

THE MAST

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Concierge shuts down and services relocate

Brennan LaBrie
News Editor

The concierge desk, the one-stop-shop for Pacific Lutheran University students for questions and services ranging from ID cards to directions, is gone. Earlier this month, the desk was cleaned out and shrouded in black curtains as it was dismantled. Within days, the space was filled with tables and chairs meant for eating, studying and lounging. The services offered by the concierge desk have been relocated across campus departments, PLU's website and a brand-new app designed for student use.

PLU faculty hopes this move will increase student services while making those already in place more convenient and accessible for students.

"The concierge is a concept that has run its course," said Valerie Seeley, Assistant Director for Business Operations. "This is much more efficient with more services for students."

While this move may have seemed sudden to many students, it has been long in the works. The catalyst for this change came about in the summer of 2018, when PLU partnered with GET Mobile to create an app aimed at students. It would offer many of concierge's services, as well as new ones such as food and drink or-

ders and ID photo submission. After numerous schedule pushbacks, the app was rolled out in January, with its team hoping to work out any kinks before the start of spring semester.

Administration also realized that many of the concierge's services were offered by members of other departments and that this new system could be more efficient.

Seeley adds her department saw the reimagining of concierge's role at PLU as a way to cut down their budget and offer new services for students, while also envisioning a better use of the concierge desk's space as a lounge and study space that wouldn't be roped off during events.

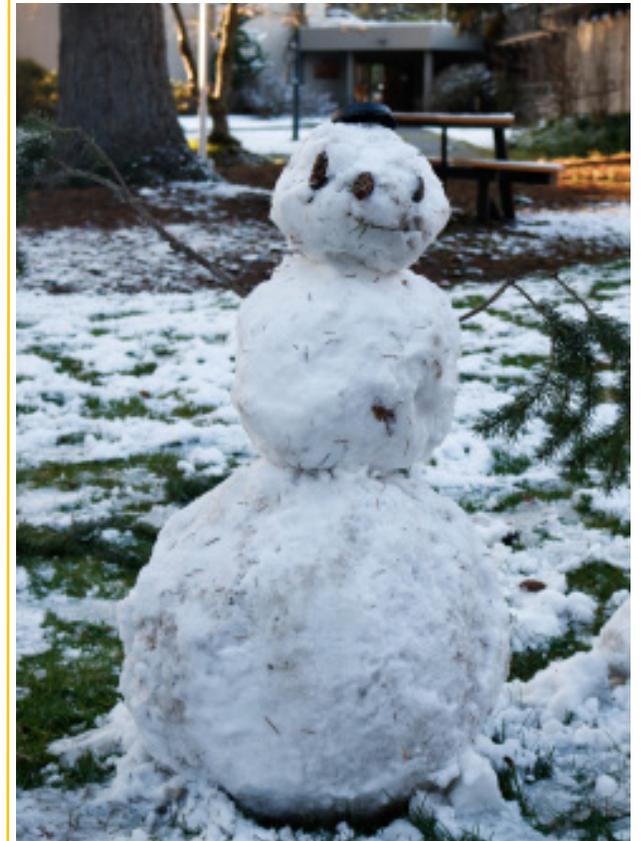
All student worker positions with the concierge were cut, including three students who will be returning to PLU next year and must apply for other jobs.

"We realized we can save the budget and the space at the same time," Seeley said, emphasizing that the goal of creating a more efficient system for students and increasing the pre-existing services outweighed any budgetary concerns.

"If GET wasn't a piece of it, it wouldn't have happened because it wouldn't have enhanced the services that we already had," said Director of Retail Services Josh Girus.

See *Concierge* page 3

Snow falls on PLU



A snowman stands in the lawn of Ordal Hall with Ingram Hall in the background. PLU received a couple inches of snow during the night of January 14, but it was only enough to get classes delayed until 10am that day. *Photo by Sheridan Moore.*

Innovation and Change Committee seeks student ideas

Raven Lirio
Copy Editor

Back in fall semester, Pacific Lutheran University president Allan Belton established the Presidential Commission for Innovation and Change. It is seeking bold and innovative ideas to suggest to both the President and Provost for the future of the university.

"The Commission is charged to source, develop, and bring new ideas forward, make recommendations to the President and Provost, and assist in the coordination and implementation of approved concepts that result in revenue generation and or expense savings," said Cameron Bennett, Dean of the School of Arts and Communication.

The Commission aims to find ideas that will lead to meaningful and long-term cost savings.

"It is designed to move PLU forward and help make our institution thrive for years to come as we continue to make an important impact on

higher education in the Pacific Northwest," Bennett said.

It is currently reviewing over 200 submitted ideas from faculty, staff and students for review.

"We encourage individuals to think within their department and division, but also to think about ideas for innovation and change in other parts of the university," Bennett said. "Allow themselves to step outside the lane or box that we sometimes place ourselves in."

The current timeline for the Commission can be found on their website, which is ePass protected. Ideas can be submitted to their "Call for Ideas" form. Students are encouraged to submit suggestions to their form but can also reach out to any of the Commission members for input and ideas.

"By early February we will have filtered and categorized ideas," Bennett said. "A select number will be determined to move forward for further consideration and review. By the end of May, we will present to the President and Provost ideas that we recommend for which PLU moves forward." Bennett said.

More information can be found, and ideas submitted, at <https://www.plu.edu/innovation-change>.

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To contact, email mast@plu.edu.

NEWS

Kombucha, kefir water and cold brew on tap at OMM

Brennan LaBrie

News Editor

PLU students and staff are now able to pour their own drinks at the Old Main Market if they wish. In addition to the many options offered by OMM's baristas, five taps now sit at the customer's disposal within the store; two for cold brew coffee, two for kombucha, and one for kefir water, a little-known relative to kombucha.

Students can fill up their own cups or bottles at the taps, or buy one of the glass mugs, pints or growlers (liter jugs) for sale with their dining dollars or LuteBucks.

The idea for the machines came from Erin McGinnis, Associate Vice President for Hospitality and Retail Services Dining and Culinary Services, who had seen a similar machine at another Washington university and thought it would fit PLU perfectly.

Cold-brew coffee and bottled kombucha are popular sellers amongst students, and Director of Retail Services Josh Girus saw offering these items in bulk as a perfect way to "enhance the student experience." In addition, the self-filling taps serve as part of OMM's goal to become more sustainable.

The machines are stocked with cold brew from Dillanos Coffee Roasters, PLU's coffee partner based out of Sumner, WA, and kombucha and kefir water from Rainbow Cloud Kombucha in Olympia. They were installed during Dead Week in December, and despite the cold weather since then, have performed quite well according to OMM employees.

"In the beginning we had a really strong push," Girus said. "We were going through probably a keg of cold brew every three days, which is pretty good."

The kombucha went slower, with one keg being emptied every two weeks, something Girus attributes to it being a less popular beverage than coffee. He expects its performance to improve once much of the students and faculty return to campus in the Spring.

Kombucha is a fermented, bubbly sweet tea with a small alcohol content that likely originated in Manchuria, and grew popular in the U.S. in the 1990's, in large part due to the health benefits associated with it. Kefir water is also a sparkling probiotic drink made from kefir culture. It is gluten, dairy and caffeine-free.



Dillanos Cold Brew and Oak Barrel Kombucha are now available for student purchase along the back wall of OMM. *Photo by Sheridan Moore.*

OMM Location Manager Erika Hoagland said that the lesser-known kefir water hasn't performed at the levels of the coffee or kombucha, but that those who have tried it have loved it.

"I think if more people knew what it was, it would be more popular," she said.

Girus himself was not familiar with kefir water when Rainbow Cloud's owner offered it as an alternative to their kombucha, but it has since become his "go-to" drink at the store.

"It's a great alternative way for people to get into it," he said. "I kind of explain it as kombucha light. It has the same flavor profile, it's just not as in your face about it."

Girus said that student and faculty feedback has been really positive, with the blackberry jasmine flavor being the clear favorite, and that many people have asked for them to expand the flavors offered. In response, OMM plans to introduce Rainbow Cloud's rose and passion fruit kombucha flavors as well as their ginger beer, cycling through these along with the current flavors.

What is the GET App?

Kiyomi Kishaba
Opinion Editor

Breaking news: PLU students can now view and edit dining dollars and meal plans without having to talk to real people! All you have to do is download the Get Mobile app onto your smart device; yet another way phones can decrease face-to-face interaction.

Back when I lived off a meal plan, we had to ask the worker who swiped our cards for the dining dollar balance, and then peer at the black and yellow chart displaying where our dining dollar balance should be based on where we were in the semester. So rudimentary.

Usually I either forgot to ask or simply wasn't in the mood to initiate human interaction, so I just continued swiping on blind faith, which is probably why I ended up with nine-hundred dollars in the last month of

freshman year, and 60 dollars after spring break of sophomore year. I went from dining-dollar daddy to dining-dollar broke.

Speaking of dining-dollar daddies, the app can send a link allowing the recipient to make a direct payment to your account. Send it to grandparents, other family members, rich friends, or sugar daddies; your account will never be empty.

However, it is challenging to use your dining dollars if you no longer have a Lute card. I can proudly say I have never lost my Lute card, but I know many of you out there cannot. Through the app, you can deactivate Lute cards so no one steals those precious dining dollars. You can also, and I just learned this today, submit a picture for your ID photo! Instead of taking a terrible, sweaty picture on move-in day surrounded by parents and chaos! The future is now, people.

And back in my day, we had to order food from Old Main Market in real time. Yes, that

means wait for our order to be ready, and consequently wander into class late clutching our sausage egg and cheese that took 20 minutes to prepare during rush time. But with this app, you can preorder drinks and breakfast sandwiches (before 10 a.m.) to be prepared and ready for pick up whenever you need it. And coming soon, you can order food and drinks from Kelley Cafe; those math, business, and comp sci kids may be cooped up in Morken but at least they'll have coffee. Rushing from class to class, from the gym to work, or from your cozy dorm back to your cozy dorm just got a lot easier.

So, all you Lutes out there on a meal plan or sick of walking through puddles, I highly recommend this Get Mobile app. As spring semester surges upon us and chaos ensues once again, ease your mind by easily tracking your source of nourishment. Your grades on Sakai may never be up to date, but at least your dining dollars will be.

Continued from page 1

Concierge

Although the reallocation of services may seem quite complicated at first, Seeley and Girnus argue that overall, this move will make students' lives easier.

Girnus highlighted the convenience of students' ability to make payments to their accounts at all hours of the day on the app, or during Old Main Market's (OMM) long business hours, as opposed to the limited hours of the concierge. Now, students can refill their printing points, for example, from the comfort of their chair in the library, and pay their parking ticket within 24 hours for a 50% discount without having to physically go to the desk.

Much of concierge's former services are offered by the Hospitality Services Office, the Business Operations Office and OMM, all of which sit just feet away from the former desk. Seeley noted that Hospitality Services already fielded much of the general questions that the concierge desk took, and so its staff is well-equipped to take on the full load of questions.

Seeley said that the first week of the transition was difficult, but that the second week was much smoother. "It's progressively getting better," she said, a sentiment shared by Girnus.

OMM workers are currently learning how to add dollars to student accounts and process the food and drink orders offered by the GET App. This hasn't been too much of a problem, said OMM Location Manager Erika Hoagland, crediting the smaller crowds of J-Term for the grace adjustment period.

"People are still getting used to the change. But I feel that as it continues it's gonna get really easy," she said.

Hoagland is pleased that the new services offered by OMM are creating more opportunities for students to come to the store. She believes OMM's centralized location makes it a perfect place to offer services for students other than food-and-drink-related ones.

The GET App can be downloaded on the Apple store, the Google Play store, or accessed online at: get.cbord.com/plu.



Seated at the newly renovated concierge space, Kiyomi Kishaba '21 reads the December Mast. Photo by Brennan LaBrie.

PLU student screens self-made documentary for campus community

Raven Lirio
Copy Editor

This past Jan 15 and 16, the Associated Students of Pacific Lutheran University hosted a showing of the student-led racial justice documentary For the Culture, filmed and produced by first year Cece Chan. The event included the documentary showing as well as talks from keynote speakers Tracy Castro-Gill and Jesse Hagopian.

The documentary itself was made by Chan while still in high school in an effort to raise awareness about ethnic studies in the Seattle School District.

"I made the documentary because I don't want students, especially students of color to have to work so hard to know that their culture and identities matter in the classroom," Chan said. "I made it to bring awareness to our current Eurocentric curriculum and how it's damaging the academic engagement, achievement and overall confidence of students of color."

See *Documentary* page 3

Current available positions:

- Reporter
- Photographer
- Online Editor
- Copy Editor
- Graphic Designer
- Social Media Editor
- Advertising Manager

Student media gradually moves to lower campus

Hannah Montgomery
Editor-in-Chief

Student media continues to relocate to the Martin J. Neeb Center on lower campus and the next organization to make a fresh start is the Lute Air Student Radio (LASR). The new location offers a larger space for media outlets, especially LASR, to expand their opportunities for learning, growth, and creativity.

The first floor suite in Neeb is dedicated entirely to student media and both The Mast and MediaLab have moved to the space. Each outlet has a cubicle space with computers for students to work and meet.

Neeb used to house KPLU, which aired jazz, blues, and the local affiliate for National Public Radio (NPR). The station lost funding from PLU and in August of 2016, it became independently licensed and changed its name from KPLU to KNKX.

This upgrade in both space and technical equipment allows LASR to make improved programming and podcasts for the station, said LASR General Manager Ian Lindhartsen '20.

"The radio facilities in Neeb are already an improvement to our current set up," he said. "Most of the technical work is actually in downsizing the system to meet our needs as an internet radio station. To make it suitable for LASR, we get to use most of the same equipment, but there has been a lot of rewiring to do."

The broadcasting and recording space provides opportunities for students to expand their skills and try new things, he said. The live studio offers the possibility for artists and bands to perform live. Multiple microphones and increased space in the podcast studio allows for larger group discussions with guests in the future.

LASR's move from the lower Anderson University Center (AUC) to Neeb is bittersweet for LASR staff and DJs.

"The only downside and this comes with any move, is leaving a space that has felt like home for a number of years. The personality in that studio is unlike any other space on campus," Lindhartsen said. "It's obvious that this move is perhaps one of the best things to happen to LASR in years considering the possibilities that come with the quality and utility of this new space."



The Martin J. Neeb Center offers a larger space for student media organizations to work and meet. Located in the first floor suite, the new offices and studios available to students allow for better collaboration and communication. "One of the big benefits is the live-studio room that we'll be able to use to bring in live band and possibly collaborate on programming with Mast TV with," LASR General Manager Ian Lindhartsen said. *Photo by Sheridan Moore.*

Continued from page 3

Documentary

Students filled multiple rows in Ingram 100 to watch the short film, which contained interviews from teachers, students, community members, educators and even featured an interview with former Seattle Seahawks NFL Star Michael Bennett.

Chan hoped that her documentary would influence educators to hold them accountable for a diverse education.

"I made it so that teachers, staff, administration, and anyone with educational power can understand their calling to improve our education," said Chan. "Events like this are important because nation is becoming more and more divided. We aren't seeing each other for who we are. Racism is very real, especially at PLU."

Chan said that the lack of an ethnic studies class or curriculum at PLU prompted her to screen her film here.

"It also focuses on empowering and understanding your identity. I put this event on to show PLU how in need we are in having our own ethnic studies class or more racial justice centered curriculum," Chan said.

Marnie Richie, assistant professor of Communication, was among those in attendance. She explained that she was invited by Chan to

attend the event to gain a perspective on how mentor students, particularly students of color.

"I was hoping to learn more about how to rhetorically advocate for ethnic studies at PLU, especially explain its vitality for PLU," said Richie. "I believe faculty have a responsibility to reflect on how they value and mentor students of color."

Richie is currently teaching a J-Term course called "Communication, Race and Surveillance," which addresses the issues of surveillance and race in the sphere of communication. In addition to the keynote, there was a panel of students from different majors who spoke about their experience with ethnic studies and its importance in their education. The floor was then opened for questions.

"One takeaway for me is that teachers should show more positive representations of people of color," Richie said. "The student panel illuminated the importance of teachers opening up positive effects and associations."

The event itself was hosted by ASPLU to raise awareness of these kinds of issues present in education, particularly at our university.

"I think too often at PLU students are disengaged with attending racial justice events because they either don't care or don't see how it relates to them," Chan said. "Racial justice and equity is the only way for PLU to be truly

'value diversity'. Racism affects everyone, not just people of color. Topics like racial justice will help every student learn the true value and understanding for one another."

The talks on both nights were well received by the audience, with lots of snaps and cheers of encouragement. There were many instances when students would actively engage with the keynote slides, some voicing their frustration or disgust with how some racial injustices are being introduced into schools.

"We have to stop disregarding injustices because you don't feel affected by it," Chan said. "An education without racial justice is a flawed education."

The documentary itself is not available online, but people interested in seeing or showing the film in class can contact cece.chan@plu.edu. Chan hopes that these kinds of talks will help to bring students a better understanding of one another.

"We have to continue to break down these walls and make bridges," Chan said. "Ethnic studies is about unity within the community. Adding more voices and stories to the table not taking away any. Without ethnic studies, our education isn't telling the full truth. We must improve."

Tips for capitalizing on study away experiences

Gurjot Kang
Reporter

Over the past three months, the city of London was my school and the little West London district of Eastcote was my home.

I remember the first day I arrived in London after a nine-hour flight, back on Sept. 1. When my host family mentioned later that evening that I should get a few warm jumpers for the upcoming fall season, I humorously thought they were referring to overalls, not sweaters. “Jumper” was just one of many British terms I picked up during my first week in the city. Some other notable lingo included: chips as in fries, crisps as in chips, rubbish as in trash, and my personal favorite, bloody hell as in...well, that one requires no explanation.

Despite all the new vocab tucked under my belt, I still don’t know how to speak with a proper English accent, nor have I mastered the art of British dry humor. While I haven’t had as much luck in these particular departments of British culture, there are still many other valuable lessons I wish to share from my fall semester in London that helped positively shape my experience abroad.

With that in mind, here are my six most important take-aways for future study away students:

1. Embrace the culture shock: You’re in an unfamiliar environment in a different country and thousands of miles away from family; it’s a lot of change to take in all at once. A great way to mediate culture shock is by researching details about your host country’s culture before getting on your flight abroad. Try to approach unfamiliarity with an open-mind and willingness to adapt and learn outside of your current stretch



Kang enjoying her time in London posing by a classic telephone booth. Photo by Gurjot Kang.

“Part of the brilliance of traveling and experiencing new cultures is the way it introduces the mind to a larger world outside of oneself.”

of knowledge—test your preconceived notions. Part of the brilliance of traveling and experiencing new cultures is the way it introduces the mind to a larger world outside of oneself.

2. Make friends outside of your program: Some of the best interactions I had while abroad were with my British co-workers at my internship for a media insights company in London. For instance, when my co-workers invited me to a Halloween Pub Quiz, I happily accepted the opportunity to dress up as a lobster and com-

petitively answer pop culture trivia questions. Part of the study abroad experience involves stepping out of your comfort zone and not being afraid to try new things.

3. Know the history of the places you travel to: As American students, we aren’t taught enough about the privileges we hold, or the histories of different nations and cultures around the world. Keeping this in mind, I strongly suggest you learn the history and significance of famous cultural sites and monuments before visiting them. Please be cautious of the right time to take photos and what you choose to post on social media.

4. Homesickness is normal: After being away from my close family and friends for so long, I started wishing some of them were alongside me during my favorite adventures. The best way to tackle homesickness is to continue communicating with your loved ones while away. It can be difficult to navigate changes in time zone, so plan beforehand and schedule the best time to video call and catch up with those you care about.

5. Reflect along the way: While taking pictures/videos is one way to document your time abroad, I recommend keeping a journal or writing a blog to record some of your favorite memories. Writing about your thoughts and emotions as you visit new places is a great source of self-reflection and can help you process and be grateful for your experiences thus far.

To all future study abroad students, I hope these lessons will come in handy wherever you find yourself in the coming months. Good luck and safe travels!

UC Commons responds to Mast opinion article

UC Staff

In an email addressed to the Mast, The Commons responded to the previous edition’s article regarding vegetarian options in the cafeteria. Here are excerpts of the email:

“The Allergen Key was born in 2007 and we haven’t really made any changes to the key, but we have gotten much more strict about our allergen handling and how careful we are to get the correct markings on all of our menu items and be very aware of our ordering practices....

We should have taken that statement out years ago, as we do pay attention to when gelatin is added to items and do not mark them as vegetarian. So you will see that change taking place...

We also reviewed our recipes and we don’t see gelatin being widely used.

When there is Jello, it is not marked as vegetarian and the other two desserts that you’ll see not marked vegetarian are the S’mores bars (containing marshmallows) and the Dirt Cake (containing gummy worms). None of the recipes in the kitchen were found to use gelatin...

Our Sous Chef, Tony, has altered recipes that are prepared vegan and containing sugar to be made using the demerara sugar that is vegan instead of regular white sugar that may be filtered through bone char...

All of the cheeses used in The Commons use a plant-based rennet instead of an animal-base so they can all be safely marked vegetarian...

Your article was very timely as we are planning to promote Vegetarian and Vegan diets throughout the month of January so you’ll definitely be seeing more information in The Commons.”

Lutes discuss the ups and downs of J-Term

Photos by Sheridan Moore



"I'm enjoying it. Yeah it's a faster pace, but you get to appreciate the class that you're taking." - Seth '23



"I really like only having to focus on one class, but it's definitely a challenge. It's nice to see the same people and bond with them." - Kenzie '23



"Very fast paced. If you're playing a sport, it may seem like you have free time, but you really don't." - Aiden '23



"Right now it's actually motivating. A lot of us tend to underestimate what J-term is about - one day's work could be worth a whole week." - Kameelah '22

Learn to establish habits instead of resolutions

Kiyomi Kishaba
Opinion Editor

Resolutions.

If you just internally groaned, I hear you. Time is a social construct, and "new year, new me" captions on Instagram usually only refer to haircuts. I roll my eyes at New Year's resolutions, mostly because it means everyone and their mother suddenly show up at my local YMCA for two weeks, but also because the simple idea of a "fresh start" is not inherent of change.

I appreciate using the new year as a launching pad for new goals, but I see people disappoint themselves when the traditional dropping of the ball doesn't suddenly transform them into gym rats who work out at 5a.m. every day. If we're going to make resolutions, we have to learn how to stick to them.

I won't pretend to be an expert in following resolutions, or in anything, for that matter, but I have been given bountiful advice from my mother, who is, as moms are, an expert in everything. She gave me a call after listening to an episode of the Hidden Brain podcast all about habits, and explained it to me.

"If we're going to make resolutions, we have to learn how to stick to them."

If we look at New Year's resolutions as an exercise in creating new habits, these suggestions could crack the code to stopping me from compulsively eating frozen orange chicken for dinner and actually cook a meal for once. That was my New Year's resolution, and yes, I do currently have orange chicken in my freezer.

So, what are these magic tricks for establishing habits?

First of all, to start a habit you must make it as easy as possible to do (or not do) the action. For example, if you wanted to hit the gym at 5a.m., perhaps sleep in your gym clothes. It would be one less thing to do when

you wake up groggy in the morning, and if you're already in them you might as well go. I used to do a similar thing back in the day when I had early morning wake-up calls for swimming, except I would sleep in my swimsuit, which is considerably less comfortable than gym clothes. But, it was nice to roll out of bed ready to dive in.

"I actually grew to look forward to running, something that, as a swimmer, I never thought I would say."

Once you've made it as easy as possible to follow your resolution, you need to incentivize yourself to do it. Take something you enjoy doing, like watching a certain TV show or listening to a favorite album, and only allow yourself to do it in accordance with your resolution. Last spring after swim season, I was addicted to watching *Sex and the City*, but limited my time with Carrie and her adventures to when I was on the elliptical in the gym. I actually grew to look forward to running, something that, as a swimmer, I never thought I would say.

You can also take the self-rewarding route. For example, if your resolution is to "eat healthier," which is a terrible resolution because it is not specific or easily measured but is nonetheless a popular choice, you could track every salad you eat and reward yourself for every consistent week. Imagine you're in fourth grade again, and make a chart to track your vegetable intake. Every day you reach your goal, you get to put a sticker! For whatever reason, a lot of us are still uncannily motivated by stickers.

Some of this probably sounds hard, but have no fear, it won't last forever. Once the attempted habit becomes a truly established habit, you can go back to sleeping in pajamas, watching *Sex and the City*, and not living for stickers, because the habit will be a habit. Your brain will have rewired itself to be accustomed to this new routine, and you will have conquered that New Year's resolution. Congratulations, and thanks mom.

Two professors, one office

Kiyomi Kishaba
Opinion Editor

“In Blomquist, we spent half of our time talking about soccer anyways,” he joked.

“And now, we don’t have to walk,” his office-mate chuckled.

The two sat at their respective desks in the large room, with four empty desks smashed against the back corner. I sat at a long table by the windows, marveling at the blank walls that used to be filled floor to ceiling with old issues of the Mast newspaper. The only remaining sign of this room’s life as the home of the Mast was an assortment of student media magnets on the mini fridge.

“Is it okay if I take some pictures?” I asked.

Professor Christian Gerzso, sitting in the desk closest to me, nodded his approval. He said the books on the shelf in the corner were his; about half of the books remaining from his destroyed office in Blomquist.

“Where are the rest of them?” I said, squatting to snap a photo.

“In boxes somewhere, I hope,” he replied.

Gerzso, along with his office-mate and fellow soccer fan of now two months, Professor Scott Rogers, were inhabitants of the Blomquist house before it was tragically broken into and flooded. As a result, they were displaced from their offices and rehoused in the old Mast newsroom. Rogers explained how the university distributed the office reassignment.

“They distribute offices by pecking order-“

“-meaning seniority-“

“-based on how many years you’ve given to PLU. In Blomquist we were the last two, and I was the last one,” Rogers finished, laughing at their predicament. The university then sent around a list of available offices, of which Gerzso and Rogers had the last pick. The choices were either offices far from work, or this shared space in the AUC.

“Rogers said the faculty generally don’t see each other much, but in this shared space he and Gerzso can see one another work and learn from each other.”

“One of the offices was this one, so might as well,” Gerzso said. It was spacious, and in a convenient area for students to visit. Rogers agreed, mentioning the struggle of getting students to office hours in Blomquist, which, although only a street-crossing away from campus, many students deem an inconvenience,

myself included.

The two described their amicable office-mate relationship, where they discuss what they’re doing in classes and other ideas for workshops and projects. Rogers said the faculty generally don’t see each other much, but in this shared space he and Gerzso can see one another work and learn from each other.

Gerzso also believes a shared office space, or common spaces for faculty in general, promotes the opportunity for collaborative projects with other faculty. Buildings like Blomquist and Admin don’t have this kind of open gathering space, and therefore discourage collaboration. Discourage may be a strong word, but having offices in a small, aging house certainly doesn’t help.

“As students, we are taught that collaboration makes us stronger. Imagine how inspiration would strike if we saw professors work together the same way as we do.”

The campus provides a plethora of common spaces for students, but perhaps the office and building designs for faculty should be revised to encourage more face-to-face interaction. As students, we are taught that collaboration makes us stronger. Imagine how inspiration would strike if we saw professors work together the same way as we do. I know they all send a ridiculous amount of emails; a common space would at least save some of their inboxes.

This space, the old Mast room, used to be a large site of student collaboration. Weekly meetings of story pitches and print nights stretching too close to dawn filled the space with our voices, on and off the paper. Now moved into the Neeb center, we have cleared the way for two professors to come together and collaborate, and most importantly, talk about soccer.

As the conversation ended, Gerzso excused himself to prepare for class. However, he turned to me and said, “You are welcome to observe the exciting time of a professor staring at the screen and at photocopies.”

Maybe my vision of professor bonding and collaboration isn’t as exciting as I want it to be; professors need quiet time for homework too. But perhaps the Blomquist break-in was a chance to try something new, something better than great minds in small, separate rooms: great minds in one big room. And although they were the last on the office list, Professors Rogers and Gerzso are the first to try it out.



Professors Christian Gerzso (left) and Scott Rogers (right) discuss lesson plans in their shared office. *Photo by Kiyomi Kishaba.*

The US’ future fades as citizens watch

Kendan Bendt
Reporter

Adam Schiff said it best: our republic is in danger. A lazy House of Representatives too concerned with political timing to drag the Trump administration to court is bringing a weak case in front of a Senate determined to rush through a trial they control. A trial with no witnesses and no official record of evidence outside the opening arguments from either side.

In a trial where the jurors have already declared a result prior to hearing opening arguments (see Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell declaring Trump would never be removed weeks before an official trial date was set), nobody seems to care about the apparently foregone conclusion. The average American citizen seems to be incapable of following the trial, with apathy (or a lack of entertainment value) preventing people from tuning into the broadcast.

Senators - the supposedly impartial jurors - break decorum constantly. Their antics include leaving to take phone calls, leaving to take bathroom breaks, talking amongst themselves and, in Senator Rand Paul’s case, making paper airplanes and writing an SOS sign for cameras.

As Americans seem to ignore the entire process, the House of Representatives trial managers can’t seem to present properly what, according to them, is an open-and-shut case, the Senators (especially Senate Republicans) ignore their responsibility to pay attention to the case they’re supposed to be trying, and Chief Justice John Roberts twiddles his thumbs while what is essentially his courtroom fails to execute its one job.

So what can you do? Open a bag of popcorn, sit in your favorite chair, and watch the fireworks (or lack thereof). The embers from the burning constitution will pop your popcorn. After all, if others can’t be bothered to save our country from itself, why should you be?

The *Fine Line* between love and loss

Hannah Montgomery
Editor-in-Chief

It has been a couple months since I ended a relationship and I had no idea how badly I needed to hear this album. Music has always been a great love of mine, but for two months I didn't want to sing, let alone listen to anyone else do so. My Spotify was full of heartbreak playlists that I would play for a minute before breaking down and turning it off.

When the time came to assign pieces for the January issue of *The Mast* I reluctantly offered to review Harry Styles' newest album, completely unaware of how his story was so similar to my own.

Fine Line was released Dec. 13, 2019. The album debuted at Number 1 on the Billboard 200, the second time Styles has achieved the coveted position on the chart. *Fine Line* sold 478 thousand album units in the United States during the first week of its release.

The album broke the record as the largest sales debut by a male English artist in the US. *Fine Line* was streamed over 100 million times within the first week alone, making it the biggest week for a pop album released by a male artist in the last four years.

Harry Styles has transitioned from boy to man during his time as a solo artist, and this last album was another step toward him growing into his 20s. Styles shares that his journey leading up to the release of the album was laden with heartbreak, transcendental meditation, and shrooms, each shaping his songwriting and musical vision.

Fine Line is "all about having sex and feeling sad," the 25-year-old artist said in an interview with *Rolling Stone*. "I feel like I'm really enjoying making music and experimenting."

Each track on the album carries its own message and meaning. From a non-musically trained background I listened for storytelling and the use of language to base this review.

The first song, *Golden*, describes the early stage of a relationship when everything feels light and warm. But, there is also a reminder that hearts can be broken and trust must be earned in the beginning. Styles weaves each track into the next well and the progression of both tempo and ro-



Photo by Columbia Records

mance crescendos during the chorus of *Adore You*, the third track.

The tone shifts as *Lights Up* addresses change. One might interpret the song as a confusing break-up and the feeling of betrayal by a significant other. But it may also be the realization that personal growth is achieved by gaining confidence and stepping into the light as one finds oneself.

The next movement of the album reminisces on past love and expresses the feeling of hopelessness. *Falling* dissects the feeling of despising oneself for poor choices and mistakes and flows into *To Be So Lonely* which describes the stage of grief when depression and anger have ebbed and reflection begins.

Fine Line ends with a feeling of hope and progress towards healing. Memories of the highs in the relationship flash in *Sunflower* and *Canyon Moon*, times when all felt easy and right. The album finishes with *Fine Line*, its namesake, which ties up the lessons learned from love and heartbreak. The last track addresses that there is a fine line of what is and isn't acceptable in a relationship and that a balance is created in love and loss.

I would have procrastinated listening to this album had it not been for *The Mast* and I am proud to say that my appreciation for Harry Styles has increased. *Fine Line* is beautiful, sad, and hopeful, a combination that I have not seen many other albums about a love achieve.

Music making its way through campus

The Music Department at PLU presents a large variety of concerts throughout the year. These events are hosted in either the Mary Baker Russell Music Center (LCH or MBR 306), or the Karen Hille Phillips Center for the Performing Arts (KHP).

Admission is free to PLU students, unless otherwise noted.

February Music Events:

- Feb. 1, 3p.m. - WSMTA Four Piano Benefit Concert (LCH)
- Feb. 7, 8p.m. - Choir of the West Tour Homecoming Concert (LCH) *\$0-10
- Feb. 8, 5:30p.m. - Northwest High School Honor Jazz Band (KHP)
- Feb. 15, 7 p.m. - Gospel Experience Concert (MBR) *\$8-\$40
- Feb. 21, 8p.m. - Showcase Concert (LCH)
- Feb. 26, 8p.m. - Artist Series: Powers & de la Torre Piano Duo (LCH)

Grammys recap

Nolan James
Arts & Culture Editor

The 62nd annual Grammy Award Show premiered on Jan. 26. This was earlier than its Feb. 10 showing in 2019. The show was hosted by singer Alicia Keys, who also performed early into the night.

The main ceremony opened with a tribute to famous basketball player Kobe Bryant, who passed away earlier that day.

Lizzo, who was nominated for the most Grammys this year with eight nominations, performed the songs *Cuz I Love You* and *Truth Hurts*, the latter of which won her the award for Best Pop Solo Performance.

Billie Eilish took home the most awards that night, winning Best New Artist, Song of the Year and Record of the Year for *Bad Guy*, and Album of the Year for *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*, and performed later in the show.

Tyler, The Creator took home the award for Rap Album of the Year for *Igor*. Many believed *Igor* deserved Album of the Year, for which it was not nominated. Instead of *Igor*, the Academy nominated a half-length EP and a deluxe album with popular singles tacked on.

There has been much controversy surrounding the Grammys lately, from sexual misconduct allegations to previous CEO of the Recording Academy, Deborah Dugan, claiming the show was fixed, a claim which did not surprise many.

Other highlights include Demi Lovato, performing for the first time since rehabilitation, and Little Nas X performing his hit single *Old Town Road* with Billy Ray Cyrus. *Old Town Road* won the awards for Best Pop Duo/Group Performance and Best Music Video.



Graphic by the Recording Academy

PLU to host 10th anniversary *Gospel Experience Concert*

Marsia Johnson & Katie McGregor
Guest Writers

The Gospel Experience Concert is returning to Pacific Lutheran University on Saturday, Feb. 15 for its 10th anniversary. This concert will be national recording artist Crystal Aikin's encore performance as she headlines the event.

The renowned gospel singer was born and raised in Tacoma and graduated from PLU with a degree in Nursing. Aiken performed on Black Entertainment Television's first all-gospel talent show Sunday Best in 2009. She competed with some of America's best gospel singers and won the first season, scoring a contract with Zomba Gospel, the largest gospel label in the world.

"PLU is a part of my academic journey, but they're also just part of my element. I think to come back and say thank you, and to come back to show how I've developed and how I've launched at this point in my life, is always a treasure — and it's really a privilege to be able to do," Aiken said.

The event will also include performances from C. I. Van Johnson and the Washington State Church of God in Christ Mass Choir, Robin Henderson and Friends, Anointed Brothers plus praise dancing featuring artists Sabian Pleasant and Diana Starr and more.

Gospel Experience Concert is a Pacific

Lutheran University Campus Ministry event directed by Melannie Denise Cunningham. Cunningham's goal is to bring people of different cultures together through gospel music and to specifically honor people who identify with black culture.

"I am particularly proud of this event because of the cultural learning and experience that students gain from participating. Black students are affirmed in their culture and others are exposed to new insights about people who are different from them," Cunningham said.

PLU Senior Ian Rice, a member of University Congregation attended last year's Gospel Experience Concert, gave a testimony on his experience of the event.

"Overall the concert was very different than what I'm used to, especially because Lutherans traditionally sit and stand fairly still while singing a hymn. This was louder and longer--since each song seemed Spirit-led in terms of when it actually finished--with lots of different instrumentation and preaching throughout," Rice said.

Tickets are on sale now at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/plu-campus-ministry-18506455677>

For more information, visit:
<https://www.plu.edu/campus-ministry/gospel-experience/>.



Graphic by Amanda Dupont

Independent student production *Man Out of Time* to premiere

Raven Lirio
Copy Editor

The independent student musical production *Man Out of Time* written by senior Gunnar Johnson will take to the stage in the CAVE on Jan 30 at 7p.m. The musical, which is sponsored by Mast TV, tells the story of a young science intern named Sherrie Amberson who attempts to uncover the mys-

tery of what happened to the lab she works in twenty years ago.

"It plays a lot with unreliable narrators," said Johnson. "I was inspired by a lot of old science fiction movies. In building the characters, I was also inspired by my own life experiences."

The musical is entirely student run, from lighting and sound design to the script and set design. Casting was held in December with rehearsals all throughout January. Production work has been building up to the premiere at the end of January.

"It is amazing to see what students dedicated to theater are able to put on as long as their heart is in it," said junior Mathæus Andersen who plays Olaf Schidtsky.

This is not the first time that Johnson has written and produced a play. He had previously done a parody of the movie *Sharknado* back in high school.

"It's a better time because I've outsourced and found a brilliant

production team," Johnson said.

As opposed to traditional categories like drama or thriller, Johnson opted to use the term sci-fi musical.

"A story like this needs a medium like sci-fi that is allowed to be comedic, dramatic, creepy, and fantastic in order to not be so limiting," Johnson said.

Andersen spoke of his experience working on the show, emphasizing the independent work of the people involved.

"This is the first time I am a part of a completely independent musical," Andersen said. "We are taking the show on with fresh eyes and ears instead of mimicking something we have seen before. It is amazing how much students can achieve."

For Johnson, this project is something that he has done out of the pure enjoyment of theater for fun.

"This has been my passion project for three years and so I'm

glad to finally see it on the stage and done so well," Johnson said.

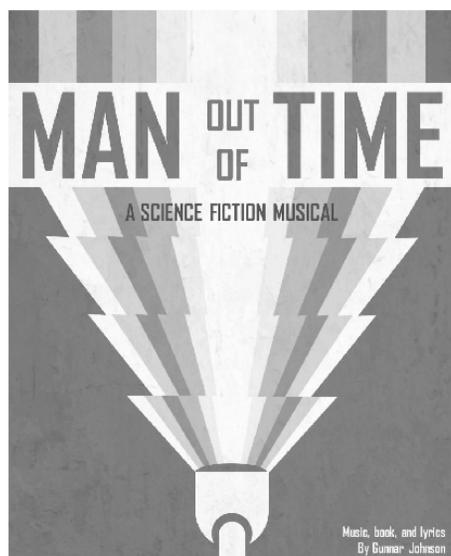
"It has been almost surreal seeing all of these characters who have only ever lived in my head suddenly walking and talking in front of me. Seeing things the actors throw in that I didn't even know would be perfect for the characters is just surreal."

Johnson's favorite part of this process has been seeing the memes created by the cast and crew for the show.

"For me as an author, it's one of the highest forms of flattery," Johnson said.

The performances will run for one week and will be recorded by Mast TV. Admission is free and open to the public on all nights.

"It is nigh professional grade theater being performed entirely independently. It's as close to independent theater as you can possibly get," Johnson said. "We are hoping this will help inspire more independent theater in the future."



Graphic by Gunnar Johnson

The Rise of Skywalker is a poorly written mess

Nolan James
Arts & Culture Editor

The new Star Wars trilogy started out seemingly strong with *The Force Awakens*, though it was a copy-and-paste job of the original movie, but after the extremely negative reception *The Last Jedi* received, the future for the trilogy did not look bright. Now that the final installment in the trilogy, *The Rise of Skywalker*, has been released, I can confirm that those fears were warranted. This is not a good movie.

“After the extremely negative reception *The Last Jedi* received, the future for the trilogy did not look bright.”

It seems the director, J.J. Abrams, seemed to focus all his energy on re-writing the mistakes Rian Johnson had made with *The Last Jedi* instead of making an actual movie. Ironically, the writing comes across as even more inconsistent than *The Last Jedi*'s, and without that movie's strong visual and thematic symbolism.

The Rise of Skywalker pretends to have interesting themes about family legacy and not being a hostage to your bloodline, but did not know how to deliver.

Rey, the protagonist of this trilogy, ultimately fails to develop at all with this new story, and almost seemingly takes a step back at the end. With one exception, however, she is sadly the character who gets the most characterization, and she does not get much.

That one exception is Kylo Ren, who was expertly portrayed once again by Adam Driver. He had all of the decent



Graphic by Walt Disney Studios

scenes in the movie to himself, as well as some strong development.

Abrams did not know what to do with the rest of the characters. Ex-Stormtrooper Finn has not received any sort of development since *The Force Awakens*, and more-or-less just kind of exists in this movie, without any sort of purpose.

Resistance fighter Poe Dameron

“The writing comes across as even more inconsistent than *The Last Jedi*'s.”

has it even worse. Since *The Last Jedi* he has actively become a despicable, unlikable, annoying character who the audience is apparently supposed to root for.

This film went nowhere, although *The Last Jedi* admittedly did not leave it with much to go off of. You just kind of have to accept where this movie goes with its story while it unfolds, but none of it is any good. It just happens, and then it's over.

Heathers: The Musical review

Kendan Bendt
Copy Editor

The Lakewood Playhouse is showing *Heathers: The Musical* from Jan. 17 to Feb. 9, and I have no regrets since seeing it.

Avery Horton plays Jason “J.D.” Dean, the primary antagonist and spurned lover of protagonist Veronica Sawyer, portrayed by Molly Quinn. Horton was frighteningly convincing in his role.

Quinn had a gorgeous voice and was stunning in her portrayal of Veronica. However, Christine Choate threatened to steal the show with her rendition of *Kindergarten Boyfriend* as Martha Dunnstock, the sad and neglected loner.

Austin Payne and Henry Temple performed their roles as Ram Sweeney and Kurt Kelly convincingly as well, with their acting performances carrying their scenes.

The set design was amazing. The stage direction and technical crew helped ensure the audience, as few as three feet away from the stage, could lose themselves in the story.

The show opened with the song *Beautiful*, and was immersive from the very beginning. The decision to freeze the entire cast in place and use lighting to illuminate them while Veronica introduces each character to the audience one after another was brilliant. The singing was spectacular as well, with all the asides bringing personality to the background characters.

Later on in the show, when J.D. was introduced in *Fight For Me*, the same brilliant level staging was used. Horton and Temple acted in slow motion during their fight, with Quinn singing softly in the background. The staging, singing and acting all combined beautifully in

“The actors and production staff at the Lakewood Playhouse have clearly put a lot of effort into their run of *Heathers*”

this song.

The decision to use the West End version of the soundtrack replacing *Blue* with *You're Welcome* was very tasteful and for good reason. *You're Welcome* solidifies the villain status of both Kurt and Ram without giving too much voice to their toxic behavior.

Quinn and Horton's performance of *Our Love is God* was captivating. Their chemistry set up the far more tense Act 2 perfectly. The rest of the show was equally as tense as that performance was, and as such it was a perfect way to finish Act 1.

The actors and production staff at the Lakewood Playhouse have clearly put a lot of effort into their run of *Heathers*, and it pays off upon viewing.



Three Heathers stand with croquet mallets. Photo from Facebook/Lakewood Playhouse.

Track and Field Teams anticipate an eventful year

Hayden Mortensen

Reporter

Olympians raced with Lutes. The stage lined purple and gold.

Four Lutes competed with a personal record so bold.

To kick start the season, Chris McGraw went mightily fast.

It sounds like 2020 will be a blast.

PLU Track and Field sent a small contingent to initiate their season at the University of Washington preview meet. The annual meet is open to all qualifying athletes, so a range of talent was present all the way up to the professional level.

It was a special start for Sulin Degollado, Emily Reeder, Vakeaemanu Hunkin, but it was a particularly grand opener for Christopher McGraw. He went .24 seconds faster than he ever has in the 60 meter hurdles: a significant speed increase. His performance placed him 18th overall. Reeder and Hunkin placed top 30 in throws while Degollado represented the Lutes in the mile.

The Lutes are now full steam ahead towards greatness. “January and February are big training months,” Head Coach Adam Frye said. “It’s also an important time for building our team.”

Team bonding seems to be an important area of focus for the 2020 season.

“We have to find the balance between growing as individual athletes and growing as a team,” Senior Captain Hunkin said.

The variety of events in the sport makes unity harder to accomplish too. Each event is practiced at a different time and place on the track, which bars athletes from bonding as often as they’d like. Joe Stilnovich, a senior sprinter and team captain, revealed that athletes are “fighting that stigma this year by going out of [their] way before and after practice to spend

time together.”

“My number one goal every year is to create a positive, welcoming and inclusive environment... I expect that will pay off with strong performances at the Northwest Conference (NWC) Championships and some national qualifiers again this season,” Frye said.

The women’s track and field team welcomes back two of their four 2019 national qualifiers: All-American throwers, Emily Reeder and Ava Nelson. Unfortunately, All-American high jumper Lauren Wilson is out with a knee injury, and sprinter Imani Keyes is absent this season. Nevertheless, the women’s team has many talented returners in all event categories to give the team good performance depth.

The men’s team expects a fast distance crew again. Also, some dual-sport newcomers are set to contribute in sprints and throwing. They will find a “fantastic home” on the track and field team like Stilnovich claimed he did (him being a former PLU football player himself).

Junior mid-distance runner Hezekiah Goodwin hopes to be a catalyst to that “fantastic home” in his new position as captain. He explained, “Compared to last year, I have definitely taken on more of a leadership role. With that said, I want to ensure there’s an uplifting culture within the team, so that everyone feels like their needs are being met.”

Both sides anticipate an eventful year. The Lutes are unanimously excited for their annual spring break training trip. They will travel to San Diego to train and compete at Point Loma. More training time was added to this season as well.

That “enabled us to get more essential preparation before our competition season,” Stilnovich said. Hopefully a slingshot effect will come to the Lutes from this extra training.

“It’s imperative we are diligent with our training to best prepare us later on,” Goodwin said.

The Lutes expect higher placements in the NWC across the board.

“We have some of the best coaches to build a foundation and continue to grow our track and field program to be one of the best in the NWC,” Hunkin said.

Stilnovich, Goodwin, and Hunkin were our captain correspondents. They, along with captains Christopher McGraw, Andraya Conger, and Bailey Forsyth will strive to lead the Lutes to victory.

“We are a committed, enthusiastic group of student athletes who are always proud to represent PLU,” Hunkin said.

Students, staff, and family should support the Lutes by attending the PLU Open on Mar. 14 and the Northwest Conference combined events on Apr. 13-14.



Senior Chris McGraw competing in the 60m hurdles. McGraw recorded a personal best in the event with a time of 9.05 seconds. *Photo by Bailey Plumb.*

February Home Events

Feb. 1

Women’s Basketball vs Whitworth University, 4 p.m.

Men’s Basketball vs Whitworth University, 6 p.m.

Feb. 11

Women’s Basketball vs University of Puget Sound, 6 p.m.

Men’s Basketball vs University of Puget Sound, 8 p.m.

Feb. 15

Women’s Tennis vs Highline Community College (Sprinker Rec Center), 1 p.m.

Women’s Basketball vs Willamette University, 4 p.m.

Men’s Basketball vs Willamette University, 6 p.m.

Feb. 21

Women’s Tennis vs Community Colleges of Spokane, 5 p.m.

Feb. 22

Men’s Tennis vs Community Colleges of Spokane, 12:30 p.m.

Feb. 23

Women’s Tennis vs Willamette University, 10 a.m.

Feb. 29

Women’s Tennis vs Whitworth University, 1 p.m.

*All home basketball events are held in Olson Gymnasium

*All home tennis events are held in the Sprinker Rec Center in Tacoma, WA

Katie Taylor diversifies her abilities

Hayden Mortensen
Reporter

Call her the storm goddess because she makes it rain at PLU. Sophomore shooting guard, Katie Taylor, is the Lutes top scorer with the highest points per game average (PPG) since 2014.

Her PPG puts her 8th overall in the Northwest Conference (NWC), but she scores more three-pointers per game than anybody in the NWC.

What's more amazing is that she does all this in spite of an injury she sustained in early December. The secret to her success: offseason training and a team-focused mentality.

Taylor adores her teammates and credits most of her accomplishments on them.

"We've been really focusing on being one unit so our offensive flow has been working," she said.

"Offensive flow" sets Taylor up to score. Head Coach Jennifer Childress said, "For us to be successful, [Katie] knows she needs to put some points on the board. With that said, she is very humble and plays within our system."

The Lutes' "system" on the court has certainly helped Taylor excel, but Taylor expressed that encouragement from her team have helped her more. The team's chemistry keeps Taylor going, especially through her injury recovery.

"I know I can rely on my teammates to help me through the tough times," Taylor said.

Taylor was out for three weeks of the season before returning to the court on Jan 11th. She admitted it was rough getting back into playing, but she is getting better.

She occasionally will experience a "funk," but her coaches know how to get her dialed in again.

"I have a problem with thinking too much," Taylor said. "[my coaches] can really tell when I'm too much in my head and they can identify it and get me out of that funk."

Taylor's offseason efforts are the final ingredient to her outstanding performance. She worked with one-on-one trainers to improve her moves, driving, defensive skills, and shooting.

"My goal this season was to become a more diverse player, not just identified as a shooter," Taylor said.

Diversifying her abilities will help her since "at one point she led the nation in 3 pt accuracy [and] conference opponents will look to take her 3 pt shot opportunities away," Childress said.

Taylor continues to accomplish her objectives. Childress has high confidence in Taylor's abilities: "[Katie] has a high basket-



Taylor is eighth in the conference in points per game with 14.2. Taylor also leads the teams with 3 pointers made with 39. *Photo courtesy Katie Taylor.*

ball IQ. As one of the most offensively talented players to come through PLU, I am very blessed to have the chance to work with her. She has a great future ahead of her in the Northwest Conference."

Catch Katie Taylor and the Lutes at the next home games taking place Jan 31st -Feb 1st against Whitman College and Whitworth University.

Mamba forever: The passing of a legend

Kendan Bendt
Reporter

This past Sunday, Jan. 26, NBA legend Kobe Bryant, his 13 year old daughter Gianna and seven other passengers aboard a private helicopter perished in a crash resulting from a heavy layer of fog. There were no survivors in the crash.

Bryant is survived by his wife, Vanessa Laine Bryant, and their other three daughters.

In terms of basketball, Kobe Bryant, aka the "Black Mamba," stands out amongst the cream of the crop. His accolades speak for themselves. In 20 seasons, he was selected to 18 NBA All-Star teams, and won 5 NBA championships.

In his career playing for the US in the Olympics, Bryant won two gold medals with the US team. Bryant is currently 4th all time in points scored, and 3rd all time in assists by a shooting guard.

His individual stats show the dedication and years of hard work Bryant put into the game.

The NBA, as well as basketball itself, will sorely miss Bryant's influence. By all accounts, he remained an influence on young players currently in the

league, and did much for the expansion of the game.

Giannis Antetokounmpo, league MVP of the 2018-2019 season, who trained with Bryant over the summer, remarked on Bryant's legacy, saying Sunday was a "horrible day... for basketball, for everybody."

A horrible day, indeed. The sports world at large will mourn the untimely passing of Bryant for years to come.

The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame chairman Jerry Colangelo stated that Bryant would be enshrined as a first-ballot Hall of Famer in the class of 2020.



Kobe played for the Lakers for his entire 20 year career. He wore number 8 and 24 during his career, both of which have been retired by the Lakers. *Photo courtesy flicker.com.*

A snapshot of Intramurals and Outdoor Rec.

David Walter
Reporter

The month of January is always a special time for students on campus. With a one class schedule for the entire month, students will often find themselves with more time on their hands.

Intramurals has evolved as a popular trend on campus during January Term, or J-term for short. So what exactly makes intramurals so popular on campus during the month of January?

"I think it's a combination of students wanting to start a new year being more social and fit," Intramural Director Rob Thompson said. "Intramurals are all about FUN, meeting new people, getting students out and active and in a lot of cases trying something new."

Some students may not be the biggest fan of intramural competition, instead they may get involved with Outdoor Recreation.

Thompson is also the director of Outdoor Recreation and says it is a great experience for students to get out and enjoy the beauty of Washington.

"The main goal is to have students take a break from technology, get outside and just explore nature," Thompson said.

"We want to offer a diverse trip schedule so it appeals to everyone. Everyone

should try at least one Outdoor Rec trip during their time at PLU," he said.

Students can experience many benefits to participating in intramurals or Outdoor Rec. "I'd say the biggest benefits is the physical and mental health benefits," Thompson said.

"We spend so much time in front of screens. Outdoor Rec gives students a chance to step away and get back into nature and just relieve stress," he said.

Outdoor Rec leader Ian Rice also agreed with Rob about spending time in nature.

"Being outside is restorative," Rice said. "I love taking nature walks and looking at trees or hiking with friends and having great conversations."

When asked about students who have not participated in any Outdoor Rec activities, he said he encourages anyone to sign up on their app and give it a try.

"You can also keep up to date with our activities by following us on Instagram! Outdoor Rec trips are a great way to relax, try new activities, meet new friends, and enjoy the beauty of the Pacific Northwest," Rice said.

Outdoor Recreation and Intramurals have activities for students to participate in all year long.