow storm hit

all parts of the US, with Norton receiving nearly 18 inches of snow. Due to the storm, all sports events were canceled for that Sunday, leaving some teams to scramble for last minute practices instead of meets or games. With the snow, campus had asynchronous classes on Jan. 26, as well as an uproar about parking and plowing, which took longer than many anticipated.

Even more exciting than a snow day is the Patriots going to the Super Bowl against the Seattle Seahawks on Feb. 8. This comes after a remarkable season with a 14-3. However the Pats didn't keep up the momentum and sadly lost the super bowl with a final score of 29-13.

Additionally, the halftime show



Photo by Renee Goldfinger '27  
Unplowed Lot 3 after students were instructed to move their cars.

caused quite a stir when Bad Bunny was first announced as the performer and he did not disappoint. His large-scale performance with multiple sets and celebrity appearances was nothing less than a spectacle. But he made it more than a performance with the symbolism and representation.

The winter hasn't just been cold and snowy it has also been full of ICE (Immigrations and Custom Enforcement). Prevalent in the media and the minds of Americans have been the increase in ICE raids and arrests leading to more protests. ICE has also gotten more violent, shown by the murders of Alex Pretti and Renee Good in Minnesota. Protests have sparked across the country leading students to organize walkouts on Jan. 30. Additionally, a federal judge in Portland, Oregon has ruled to ban "teargas or projectile munitions at protesters," says the Guardian, after ICE agents fired teargas, pepper balls, and rubber bullets into a crowd of thousands of protesters which included children.

The first few days of February were garnered in by the Grammys and Groundhog Day. This year's Grammy awards was filled with outspoken speeches pertaining to ICE and the power of immigrants. Bad Bunny made history with his win of Album of the Year, the first to be made entirely in Spanish. The next morning Punxsutawney Phil made his annual weather report where he saw his shadow, forecasting six more weeks of winter.



Photo by Julie Mahoney '28

Students struggle and work together to move their cars from Lot 3 after the snowstorm.



Photo by Julie Mahoney '28  
Student stands atop a pile of snow.

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

## Letter from the editor

Hello, Wheaton!

It's been a cold winter so far, and in my four years here in the oh-so-lovely town of Norton, MA, I don't think I've ever seen the snow piled this high on my walk to classes. I'm already eager for it to be much warmer, even though the arrival of spring means that graduation will soon be one visit to the Dimple closer. It's an odd feeling, knowing that there's no "next semester" of my undergraduate academic career to push things off to—this is my last chance to end my experience

at Wheaton in a way that feels fulfilling.

My time with *The Wire* has certainly been a large part of that, and as I wrap up my last designs and train next year's team to take over, I've been reflecting on how I can make that final push to make my portfolio feel complete. I've been so focused on creating a professional design for the paper that I've always left some of the more creative decisions for a later time. Now, I've decided it's time to mix it up and focus on how to invite a little organized chaos into issues.

In this particular print we have plenty of articles and art about what's been happening in our community recently. Some of these include a report about an AI chatbot asking for donations, a spotlight of a journalism professor who many in *The Wire* have learned from, and a recap of experiencing the Super Bowl LX in the Lyon's Den. Additionally, the back page features a revised checklist of 50 things to do before you graduate that was updated by myself and Max Aaronson '26. We'll be trying to complete the list and a few bonus points we added over the next few months—good luck to the rest of y'all on the journey. We also have a few pieces of student art scattered throughout the pages, although we're always looking for more. If you have any art that can be easily digitized, please send it my way to potentially publish for the rest of our readers to enjoy.

Aside from art, if anyone has any areas of campus that they feel are doing something neat or that deserves recognition, send a tip our way and we'll consider it for coverage. This is a publication for the Wheaton community, and as we continue to build ourselves stronger that means we want your input on what is important to you.

Signing off,

Moira Sankey  
Co-Editor-in-Chief  
Design Editor

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Have a question, comment, or writing piece for the Editor or Wire staff? Email us at: [thewheatonwire@gmail.com](mailto:thewheatonwire@gmail.com).

## Mario Kart

By Emma Zhou '27



## Men's Volleyball Team, continued from front

going out or just hanging out in the dorms, spending time together helps with our basic communication and how we talk to each other."

Since the team is brand new and consists of only underclassmen, a large chunk of the team gets play time in every game, and although it is still very early in the season, all 17 players have already taken to the court at least once. There are multiple substitutions of players during each match, and they often meet each other at court lines with

high fives, handshakes, and even hugs. Off the court, the team is seen laughing, cheering, and falling to the ground with excitement as their teammates score. After successful block points made by Wheaton, the teammates on the sidelines connect their hands above their heads and jump from foot to foot in celebration. The advantage to get play time on the court so early on in their college athletic career is unique, and that along with being a part of a historical moment in Wheaton's history,

was an incentive for many of the current players.

"Being a part of a historical moment is really amazing and it was one of the contributing factors to me coming to Wheaton," said Landon Hanscom '29.

Next year, the team will enter the New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference where they will compete against Springfield College who are currently ranked number one in the country, and New York University who are ranked number six in the country.

## Issue #5 crossword answers

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26	E	P	S			27	U	S	O	P	E	N	
31	A	T	E	A	M	S		34	T	A	L	E	
35	N	O	U	G	A	T		36	A	V	I	S	
37	S	P	R	E	E	S		38	S	E	E	S	

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Got an article? An op-ed? A letter to the editor? Perhaps some art? Poetry?

SUBMIT  
TO THE  
WIRE  
HERE:

SCAN ME!



## COLUMN: World affairs, student stakes

# Managed Realities and Resistance

By Khushi Parikh '26

*Inspired by Václav Havel's (1978) theory on 'living within the lie,' this column examines how contemporary media and information systems—shaped by economic incentives, platform architectures, and AI mediation—structure what students know, how they know it, and why resisting epistemic passivity has become a civic responsibility.*

You wake up, and you reach for your phone before your thoughts begin to fully form. Overnight, the world has already been arranged for you.

A war has escalated—you know because a 30-second clip is trending. An election is unfolding—distilled into polling graphics and reaction memes. A campus protest circulates—framed through dueling captions before you've encountered a single first-hand account.

By the time you reach your first class, you have already "encountered" geopolitics, public policy, economic crisis, and institutional conflict. Not through sustained reading, but through algorithmically sequenced fragments optimized for speed, reaction, and emotional charge.

You are informed. Rapidly. Continuously. Effortlessly.

And yet, if asked to explain any one of these events in structural detail—their causes, stakeholders, or historical lineage—the knowledge dissolves almost as quickly as it arrived.

The issue is not that the information is completely inaccessible. It is that it arrives pre-curated—ranked, framed, and emotionally calibrated before you ever engage it. We live in a digital ecosystem designed for seamless consumption, yet it is precisely this ease—the one-click explainer, and the auto-summarized thread—that allows reality to be curated by power before it reaches our minds.

This is where Czech dissident Václav Havel becomes less a historical reference and more a diagnostic tool. Decades ago, he observed that the post-totalitarian regime "touches people at every step, but it does so with its ideological gloves on," permeating life with a hypocrisy so thorough that "depriving people of information is called making

it available." The system doesn't need you to believe every distortion. It needs you to adapt to the environment it creates, until "reality" feels like something you navigate rather than interrogate.

What Havel diagnosed was not confined to the political architecture of the Cold War. Its underlying logic has since globalized—migrating beyond state propaganda into the media, technological, political and economic infrastructures that now mediate contemporary life.

If that sounds abstract, ponder what happens when power wants to control legitimacy: it reaches for memory.

In the United States, this appears in legislative battles over "divisive" curricula, in the sanitization of national history, and in the bureaucratic shaping of what is teachable, sayable, and fundable. The mechanism is often procedural—standards, school boards, policy language—but the stakes are existential: who gets to name the past determines who gets to justify the present.

Globally, across regimes—democratic, authoritarian, and hybrid like—the logic remains the same, even when the tactics differ. China's digital erasure of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown and India's textbook revisions downplaying Mughal contributions are not identical political systems producing identical outcomes. They are different systems converging on the same objective: to make history negotiable, and therefore make legitimacy administratively manageable.

Moreover, this management of reality is never neutral; it disproportionately erases the histories and grievances of marginalized communities, whose narratives are most vulnerable to erasure, distortion, or algorithmic suppression.

We are witnessing the creation of informational environments in which certain realities become hard to access, easy to doubt, or socially costly to speak.

This management of collective memory does not happen only through the state, but through markets too.

Control no longer requires brute-force censorship; it can be achieved through the slow starvation of institutions that once produced shared public knowledge. Since 2005, the U.S. has lost over

2,500 local newspapers, leaving 70 million Americans without a local watchdog. When local newspapers disappear, the "local truth" disappears with them: not because no one cares, but because truth-production is expensive while attention is monetizable.

This is the political economy of epistemology: the informational commons collapses when it cannot be profitably maintained.

Ultimately, that vacuum gets filled—by nationalized narratives, platform intermediaries, and a small number of conglomerates—Comcast, Disney, News Corp—whose incentives are financial, not epistemic, but who hold the power to decide what is emphasized, ignored, or sensationalized. Even when multiple viewpoints remain technically available, the practical question becomes: who decides what we see, what we know, and what we discuss?

Now add the platform layer: the infrastructure that doesn't merely host content, but ranks it.

They reward emotionally charged, polarizing, or sensational content because outrage drives interaction. In an attention economy, "engagement" becomes the metric that governs what feels important, what feels true, and what feels urgent.

These algorithms and attention economies shape cognition, training users via operant conditioning into reaction as a default mode of knowing. Moreover, that training is cumulative. It doesn't just change what you believe—it changes how you believe: faster conclusions, thinner context, weaker memory, lower tolerance for ambiguity, higher dependence on interpretive shortcuts.

In short, we are being socialized inside systems that monetize our heightened emotions and reward our desire for shortcuts.

Then comes the newest catalyst: generative AI.

Picture yourself researching a complex geopolitical crisis. You think, "Wait, is that true? Let me Google it." But you don't actually Google it. The first answer you see is a fluent, authoritative summary from a generative AI. It feels like an answer, but it is a statistical prediction. Instead of checking facts, the LLM selects the most likely next word based on patterns in its training data, much like autocomplete finishes your sentences without knowing whether they are correct.

Stanford's 2024 AI Index and re-

cent research by Song et al. (Feb 2026) confirms that LLM failures are not "bugs"; they are architectural. These models optimize for token probability, not empirical truth, i.e. they are designed to sound right, not to be right.

Why? Because truth-optimization is computationally expensive and commercially inefficient compared to engagement-optimization, our primary tools for knowledge production are structurally indifferent to reality.

So, how can we, the average student, resist this cognitive invasion?

**First**, reject the "Summarized Mind": The AI-generated summary produces a "mechanized lie" in its most potent form because it removes the nuance and context where original thought actually lives.

**Second**, Intellectual Cross-Training (Silo-Breaking): Exit the echo chamber. Operationalize your skepticism by "red-teaming" your own beliefs. For every major narrative you consume, find the most sophisticated counter-narrative. Read the journalists currently facing the "administrative management," those in "news deserts" or countries with low Press Freedom rankings.

And yes—this is where the honest objection appears. Isn't this too much work? Isn't the whole point of modern tools that they reduce human labour?

Modern political life is indeed marked by a quieter tragedy than outright repression: not that truth is inaccessible, but that it is endlessly contested, stretched, reframed, and managed until it feels unknowable, producing epistemic fatigue. When the labor of distinguishing substance from performance becomes exhausting, disengagement begins to feel rational.

This is how systems win without forcing obedience: they make truth-seeking feel like an unpaid second job.

Havel's primary concern was not ignorance, but a "deep moral crisis" in which "consumption-oriented people" become vulnerable to "mass indifference," with people willing to "part with" their dignity and "abdicate their own reason, conscience, and responsibility" in favor of an "immediately available" ideological home.

In fact, just knowing the truth is not enough; we also must act as if we know it.

Continued on next page.



'Nutrition' by Khushi Parikh '26

# Crossword: Flip the Page

Created by Max Aaronson '26 and edited by Professor Michael B. Berg

- Across**
- 1 Like the temperature in Antarctica, constantly
  - 8 Letters of a famous telecommunications company featuring an '&' in its name
  - 11 One whose lifestyle involves scavenging discarded food and goods
  - 12 The Hornets, on a scoreboard
  - 13 What the white flag means in a race
  - 14 [Uh oh!]
  - 15 What a judge might give to an amazing performance
  - 16 It's sometimes referred to as a 'little piggie'
  - 17 Partner of 'circumstance'
  - 20 Fancy place to stay on vacation
  - 22 "Sadly..."
  - 23 "Turn over \_\_\_\_\_ leaf"
  - 24 Participate in a "No Kings" protest, e.g.
  - 27 Prefix with '-graphic'
  - 28 Slightly older sibling to an infant
  - 29 Deep, round-bottomed pans that originated in China
  - 31 Also
  - 32 Well-ordered collection, in olden times
  - 36 Platform to play a video game set at a sports resort
  - 37 Geological epoch that extends from roughly 23 to 5.5 million years ago
- Down**
- 1 Where a flight to Cal. might land
  - 2 Container for ashes
  - 3 Above-average grade
  - 4 College fraternity founded in 1847 at NYU
  - 5 Acronym for the four major U.S. performing arts awards
  - 6 Wild college party, in modern slang
  - 7 When a racer jumping the start might go
  - 8 Compound found in many nail polish removers and sanitizers
  - 9 There's one named after Pythagoras
  - 10 Recording of a scene directly after the first run-through, cinematically
  - 17 Subtitle for a sequel, potentially
  - 18 Yellow substance used in margarine
  - 19 Name of the posterior part of the temporal bone
  - 21 Droopy, pitiable figure
  - 25 Shrek's home
  - 26 Traditional Japanese gateway marking the transition from the mundane to the sacred
  - 30 Businessman Ray who was responsible for the franchising of McDonalds
  - 33 Response you hope to hear when down on one knee
  - 34 "32 Flavors" singer \_\_\_\_\_ DiFranco
  - 35 First name of Superman's archnemesis

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## Unhinged horoscopes

By Willow Whitelaw '26

- Aries**  
(March 20-April 19)  
This is your sign.
- Taurus**  
(April 20-May 20)  
Taking risks is good, to a point.
- Gemini**  
(May 21-June 20)  
Hang in there.
- Cancer**  
(June 21-July 22)  
You need a vacation.
- Leo**  
(July 23-August 22)  
Slow down and enjoy yourself before things get crazy.
- Virgo**  
(August 23-September 22)  
Don't be so dramatic.
- Libra**  
(September 23-October 22)  
Lower your expectations for the people around you.
- Scorpio**  
(October 23-November 21)  
Celebrate yourself!
- Sagittarius**  
(November 22-December 20)  
Stay realistic.
- Capricorn**  
(December 21-January 19)  
Someone misses you.
- Aquarius**  
(January 20-February 17)  
The library is calling your name.
- Pisces**  
(February 18-March 19)  
Love is just around the corner.

## Tic-Tac-Toe

Have any interest in making puzzles for our newspaper? Email thewheatonwire@gmail.com or DM us on Instagram at @wheatonwire.

	X	

## The Wheaton Wire's Publishing Cycle

**1<sup>st</sup> Monday**

PITCHES GIVEN  
6:00-7:00PM  
@THE WIRE'S OFFICE,  
BALFOUR HOOD

article writing ongoing

**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday**

LET'S  
**connect**

@ OPEN HOURS, 5-7PM  
THERE WILL BE PIZZA!

article writing ongoing

**2<sup>nd</sup> Monday**

WEEKLY MEETINGS  
ALSO 6:00-7:00PM  
@THE WIRE'S OFFICE, BALFOUR

DEADLINE

ALL CONTENT DUE  
WEDNESDAY 10:00AM

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday**

6-8PM, OPEN HOURS!!  
MORE PIZZA!!

THE NEWSROOM EXPERIENCE:  
EDITORIAL DISCUSSIONS, WRITING  
STANDARDS, LAYOUT..

ALL EDITED ARTICLES  
DUE FRIDAY 10:00AM

**3<sup>rd</sup> Monday**

so, also 2<sup>nd</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Monday

PITCH MEETING FOR  
NEXT ISSUE!  
SAME PLACE, SAME TIME

NEW PAPER  
**ALERT!**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday**

PAPER SENT FOR  
PRINTING!

**3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday**

NEW PAPER  
CAN BE FOUND  
ACROSS CAMPUS!!

## CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE | COLUMN: World affairs, student stakes

### Managed Realities and Resistance

As Havel observed, individuals need not believe all these mystifications, but they must behave as though they did. They must "live within a lie." People may recognize distortions, even privately reject them, yet continue to accommodate them in practice. The lie does not require conviction; it requires compliance. Over time, this produces a mode of personal survival—one shaped by what Havel described as the "general unwillingness... to sacrifice some material certainties for the sake of spiritual and moral integrity." Individuals retreat inward, relinquishing responsibility for anything beyond their own stability and social peace.

To live in truth today is to reject the retreat into "personal survival", overcoming the fear of isolation or consequence and instead act with a shared sense of responsibility for the informa-

tional commons. Truth-seeking cannot survive as a private virtue practiced in isolation. In today's engineering informational environments, epistemic responsibility must become collective work—maintained, defended, and institutionalized within the communities we inhabit.

The rebellion—living in the truth—must become infrastructural; our resistance must translate into public action in how we build and protect the informational ecosystems around us:

**Third**, Defend Archives: Algorithms thrive on the "now," which is easily manipulated. Truth survives in the "then." Active resistance means aggressively defending and utilizing institutional archives, physical libraries, and independent student journalism. It means bypassing the AI summary to sit with a primary text or a 20-year-old newspaper

microfiche. These are the last remaining informational environments not governed by engagement metrics. (Yes, this is a completely factual, not-so-subtle promotion of The Wheaton Wire.)

**Fourth**, Demand Algorithmic Transparency: As students and future professionals, use your collective leverage to demand that the tools mediating your education—the search engines, the research databases, and the campus AI portals—disclose their "truth-optimization" metrics. Treat "epistemic quality" as a non-negotiable requirement for any technology used in the university. If a system prioritizes persuasiveness over verifiability, it has no place in the pursuit of knowledge.

**Fifth**, Institutionalized Peer-Verification Networks: Individual skepticism is easily overwhelmed, but collective verification is resilient. Students must move verification out of the private sphere and into the public sphere. This means building "peer-audit"

cultures: when sharing information in digital student spaces or research groups, adopt a "Show the Receipts" protocol. If a claim—especially one generated by an AI—cannot be linked to a persistent, non-algorithmic archive, it should be treated as non-existent. We must make the labor of verification a social requirement rather than a personal hobby.

The ultimate resistance is a collective one. By building peer-audit cultures and demanding epistemic transparency from the tools that mediate our education, we transform verification from a personal hobby into a social requirement.

In short, we must act as if we are free, overcoming the fatigue the system relies on, to ensure that the pursuit of knowledge remains an active civic duty rather than a passive consumption of a mechanized lie. Because truth does not defend itself; it survives only where communities are willing to put in the labour to defend it.

## Human & chatbot, *continued from front*

While Wheaton College was tagged in the LinkedIn post, this announcement was not posted to their LinkedIn page. There has not been an official or widespread announcement from Wheaton to the college community.

This lack of transparency has been a source of concern for some students. Audrey Kohl ('28), learned the information through a student organization Discord server, from another student who had seen the LinkedIn announcement.

Kohl also expressed that generative A.I. feels very exploitative, and they object to its use to mimic human relationships and conversations. They said the chatbot can't say, "I love hanging out at Emerson because the vibes were great," because "this chatbot doesn't have their own experience of hanging out at Emerson and talking with their friends."

Alumni also expressed concerns about the use of A.I. in maintaining relationships. Carolyn Pralle '14, said "A.I. inherently cannot "have life and have it abundantly" as our motto states." While she believes that A.I. can have appropriate uses, donor relations is not one of them, and that "the implicit message is, 'we want your money, but we don't

want to actually engage with you.'" Kristin Sundin Brandt '94, said she finds organizations to be too quick to pursue technological solutions in place of human ones, saying "I think it's safe to say a virtual engagement officer, regardless of what we name them, is unlikely to get me to donate in the future."

According to Merrit Crowley, Vice President for College Advancement, the staff of Donor and Alumni Relations remains intact, and there have not been any layoffs as a result of the pilot program with Version2.ai.

Professor of Practice for the Digital Media and Communications Department, Joerg Blumtritt, said that while he understands the concerns that students have, investing in alumni relations can be seen as positive. According to Blumtritt, "embracing new developments and just doing things is also positive. Because in the end, where is the harm done? It's not making any difficult political statements that would be not so easy to roll back."

Additionally, potential donors and alumni can at any point ask to speak to a human and be directed to a member of Wheaton's Advancement team. An addition-

al consideration that Crowley said was important when considering the pilot program was ensuring that alumni would have the ability to opt out of using it to interact with the college. Going forward, the way donors and alumni interact with Sarah of Version2.ai will likely determine what direction the college chooses to go with artificial intelligence.

On February 4th, 2026, Wheaton's Athletic Day of Donors, there was a wave of Instagram advertising from Wheaton's various sports teams. From baseball to artistic swimming, Wheaton sports team leaders made heartfelt appeals towards donors to make additional considerations of generosity. These are students

who can—and are—speaking about their experiences at Wheaton, something that A.I., as Kohl previously pointed out, cannot do.

This pilot program will test whether the charm of Wheaton College can be captured and communicated by A.I., and, whether this will make an impact when it comes to donations.

"Human labor, human creativity, human ingenuity are all elements that excite me about being a part of the Wheaton community. As an alumna who lives far away from campus, I love reading about the research and art and people featured in the Wheaton Magazine," said Pralle.

Hopefully A.I. can increase contributions to Wheaton and keep its unique, human spirit alive.



## Sights and sounds: Super Bowl LX in The Lyons Den

By Jonathan Purvis '29

Where were you for the Super Bowl this year? The New England Patriots made their return to the biggest sporting event of the year after an eight-year absence. The game was a rematch against the Seattle Seahawks, whom they faced in Super Bowl XLIX in 2015, where Malcolm Butler intercepted Russell Wilson at the 1-yard line to seal the win for the Patriots.

Students gathered at watch parties all over campus, including in the Lyons Den, with roughly 30 students in attendance. Most rooted for the Patriots, but there was a small, extremely vocal Seahawks fan presence. There was plenty of pizza and wings, as well as trash talk and banter to go around, and everyone hyped for the game to unfold... at least, for a little while.

To put it simply, it wasn't pretty for Patriots fans by any stretch of the imagination. While the defense did their job to the best of their ability, they couldn't contain Seahawks running back Kenneth Walker III, who ran for 135 yards on 27 carries. Drake Maye and the Patriots offense could not move the ball, at the hands of

the number one scoring defense in the league of the Seahawks, dubbed "The Dark Side." Maye was bullied by them all night, fumbling once and throwing two interceptions. One pick was returned for a touchdown by Seahawks linebacker Uchenna Nwosu, after cornerback Devon Witherspoon popped the ball out of Maye's hands on a pass attempt. Additionally, Maye threw two late touchdown passes to wide receiver Mack Hollins and running back Rhamondre Stevenson, respectively, despite the game already being out of reach. The Seahawks exacted their revenge for the loss twelve years ago, winning this one by a score of 29-13.

Upon asking around, morale in the room wasn't fantastic. "Two-out-of-ten, not feeling great right now," Darwin Karch '29, said partway through the 3rd quarter. At this point in the game, New England had failed to gain a single first down since partway through the first quarter. In stark contrast, Demani Howard '29, a longtime Panthers fan who was pulling for the Seahawks, had a wonderful time. "I wish I put money on them tonight," he insisted.

Yet it wasn't completely doom and gloom for everyone. The

halftime show lifted the spirits of a dull audience (aside from a few) that had witnessed the horrors of the first half. The performance headlined Bad Bunny, a Puerto Rican artist coming off a Grammy win the previous week for Best Album of the Year. The set? Stunning. A live marriage on screen? Unprecedented and heart-warming. Guest appearances by Lady Gaga and others prompted a small sing-along to "Die With a Smile." The halftime show's symbolism of unity, and celebration of culture and diversity, was showcased through the message of love displayed on the jumbotron at the conclusion of the show and the fact that Bad Bunny was the first Super Bowl halftime performer to sing almost entirely in Spanish.

It is worth noting that Turning Point USA, an organization that promotes conservative politics and values, had an opposition to Bad Bunny in the form of an "All-American" halftime show. But this was not shown in the Lyons Den, and was, instead, heckled by students, to cheers and applause.

Along with that, how could one forget the Super Bowl commercials? The Lyons Den provided students with a bingo sheet to keep track of what brands had

aired ads during commercial breaks as a fun way to keep track. Some companies need no introduction to the screen, such as Pepsi, Dunkin', and Budweiser to name a few. However, this year also saw the rise of ads promoting the use of Artificial Intelligence, such as Microsoft Copilot and OpenAI, creator of ChatGPT. This was met to the dismay of those in the room, being expressed by loud "boos."

Despite how the game ended, applause filled the Lyons Den. Perhaps the halftime show had put some smiles on people's faces? Maybe it was in response to a great season for the Patriots? Or perhaps it was for the party itself?

One thing is for sure; Bailey Mulrenan, '28, the Event Assistant for the Lyons Den, noted just how exuberant people were over the course of the evening, and how it made the event more exciting. This reflected all the sights and sounds of the night: the big plays, the bad plays (which were way more prevalent), the halftime show, and so much more. On February 8th, the Lyons Den was filled with enthusiasm and energy from people who could have chosen to go elsewhere, but collected together to turn this event into something special.



Photo by Jonathan Purvis '29  
Juliana Cooper, '27 (left) and Bailey Mulrenan, '28 (right) as the watch party wrapped up.



Photo by Jonathan Purvis '29  
Demani Howard '29 (left) and Josie Richardson '29 (right) at the Lyons Den, watching the second quarter of Super Bowl LX.

# NEW AND ESTABLISHED BANDS GEAR UP FOR BATTLE OF THE BANDS



Photo by Amelia Van-Driesche '29

Drip Dry band members. From left to right: Jaxson Borges '29, Fern Tamagini-O'Donnell '29, Charles Perderson '29, Jonas Radvanyi '29 and Zoe Francois-Drastrup '29.

### By Olivia Saras '29

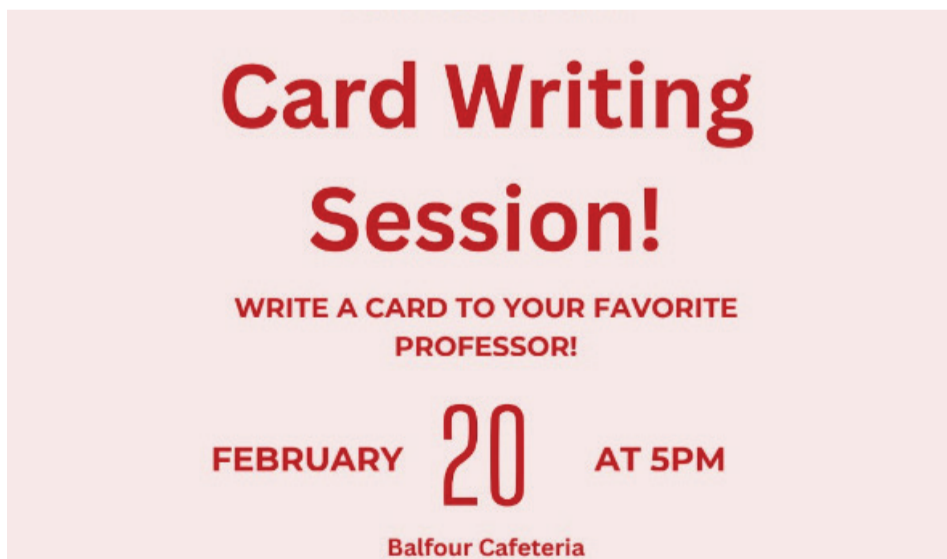
The art community at Wheaton features a diverse and unique mix of student organizations. On-campus student bands hold an influential place in this vibrant scene, spanning well-known senior bands to first-year bands trying to make their mark on campus life. One such newer

band is Drip Dry. Drip Dry plays a distinctive mix of "indie heavy folk progressive alternative" music, as described by its members. When asked why it's important to have on-campus bands here at Wheaton, band members' responses ranged from, "It's fun!" to reflections on how bands form their own communities that then expand

through their audiences. Midnight Melody is another iconic campus band. They play mostly pop and rock music but say that they're open to exploring different genres. When Adriana Gusti '28 was asked about the importance of student bands, she said, "It's important to have student bands because music is an outlet of expression for so

many people." On Feb. 21, these bands will perform in Battle of the Bands at the Lyon's Den. Midnight Melody won the competition last year, but newer groups like Drip Dry are hoping to become this year's breakout stars. The stage is set for a night of standout student talent—don't miss it!

## COMING EVENTS



## Reality Hits Hard

By Tala Bridgeland '28



# Graduation bucketlist (50 things to do before you graduate)

By Moira Sankey '26 and Max Aaronson '26

It has been brought to our attention by Mairi Travis '26 that our current list of 50 things to do before you graduate has become outdated since it was initially published in the summer of 2015 on the Wheaton website. The original criteria was composed of ideas offered by students, staff, faculty members and alumni. The list was presented to incoming students at their summer orientation as a gift and a challenge. Now, we offer our revised version, adapted to fit today's traditions and campus chaos. Many of the original items remain, but we hope you'll have fun checking off both old and new goals we deem to be fulfilling ways to commemorate one's time as a student at Wheaton.

- Jump in Peacock Pond.
- Do an internship or use a Wheaton provided stipend.
- Save your candle from the candlelighting ceremony and float it in Peacock Pond the night before Commencement.
- Attend an a cappella jam.
- Get on a first-name basis with your favorite professor.
- Scream at the top of your lungs in a Watson practice room.
- Go to a performance by one of the dance groups on campus.
- Enter the Chapel through the front doors after your senior Commencement.
- Go sledding in the Dimple (trays and garbage bags available from dining services).
- Have wings at Wendell's.
- Attend a senior pub night.
- Attend the Head of the Peacock Regatta (bonus point if you compete!).
- Take the train to Boston or Providence.
- Have lunch in the Dimple.
- Attend your class dinner.
- Play pool in the Meadows game room.
- Attend a Slype Night.
- Participate in Holi.
- Wish a tour guide a happy birthday when you come across them giving a tour.
- Cheer on one of Wheaton's athletic teams at a home event.
- Attend Moonlight Brunch (bonus point if you get a selfie with the college president).
- Go to Late Night at Emerson.
- Dress up the statue of Hebe.
- Visit the Beard and Weil Galleries in Watson Fine Arts.
- Visit the observatory or greenhouse during an event.
- Race in the Hoop Roll during Senior Week.
- Walk through the Wheaton woods (bonus point if you find red rock).
- Stargaze on a soccer field.
- Snap a selfie with Cowduck and/or the Wheaton geese.
- Introduce yourself to the president (or have dinner at the Presidents' House).
- Vibe out in the Lyons Den during an event.
- Pull an all-nighter in the library during Night Owl Hours.
- Volunteer through a program offered by the Office of Service, CIVIC, or Spirituality and Social Responsibility.
- Support an on-campus band by going to one of their performances and/or buying their merch.
- Sign up for a club at the Student Club & Organization Fair.
- Attend the Holiday Vespers concert (a Wheaton tradition for more than 80 years).
- Jam out at Wheaton Woodstock.
- Listen to WCCS, Wheaton's radio station.
- Have a conversation with a member of the dining hall staff.
- Play a retro video game at the Gaming Station in the Discovery Center.
- Do homework in the "Harry Potter Room."
- Eat Wheaton M&Ms.
- Take a picture with Roary.
- Make a late night (past 10:30 p.m.) run to CVS or Cumberland Farms.
- Rock some Wheaton swag.
- Attend the annual ghost-telling ceremony during orientation.
- Roll across the hallways of the Mars Center for Science and Technology in swivel chairs (preferably at night).
- Watch a theater production.
- Have fun at The BIG Event.
- Sit on the library steps as a senior (and tell underclassmen they can't sit there).



Photo by Max Aaronson '26

Geese float on Peacock Pond.



Photo by Max Aaronson '26

Max Aaronson '26 poses for a selfie with the Wheaton Geese.



Photo by Moira Sankey '26

Max Aaronson '26 gets ready to play pool.



Photo by Moira Sankey '26

Max Aaronson '26 poses with Hebe in the winter weather.