

THE TIDE

THE TIDE RETURNS!

THE TIDE STAFF

Welcome or welcome back to LBHS! Although the last ten months have brought an incomprehensible amount of change, stress, and disorder, we have stayed strong together and overcome the challenges of a global pandemic. This year is unlike

any other, but students have found a sense of normalcy in joining their favorite clubs and practicing with their sports teams. With the New Year behind us, we at *The Tide* hope everyone at LB has an awesome 2021 full of happiness, health, and prosperity. If you want to share your thoughts on anything, send your article to tylcollinson@lbeachg.org. *The Tide* is always looking for new members! If you are interested in joining, join our Google Classroom and log onto the 2021 full of happiness, health, and prosperity. If you want to

INTERVIEWING THE

VALEDICTORIAN & SALUTATORIAN

FREDDY RAMON
STAFF WRITER

Recently, Long Beach High School announced the Class of 2021 valedictorian and salutatorian. Twins Uma and Maya Arengo, respectively, were recognized based on their academic excellence throughout their time at Long Beach. I asked them some questions about their time at LBHS and advice that may pertain to other students.

Q- How would you describe your time here at LBHS?

Uma- For me, every year at LBHS has been so different—in a good way! Each year, I've met new people, studied fascinating subjects, and explored new hobbies. My high school experience has been diverse, which is what I like about it.

Maya- I love being a student at LBHS. All of my teachers have done a great job at teaching their classes and are all wonderful people.

Q- What are some of your favorite experiences that you've had at LBHS?

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INTERVIEWING THE VALEDICTORIAN & SALUTATORIAN (cont'd.)

Uma- All my favorite memories from school occur the day before a long break: holiday recess, winter break, spring break—you name it. It's not any experience in particular I like; I just enjoy spending time with my friends before I get to relax at home for a few days.

Maya- I enjoy watching Class Olympics and seeing my peers win points for our class. I also really liked our IB field trip to the United Nations last year.

Q- Are there any clubs or sports you would recommend others to join?

Uma- The Tide, of course!

Maya- Math club is great because we learn how to use the math skills we learn in class to solve non-traditional math problems. Many of these math problems require thinking outside the box.

Q: What tips do you have for students preparing for the SAT?

Uma- As for any exam, the best tip I have for the SAT is to study old or practice tests. While studying grammar and math rules is important, the time constraints seem to be tough for a lot of students. I recommend taking the time to complete an exam at least once or twice before the real SAT to become familiar with each section.

Maya- Make sure to take a lot of practice tests in advance. When you finish, look at the questions you got wrong. Try to understand why you got these questions wrong and why the correct answer is actually correct. If you actively learn from your mistakes, your SAT score will improve over time as you take more practice tests. I highly recommend Khan Academy for SAT practice questions. The website is free and it tracks your progress.

Q- What does earning this recognition mean to you?

Uma- Being Valedictorian is surreal; it just makes me think of how long I've been at LBHS and how close I am to graduating. It's also humbling to receive recognition for my academic work from the past three years.

Maya- I am very grateful for being the Salutatorian. For me, it is a reminder of my hard work throughout my high school years.

Q- Is there anyone in particular you can attribute some of your success to?

Uma- My parents. Ever since I was young, they instilled the importance of hard work and dedication with school, clubs, and other activities. I didn't understand the importance of work ethic at first, though I do now.

Maya- I can attribute some of my success to my friends. They have pushed me to work hard and study for exams when I was feeling tired. They also helped me understand concepts we learned in school that I found confusing.

Q- How has it been adjusting to online learning?

Uma- Like others, I hadn't expected to do online learning for so long! Back in March, I adjusted well and enjoyed the freedom of being able to follow my own schedule. But as the months continued, I realized that I just wanted to see all my classmates and teachers again. Although this year is not a complete return to normalcy, I'm grateful that I'm able to enjoy the benefits of both in-person and online learning.

Maya- I don't mind online learning in the hybrid model. For me, learning online is the same as learning in-

person. However, I don't think I would enjoy online learning for an extended period of time. I like to physically be in the school building and see my classmates and teachers.

Q: What do you see your future being? Are there any jobs or colleges that you're interested in?

Uma- Honestly, my future career remains a mystery to me. I have some ideas: mathematician, lawyer, economist; it could be any one of those three (or none). Hopefully, I'll figure it out soon! As for colleges, I'm still working on applications, so I just hope I can keep up with all the work.

Maya- I am not sure what I want to pursue. I love learning about all sorts of topics like chemistry, world history, and music. This is why I am interested in attending a liberal arts college. I want to be able to explore all of my academic interests without feeling boxed into a specific program or major. I hope that in college, I'll have a clearer picture of what I want to pursue as a career.

Q- Do you have any last pieces of advice for LBHS students?

Uma- I encourage my peers to consider the bigger picture when achieving their goals throughout high school. Often, success is long-term, so it's important to work equally hard in freshman and sophomore year as it is junior and senior year. With that said, it's also important to not stress about one low test or class grade, as long as your work ethic is consistent. Remember, everything will work out.

Maya- Make sure to manage your time wisely. If you are able to, plan out your weekly schedule to ensure that you will have enough time to finish your homework, attend club meetings, and spend time with your friends.

LBHS WELCOMES NEW TEACHERS

TYLER COLLINSON
SENIOR EDITOR

MRS. PAPETTI

Q: What inspired you to go into education? As a young girl, I knew I wanted to become a teacher. My drive for education lies in my passion for making a difference in the lives of others.

Q: What subject do you teach? I teach math (Geometry & Algebra II)

Q: Where did you go to college? I went to Molloy College for my bachelor's degree and Queens College for my Masters.

Q: What's your favorite movie? *Mrs. Doubtfire*. I can recite every line!

Q: What could you not live without? My dog, Capone!

Q: What do you like most about the district so far? Long Beach is an extremely supportive environment. I love my co-workers, administrators, and students!

Q: What's your favorite sports team? The Mets and the USWNT (United States Women's National Team - Soccer)

Q: What's your favorite food? Pizza.

Q: One random fact about you: I ran 3 marathons (NYC, Disney, & Chicago)

MS. YOUSHA-SPITZ

Q: What subject do you teach? Science

Q: Where did you go to college? SUNY Buffalo

Q: What's your favorite movie and/or novel? *To Kill a Mockingbird* is my favorite book. Movie is a tough one...probably *The Godfather II* or *Jaws*.

Q: What could you not live without? I mean... oxygen?

Q: What do you like most about the district so far? Everyone is really welcoming and supportive.

Q: What's your favorite sports team? Yankees, baby.

Q: What is your favorite food? Pizza all day.

Q: One random fact about you: I'm on a running streak. Haven't missed a day of running in two years.

MR PUCCIO

Q: What inspired you to go into education? I have a passion in helping the future generation of students. In education, it is a field of lifelong learning. I did not realize that until I got to college and had a professor who made me think otherwise.

Q: What subject do you teach? Special Education

Q: Where did you go to college? I went to St. Francis College (Brooklyn Heights)

Q: What's your favorite movie and/or novel? My favorite movie is *A Bronx Tale*, my favorite book(s) are *Can't Hurt Me* by David Goggins & *Shoe Dog* by Phil Knight.

Q: What could you not live without? Coffee

Q: What do you like most about the district so far? Everyone in the building has been so nice and welcoming!

Q: What's your favorite sports team? New York Rangers / New York Yankees

Q: What is your favorite food? This is tough! I am a BIG foodie. I love my desserts, but all around I do love Italian food. I'll go with Veal Parmigiana.

Q: One random fact about you: I love to stay active and learn new things.

**CONTINUED
ON PAGE 4...**

LBHS WELCOMES NEW TEACHERS (cont'd.)

MR. YAZAK

MS. REYNECKI

Q: What inspired you to go into education? Sharing has always been in my nature as well as a love for the Earth and science. I figured nothing would make me happier than to spend my life sharing the science of earth with others.

Q: What subject do you teach? Earth Science and Sports Medicine

Q: Where did you go to college? Stony Brook University

Q: What's your favorite movie and/or novel? Movie - *Blade Runner*; Novel - *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury

Q: What could you not live without? My surfboards

Q: What do you like most about the district so far? I really like how strong the community is. It seems like everyone wants to support each other and be around to help. It really feels great.

Q: What's your favorite sports team? New York Islanders

Q: What's your favorite food? Steak burritos

Q: One random fact about you: I build motorcycles.

Q: What inspired you to go into education? The meaningful interactions I have had with teachers. I look forward to the time I get to learn with my students and from my students.

Q: What subject do you teach? English.

Q: Where did you go to college? I attended Binghamton University for my undergraduate degree and received my Masters from Teachers College.

Q: What's your favorite novel? Too hard! I have a different favorite novel for my different moods. Some favorites are *Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris, *Someone* by Alice McDermott and *The Argonauts* by Maggie Nelson.

Q: What could you not live without? Books and bookstores. I try to visit a bookstore in every country I visit.

Q: What do you like most about the district so far? The students!! I admire their resilience and dedication to learn this year.

Q: What's your favorite sports team? The Mighty Ducks.

Q: What's your favorite food? I could eat mango with every meal.

Q: One random fact about you: I went to Long Beach High School!!

2021

JHANA PRUE
CONTRIBUTING CARTOONIST



LBHS

LBHS CONGRATULATES AN AWARD-WINNING ARTIST

TYLER COLLINSON
SENIOR EDITOR

Long Beach High School senior Robin Xiao was one of twenty students to receive a 2020 Award of Merit from the Long Island Arts Alliance. After being nominated by the high school, his portfolio was judged by panels of artists and educators across Long Island.

Robin's artistic process is one of experimentation and self-reflection, he explains. "Every one of my pieces is a journey. My pieces always begin from a spark of inspiration from other artists or my own life. Personally, I paint a lot of portraits, so I love painting the face and the skin tones. The face is always the first thing I paint and it marks the beginning of every piece. At the end of each

piece, not only is the journey complete, but the story or the message of the piece is as well."

For new, young artists, Robin



offers some laconic advice: take risks. "In art, failures are not really failures but rather learning opportunities that allow you to improve your own work and make new discoveries." As he explains, there is no 'wrong an-

swer' in art and the best way to improve is to experiment and try new techniques. He also suggests students take advantage of Long Beach's diverse and comprehensive art program. "Long Beach offers so many different art classes from Ceramics to Drawing and Painting to Photography. All of these classes let students and aspiring artists express their creative side. Additionally, there are so many opportunities throughout the year to enter competitions and engage with the best local artists."

After graduating from Long Beach this spring, Robin intends on continuing to college to study architecture, which combines both his love of math and his artistic talent. *The Tide* congratulates Robin for his award!

HOW ONE LBHS STUDENT IS PROTECTING OUR ECOSYSTEMS

RIO ARENGO
STAFF WRITER

In the Science Research class at LBHS, students participate in months-long projects that aim to discover new aspects of nature. Students in every grade have the option to take the class, and several students take part in projects that span multiple years.

One project is that of Freddy Ramon, a junior. He wanted to do this project because he saw that there needed to be a massive effort to restore oceanic ecosystems, after

years of man-made damage to marine life. He saw the efforts of a non-profit, GreenWave, that aims to use seaweed and shellfish to generate blue carbon, which is removed from the atmosphere by ocean plants. Freddy wanted to see if kelp can also create blue carbon.

After growing the kelp in a controlled environment from November to March, they are harvested. The kelp will then be sent to a Cornell lab to find its carbon/nitrogen ratio, metal analysis, absorbed nutrients, and biomass.

When asked about the real

world implications of his project, Freddy said, "Kelp can restore ocean ecosystems by capturing carbon and nitrogen, and it also has potential to be used as food, fertilizer, or animal food." He also mentioned the contribution kelp can potentially reduce the effects of global warming, a desperately needed measure.

The work at Science Research can save many lives, as students are constantly discovering new solutions to harmful problems. If you want to take that class next year, contact your guidance counselor or Mr. Onufrock.

QUARANTINE MEMORIES

TYLER COLLINSON
SENIOR EDITOR

Although the last six months have been wildly unpredictable and unprecedented, people around the country have tried to view the lockdown in a positive light. For many, myself included, the newfound free time was a chance to explore new nonacademic interests and develop old ones. Over the last few weeks, I've surveyed Long Beach students about their experiences during the quarantine.

When asked if they had explored new hobbies over the last few months, the answer was a resounding yes, with 78.6% of students saying they had. These interests varied from instruments to sports to meditation; several students said they took the time to snuggle up with a good book whereas others said they rolled out

the exercise mat for some cardio. Some students explained how they used the free time this spring for self-reflection, learning about themselves in the process, while others used the time to bond with their families. Senior Grace said her favorite part of quarantine was the hilarious trends on the video-sharing app TikTok. Freshman Chazz Joseph, who began playing ukulele this spring, found a bit of humor in his experience: both his favorite and least favorite things about quarantine were "getting the 'rona."

Despite our optimism, there were still plenty of things to lament. The majority of surveyed students cited having to stay home and be isolated from their friends, extended family, and even strangers as the

cause of much of their stress. For others, keeping up with schoolwork while virtual became increasingly difficult, and many harbored the fear of missing out on their high school years. As senior Tara Sheridan explained, "It was really the simple things like going out to dinner or getting my nails done or even going to school that made quarantine difficult."

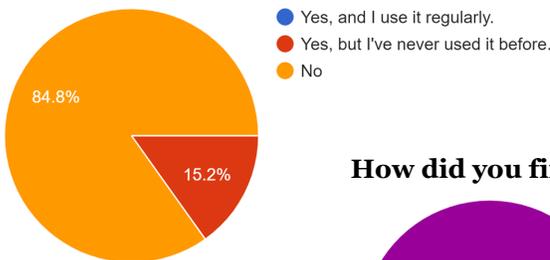
As the school year progresses, we can hope that the current Covid-19 situation does, as well. For the safety and well-being of others, please ensure you wear your mask appropriately and follow social distancing guidelines as stated by the CDC and WHO. Together, we can stop Covid-19 from spreading further and hopefully return to normal soon.

SURVEYING THE STUDENTS: CLASSLINK

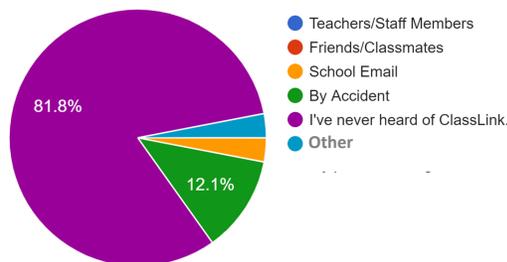
UMA ARENGO
SENIOR EDITOR

Each issue, The Tide surveys LBHS students to gain their perspective on a number of schoolwide topics. This quarter, we asked a sample of 33 students about ClassLink. Here's what they had to say:

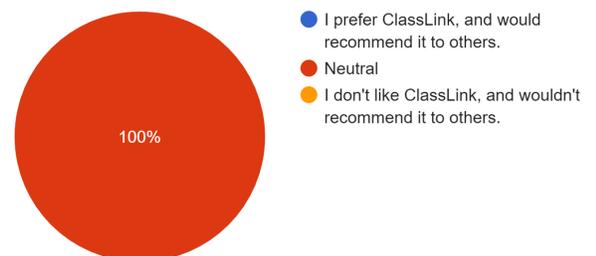
Do you know what ClassLink is?



How did you find out about ClassLink?



If you use or have used ClassLink, what are your thoughts?



BLOCKBUSTER DELAYS

JORDAN COLLINSON
STAFF WRITER

As we all know, there have been a lot of changes this year as a result of the ongoing pandemic. Included in these changes was the delay of many upcoming films.

Disney's *Mulan* (2020) was originally meant to air on March 27th, early into the pandemic. A live action remake of the 1998 animated musical of the same name, the film tells the story of a young woman who poses as a man in an attempt to save her father from serving in the Imperial Army. It was released on September 4th to Disney's streaming service, Disney+, and you can watch it now for a premium fee.

Bill and Ted Face the Music, the third film in Stephen Herek's *Bill and Ted* series, follows the titular best friends who need to write a song to save life as we know it. Rather than writing this song, they decide to travel to the future to steal a song from their older selves. Initially set to release on

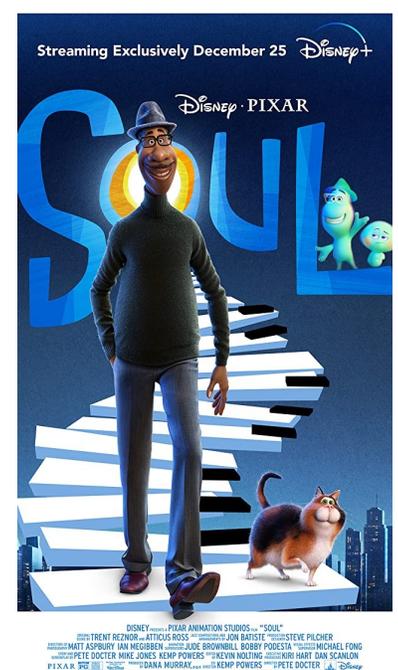
August 21st, this film did not get postponed and premiered as scheduled, although theaters showing it had to follow Covid-19 protocol.

The release of *Wonder Woman 1984* has been pushed back multiple months, from its previous release date on August 13th to its current premiere date on December 25th. In this movie, a sequel to 2017's original Wonder Woman movie, Wonder Woman finds herself facing off against two villains, The Cheetah and Max Lord. It will be the ninth installment of the DC Extended Universe.

Disney Pixar's *Soul* will be available to stream on Disney+ at no extra cost on December 25th; its initial release date was June 19th. In this movie, a band teacher, Joe, loses sight of his true passion, jazz. When he travels to another realm to help someone find their own passion, Joe begins to find himself again. *Soul* has been critically acclaimed on Metacritic and

Rotten Tomatoes following its press premiere on October 11th.

As the thirteenth and final installment of the *X-Men* movie series, *The New Mutants* was initially scheduled to release in April 2018, but following several delays it was rescheduled to April 3rd, 2020, and was subsequently rescheduled again due to the pandemic. This film follows five teenage mutants who are held at an institution attempting to cure their dangerous powers with different treatments. As they look back on their experiences, the teens question why they were really being held and if someone is trying to destroy them. *The New Mutants* premiered on August 28th and is available on to stream on Amazon Prime.



SPORTS

SPORTS CONDITIONING AT LBHS

FREDDY RAMON
STAFF WRITER

Starting on September 29th, Long Beach High School kicked off its fall workout. This program was open to all students, and no commitment to the team was necessary. There were a large variety of sports for students to choose from: boys badminton, cross country, football, volleyball,

soccer, cheerleading, girls tennis, girls swimming, and for the first time ever, girls field hockey. It was a great experience for those involved as they finally got to return to their respective sports and a sense of normalcy. For many, this program was the first time they were able to go out on the field, gym, or indoor courts, and practice. During this period athletes focused on key skills related to their sports like

agility, speed, and balance. Additionally, Long Beach made sure to follow Covid-19 protocol; all participants had to socially distance and wear a mask. Overall, this conditioning program was a great success and students were happy to return to sports. These athletes can hopefully look forward to a fall sports season that will begin on March 1st of next year.



THE FUTURE OF THE PARTIES

BENJAMIN ARMUS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

** Originally written on 11/15/20*

Two months after the 2020 presidential election, Biden has declared victory and begun compiling a cabinet. But the man he unseated, Donald Trump, has not conceded yet. Trump plans on challenging the results of key states in court. President Trump's odds of winning are nearly zero as he would need two states to flip from Biden, and hundreds of thousands of instances of electoral fraud: numbers that are unprecedented in the history of democracy. So, this article will examine the future of America's political parties with Joseph R. Biden as the next President of the United States.

The Democratic Party:

The Democrats may have won the White House, but with disappointing showings in the House and Senate elections, the party is all but united right now. Since around 2016, a new, different political animal has made its way into the Democratic party: the progressive, also known as the "democratic socialist." Since Bernie Sanders sent waves through the party with his influential 2016 run, 97 members of Congress have started describing themselves as progressives. These people tend to believe in a more heavily regulated market, raised minimum wage, universal healthcare, and direct democracy. They also tend to critique capitalism more than any other major players in American politics. This puts them directly at odds with the historical core of Andrew Jackson's party, which has been a pro-capitalist party

for all of its history.

The democratic primary showcased how dissimilar the two opposing ideologies are. Bernie Sanders looked poised to win in an open field primary, and was only defeated when every other candidate dropped out to support Joe Biden. Though Biden had the support of these left wing democrats, it was only very reluctantly, with social media pages like @SettleforBiden on Instagram gathering nearly 300,000 followers on Instagram. It's sure that we will see vehement resistance to any attempts by the Biden/Harris Administration to legislate moderate economic policy or work with the GOP on issues that matter to the left wing of the party.

There has also been much speculation about the 2022 midterms, and how Democrats can maintain their House majority. Dems lost thirteen seats in the House this year, nearly losing their majority and certainly creating a panic amongst House leadership. 2024 also poses a conundrum for the party, as Biden will be 81 and has signaled his role as a one term president fairly clearly. Harris is the most likely replacement candidate, but she's already gotten flak from the left wing of the party for her prosecutorial record and could face a strong primary from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or someone else on the left of the party. The future the Democrats face is all but certain.

The Republican Party:

Though some Republicans seem to be holding onto hope that Trump can pull through, it seems that most of the party has realized that Trump will not reach the 270 mark, and the party

needs to begin its restructuring. In some ways, the 2020 election results were very promising for the GOP. Republican candidates overperformed across the board, gaining thirteen House seats and maintaining a shaky Senate majority (depending on the Georgia runoff elections). They also did well with Hispanic voters, a demographic that is key to future success for the Republican party. Still, the party faces the same major internal problems as the Democrats.

With his 2016 win, Donald Trump tapped into something in the Republican psyche that was tired of mainstream candidates, and desired someone who wasn't scared to say what is on his mind, even if it was severely to his detriment. Even as a lame duck, Trump maintains a loyal following within the party, that will no doubt want an 'America First' candidate in 2024, and will attack any moderate as a "RINO" (i.e. Republican in name only). If the GOP can unite, though, they'll be a force to be reckoned with in the 2022 midterms, likely winning the House and grabbing some Senate seats as well.

Some likely nominees for 2024 are Trump (who wouldn't be the first President to serve non-consecutive terms), Nikki Haley, Josh Hawley, Mike Pence, Tim Scott, Marco Rubio, or Tom Cotton, though the Republicans have no shortage of young elected officials, so you can expect to see any number of dark horse candidates. Regardless of who they choose, the legacy of Trump will loom large in the memory of the Grand Old Party, and it's unclear how ready they are to move past him.

HOPEFUL NEWS FROM 2020

UMA ARENGO
SENIOR EDITOR

As we begin the new year, many are all too eager to leave 2020 in the past. After all, who could blame us? But amid the uncertainty and hardship we've faced, last year also brought some good news, in the fields of science, medicine, civic engagement, and more. Here are a few events and advancements from the 2020 to give everyone hope for this coming year, and perhaps make us think twice about completely disregarding the past year.

- Several nations pledged to eliminate or drastically reduce carbon emissions in the next few decades. Argentina, South Korea, and Japan committed to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, while China committed

to the same goal by 2060. Furthermore, the UK and EU pledged to reduce emissions by 68% and by 55% in the next decade.

- In August of 2020, the World Health Organization announced that wild poliovirus has been eradicated in Africa. None of the 47 countries in the WHO's Africa region has reported cases of the disease in the past three years, thanks to extensive immunization and other medical initiatives. While other strains of the virus still persist (a notable strain being vaccine-driven polio recorded in over 20 African countries), the elimination of wild poliovirus in Africa is a step towards the full-scale eradication of polio we hope to see in the future.

- The 2020 U.S. presidential election

saw the largest voter turnout in over a century, with a total of over 150 million ballots being recorded, despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Regardless of the outcome of the election, large-scale voter participation is certainly something to celebrate.

- Lastly, the Covid-19 vaccines. Several have been developed across the world, though the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are the only ones to be authorized for emergency use in the U.S. by the FDA. The revolutionary mRNA technology used in these two vaccines will be able to accelerate the development of immunizations for future pandemics. While the majority of the population has yet to receive their dose, many remain hopeful that 2021 will bring a large-scale vaccination initiative to end the Covid-19 pandemic.

WHAT TWO LBHS GRADUATES HAVE LEARNED

Hannah Lilly and Anna Xiao are two recent LBHS graduates attending Macauley Honors College and Northwestern University, respectively. When we asked them about how their high school experience has helped them in college, here's what they had to say:

HANNAH LILLY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

My experience at Long Beach has definitely affected my college experience so far. The classes I took in high school did prepare me for college - most AP, IB, and honors courses are about the same difficulty of the classes I am taking now (some are even a bit harder!). While there is more free time in college, there is also a higher workload, which is why learning how to manage time is so important. The time management skills I learned in high school prepared me for college, which I am grateful for because I can effectively plan my time to complete papers and prepare for finals.

ANNA XIAO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As a former IB Diploma Candidate, I can say that the International Baccalaureate Program has prepared me well for the classes I am taking in college. Particularly, the Extended Essay and the individual class Internal Assessments have not only taught me how to write research papers, but have taught me to manage my time better to meet deadlines. Many of the study habits that I have developed at LBHS have helped me study for final exams this fall!

THE TRUTH ABOUT COLLEGE RANKINGSTYLER COLLINSON
SENIOR EDITOR

Each August, parents, students, and administrators alike gather around the computer to check US News and World Reports' annual college rankings. I always laughed it off, taking a moment to guess how negligibly the top ten schools would shuffle. After all, whether Harvard ranked number one or two was irrelevant, right? Or maybe not. As I learned this summer, for some, this system has become the infallible decider of where to apply and what to major in.

On r/A2C, the college admissions subforum on Reddit.com, students around the country gossiped over the 2021 rankings as they were released: first, from US News, then Wall Street Journal, then Niche. When it was announced that Yale had lost its third-place spot, the forum erupted with posts by high school seniors, claiming they would no longer be applying early to Yale in favor of the new third-place school, Columbia. And although the antics of a few overachieving high schoolers aren't representative of everyone, I think the general sentiment towards US News remains the same.

One of the most flawed aspects of the college ranking system is its algorithm. What defines a good school? One would think quality of education and student life, both on campus and post-graduation, but US News' priorities lie elsewhere. Their most significant metrics for the algorithm are the college's six-year graduation rate, which is worth 17.6% of the overall score, and a "peer assessment survey," worth 20%. This sur-

vey, which asks administrators at colleges around the country what they think of a specific school, turns the ranking into a prestige-based popularity contest; after all, what does the provost at Clemson University know about the academics at Virginia Tech aside from generalizations and its reputation? Such a system also hurts smaller, less-known schools that could be perfectly adept and yet are bumped down in the rankings for not being prestigious enough. Although prestige does affect alumni outcomes, it shouldn't be the most significant metric on a college ranking list, nor should it be the sole reason you choose a school.

US News' ranking system always opens opportunities for universities to "game" the algorithm. According to *The College Solution*, twenty years ago, Northeastern University was a low-ranked commuter school, practically unheard of outside of Boston. In recent years, Northeastern has climbed over 120 spots to its current seat as 49th and attracts extremely competitive applicants from around the country. This isn't to say Northeastern is a bad school by any means; however, it did crack the US News code to boost its ranking. Colleges do this by focusing on significant aspects of the ranking formula and putting their resources into raising that specific metric, which can harm students in the long term. More maliciously, however, some universities blatantly fabricate their admissions data to raise their score: notable schools that have been caught lying include Claremont McKenna, U.S. Naval Academy, Baylor University, and

Emory University.

As an example, George Washington University artificially increased its ranking by increasing its applicant pool, which allowed it to drastically decrease its acceptance rate. When US News considered acceptance rate as part of their selectivity algorithm (which, to their credit, is no longer considered), schools would look to attract more applicants, specifically unqualified ones which they could reject, to spike to rejection rate and make a school seem more selective. Over the course of thirty years, GW increased its tuition from \$14,000 to \$39,000 and used the excess money to give the campus a preppy makeover. This made the school seem more Ivy-esque and thus prestigious, which attracted new applicants, raised the average SAT score, and in the end boosted GW's ranking from nonexistent to 66th. At first glance, these campus changes may seem like improvements, but the increased tuition only perpetuates a culture of student debt.

Another thing worth mentioning is how universities use manipulative marketing tactics to increase their applicant pool. After buying a student's information from the College Board, the college will send dozens of junk emails. For some students, this information is helpful, but for other, less competitive students, it gives them the illusion that they have a chance of admission at extremely selective colleges. The colleges instantly reject these applicants, which lowers the acceptance rate and increases their

EDITORIAL

THE TRUTH ABOUT COLLEGE RANKINGS (cont'd.)

prestige. The rejection, however, wastes students' time and resources and affects their mental health.

Increasing tuition to unfathomable rates also creates a system in which the wealthy are favored. Lower- and middle-class families could never afford a school that costs half of their annual income, and for many disadvantaged students, going into debt at such a young age isn't feasible, so opportunities for social mobility are greatly limited. Similarly, schools that use merit scholarships to entice more qualified applicants to join have less money from their endowment to spend on need-based financial aid for low-income students. There is also a correlation between household income and standardized test scores, due mostly to the college-prep resources and better educations offered to the affluent, so when the average SAT score of an institution is artificially increased, it again limits the number of low-income students being accepted or even applying in the first place.

But more importantly, obsessing over college rankings ignores the more personal aspect of the college search process: where you feel as if you belong. Each school is different, and for each individual, there are dozens of factors to consider, ones US News could never rank objectively, such as varying campus vibes, locations, and sizes; specific majors, specialty programs, and resources; affordability and financial aid.

So how should students approach their college research without rankings? For starters, you don't necessarily have to eliminate rankings from the process. However, rather than centering your research on them, think about what you're looking for in a college, and from there, funnel your research into rankings. Do you want the best bang for your buck? Look at lists of Best Value Colleges, which are often based on tuition and average starting salary or debt. If you are already sure of your career or major choice, research rankings for col-

leges with those programs. To get an understanding of the student experience, talk to people from the colleges you are interested, whether you converse on a tour, online, or with a friend who goes there. If you spend the next four years at a single college, you want to ensure you will enjoy your time there.

When I began my college search process this summer, I too fretted over rankings and arbitrary numbers. And I don't blame myself: that's what we've been told to focus on for practically our entire lives. But as you approach your college search process this upcoming year, I hope you keep my own experience in mind. Find where you fit, where you can imagine yourself living for four years, where the students share your values and passions. This is your journey; don't let some overhyped listicle interfere. After all, whether a university is ranked 1 or 17 or 168, an arbitrary number doesn't define your college experience—you do.



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