

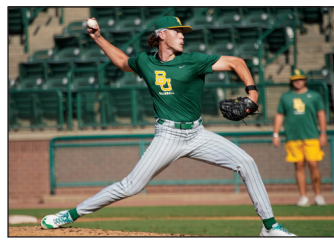
Thursday, October 3, 2024

baylorlariat.com



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EDITORIAL:
What can happen in 11 minutes?



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BASEBALL:
Free weekly scrimmages showcase fall ball talent.



A&L | A5

SWEET VICTORY
KOT looks to defend its title as All-University Sing champions.



Associated Press

STAR-POWERED POLITICS Celebrities such as Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish and her brother FINNEAS have come out in support of Kamala Harris. Across the aisle, Kid Rock, Brittany Mahomes and Zachary Levi have publicly shown support for Donald Trump. But, what's in a celebrity endorsement, and how much of a difference do they really make?

The fault in our stars

How valuable are celebrity endorsements?

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts and Life Editor

As the November election approaches, voices grow louder on the question of who to vote for. These voices come from friends, family and the candidates themselves. Now, even celebrities are joining in the chant.

On Sept. 10, minutes after the presidential debate, Taylor Swift posted her endorsement of Kamala Harris on Instagram. In the post, she said she did so in response to AI-generated photos of her endorsing Trump which had been circulating the internet. Because of this, she wanted to be "transparent" about her vote.

According to Reuters, Swift's post drew 406,000 individuals to vote.gov, a website run by the U.S.

General Service Administration that directs people to state-by-state voter information.

Billie Eilish and fellow musician FINNEAS, her brother, endorsed Harris on Sept. 17. The buzz around endorsements continued to grow when a Washington Post article from Sept. 19 noted how rapper Bad Bunny could have power in swaying the opinions of a large demographic of young Latin voters.

Dr. Dave Bridge, an associate professor of political science who teaches a course on campaigns and elections, said he thinks celebrity endorsements don't really tend to persuade voters who are set in their thinking — unless that celebrity is Taylor Swift.

"We saw it with hundreds of thousands of people registering to

vote the day she endorsed Kamala Harris," Bridge said. "So maybe, if she posts something on the day before Election Day or on Election Day, and that encourages a couple thousand people in Wisconsin to vote, that is a big effect."

Dallas senior Hannah Williams, a political science major, said she personally tries not to let celebrities sway her vote, as politics are often not their field of specialty.

"I think who someone votes for is personal to them," Williams said.

In agreement with Bridge, Williams said that she also believes Taylor Swift has the power to actually sway voters in their decision, especially those who may not have been planning on voting at all.

"I feel like that could get a lot of people out to the polls to vote for Kamala, because they're like, 'If Taylor Swift is voting for Kamala, then I'm gonna vote for Kamala,'" Williams said.

Washington, D.C. senior Andrew Stroka, a political science minor, said there would be more traction if celebrities simply encouraged their followers to vote instead of also promoting their own opinions.

POP AT THE POLLS >>
A8



Baylor tops rankings in undergrad education, experience

RORY DULOCK
Staff Writer

The U.S. News & World Report annual best colleges report was released last Tuesday, ranking Baylor among the best in the nation for undergraduate education and first-year experience.

According to President Linda Livingstone's Presidential Perspective email, Baylor is a Top 50 private university and a Top 100 university, where it is tied with SMU and five other universities.

"While various rankings provide an understanding of strengths and areas in which you can be better, our continued focus remains on improving our retention and graduation rates, as well as access and affordability for students," Livingstone said in the email.

Provost Nancy Brickhouse said in an email that the report showcases the well-roundedness of the university and its focus on multiple aspects in education.

"Many of U.S. News category rankings are based on what our reputation is among other higher education leaders," Brickhouse said. "Well-rounded universities are good at more than one thing. For example, Baylor has a very strong first-year experience. We work to continuously improve on the first-year experience program from a position of strength."

Brickhouse also said Baylor is strong in undergraduate teaching and research, and the report reveals the university's mission to provide a well-rounded education.

TOP NOTCH >> A8

Breast cancer can be caught, beat with regular self-exams

PIPER RUTHERFORD
Staff Writer

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Health and Wellness Center offers students tips for how to check for signs of breast cancer.

Dr. Sharon Stern, Baylor's medical director, said that while breast cancer can occur in the breast tissues of both men and women, women are far more likely to develop it.

"By the time you are 85 or 90 years old, you will know a lot of women that have had breast cancer, since it happens to one in eight women over the course of a lifetime," Stern said. "Outside of skin cancer, this statistic makes it the most common cancer for American women."

Stern said 62 years old is the average age for breast cancer diagnosis, and though many young women in college are healthy, it's important that women are cognizant of their family's health history.

"Breast cancer can run in families, and there is an increased risk if one of your first-degree relatives has had it before," Stern said. "This can include a mother, sister or daughter."

Another important factor

to consider for heightened risks is a female's race, according to Stern.

"While women of color, like Black women, have a similar average age of diagnosis as that of white



Outside of skin cancer, this statistic makes it the most common cancer for American women.

DR. SHARON STERN | BAYLOR MEDICAL DIRECTOR

women, Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer," Stern said. "This is because one in five

Black women are diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer, which deals with hormone markers and is far more difficult to treat."

To check for signs of breast cancer, Stern recommended that women conduct a monthly self-examination test following their menstrual cycle when their breasts are less tender.

"You can do this standing up in the shower or mirror, by moving the flat parts of the tips of your fingers around in a circle, working your way up and down," Stern said. "What you are feeling for is the feeling of a rock in the midst of the breast tissue, which is inherently lumpy like the consistency of oatmeal, so check for something that feels hard and that might be tender."

According to Stern, another step students can take is making sure that they set up their "Well Woman" exam once a year.

"At these offices, they can order an ultrasound," Stern said. "This X-ray is usually more accurate at seeing small cysts than mammograms are."

HEALTH MATTERS >> A8



Ashleigh Anema | Roundup Yearbook

CLASS AT THE CLINIC The Louise Herrington School of Nursing prepares students for real-life work in healthcare. Students begin working with real patients after five weeks.

Nursing school among fastest-growing programs

KRISTY VOLMERT
Staff Writer

In 2023, Baylor's Louise Herrington School of Nursing was established as having the highest undergraduate enrollment of all colleges at Baylor.

Along with Robbins College of Health and Human Sciences, the nursing school is the fastest-growing college at Baylor University and continues to grow and prosper in the pursuit of excellence.

Provost Nancy Brickhouse acknowledged that students are ambitiously responding to one of the world's greatest needs.

"Students are clearly answering to the demand the world has in need for health professionals, and you certainly see that in the way that they gravitate towards those schools," Brickhouse said.

The nursing school is unlike any other college at Baylor. Located in downtown Dallas about 90 miles from Waco, it has its own individual environment in which students will study for the last four semesters of their undergraduate education.

Nursing students are also able to take an accelerated track and move to Dallas during their second — and sometimes, even their first semester — of sophomore year, which also allows students to graduate a semester early.

It also has a rich history. Founded in 1909, the school is soon to celebrate its 115th anniversary. And in these 115 years, it has seen many notable accomplishments.

This semester, the school received a national ranking of No. 39 in the U.S. News & World Report's 2025 rankings of the best

COMMITTED TO CARE >> A8

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We want to hear it. Send us your thoughts: Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu

Students respond to vice president debate

ERIKA KUEHL
Opinion Editor

EMMA WEIDMANN
Editor-in-Chief

Representatives from both College Democrats and College Republicans at Baylor reacted to Tuesday night's vice presidential debate between JD Vance and Tim Walz.

During the strikingly civil, largely policy-focused night, topics such as healthcare, border control, gun control, abortion and the Middle East were covered.

Waco junior JW LaStrape, vice president of College Democrats and Brick, N.J., senior Holly Tkach co-chair of College Republicans weighed in.

Read it here!



Suicide prevention – not just a month

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD



James Ellis | Cartoonist

There's not a whole lot you can do in 11 minutes. You can probably make your breakfast in that time. Perhaps you can fold some laundry or drive to work before the time is up. Meanwhile, each 11 minutes that go by, an American dies by their own hand.

According to the CDC, there were 13.2 million people who seriously considered suicide, 3.8 million who planned out their suicide and 1.6 million who actually attempted.

In America, 13.6% of adults aged 18-25 have had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year. These are people we see everyday — classmates, colleagues and friends.

Grim as it is, 30% of American college students are diagnosed with depression, according to a study done by The Healthy Minds Network, a research organization that aims to improve the mental health of young adults.

If you aren't part of that statistic, that means you see, speak to and spend time with people weighed down by these intense feelings of discouragement, numbness and weariness, maybe more often than you think.

While it's an uncomfortable topic, suicide is something that needs to be talked about and taken seriously. Just because Suicide Prevention Month

is ending with September doesn't mean we stop raising awareness. It doesn't mean we stop checking in on our loved ones, asking how they're really doing and encouraging them to seek professional help if needed, no matter how put-together their life seems.

Take these statistics as a reminder to deal with and speak to people with kindness and encouragement. Usually, when someone is suicidal, there are signs. Talking about wanting to die in a both joking and serious manner, sudden disconnection from friends and family, sudden or increased substance abuse, giving away significant personal belongings and talking about feeling like a burden are all behaviors which should raise alarms and can be indicators that someone is suicidal.

Also consider that sometimes the most depressed people are the ones who are the best at hiding it. If you have a bad gut feeling about someone's well-being, don't stay silent. You may end up regretting it.

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, call or text the 24-hour Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (988). If you or someone you know is planning on suicide or actively following through with suicide, call for help (911) immediately.

Performance Christianity: Posting your mission trip on Instagram won't draw you closer to God

KRISTY VOLMERT
Staff Writer



"Performance Christianity" is a phenomenon becoming increasingly common amongst Christian college students, and is abundant at Baylor University.

Baylor's administrators in spiritual well-being do a fabulous job at helping Christian students grow in their faith. In fact, they almost don't get enough recognition. The resources provided to students by faculty to engage in spiritual growth are extraordinary. The thing that concerns me is the growing number of college-aged Christians who don't practice what they preach.

Surely, no Christian student is perfect, nor should they ever be expected to be. Every single one of us will make mistakes and sin. These mistakes are part of human nature, and we should be quick to forgive ourselves and others just as God forgives us. The issue lies within the way we act when nobody is watching — or at least when nobody whose opinion we truly care about is watching. The truth is, there's only one opinion that should always matter to us — God's.

Christian character all comes down to integrity, and integrity is rooted in intention. As a Christian, that intention is to follow the example of Jesus and live a life that is dedicated to Him. Having this genuine intention in our hearts equips us to live with integrity that sets us apart from others.

Many Christians believe that they are driven by this intention, but are more motivated by self-benefit. This ulterior motivation, whether consciously recognizable or not, can stand in the way of true Christian integrity. This is normal and nothing to be ashamed of. Human nature is an inevitable component of our behavior. But someone who has the intention of living for Jesus will at some point recognize this fault and intentionally repent. However, some Christians will recognize this fault and convince themselves that they can make it work — there's a way for them to make their wrongs right.

There is no way for anybody to grow in their faith if they are not able to recognize the areas in which they struggle most. Self-awareness is a key part of growth. Self-awareness is to growth as intention is to integrity. I believe that these attributes are greatly under-discussed. A lack of both intention and self-awareness is what leads to Performance Christianity — a lifestyle that on the outside is dedicated to Christ, but is ultimately selfish beneath the surface.

For one, there are those who openly have no intention of having a relationship with God and took every spiritual opportunity for granted. Two, there are those who are intentional in their Christian faith and want to grow in an evident way. And three, there are those who say what a Christian would say and do what a Christian would do, only when given a reward or public recognition of some kind — that's Performance Christianity.

Having a graduating class of less than two-thirds of my current Psychology lecture, it wasn't hard to get to know almost everyone and their relevant public endeavors. After years of observing those around me, I eventually

adopted the ability to discern an intentional Christian from a hypocritical one. But I did not learn this the easy way. From sixth grade until my junior year, my naivety left me vulnerable to a group of Performance Christians who became my group of friends.

It wasn't until I was truly saved and fully dedicated my life to Christ that I woke up to the reality of how many of my friends had been living. I had understood what it meant to be considered a Christian, but I was not living it. I was falling into the pattern of many around

me, letting my faith become a checklist and my selfish wants becoming the driving force behind my actions. The radical change I experienced when I was born again changed my perspective on everything. It was like taking off a blindfold. I became aware of the mistakes I had been making. Now, I understand who I am, but I won't forget who I was before.

Posting Instagram pictures from the mission trips I went on and receiving recognition of Christian character from my coaches did not fulfill me in the way I'd always thought it would. Nor did leading worship, reposting Bible verses on my Snapchat story, donating an outstanding amount of money to my church's expansion fund or telling my friends about all the ways I'd volunteered in ministry.

I thought I was doing everything right and wondered why I wasn't experiencing the abundant joy and peace that other Christians so often talked about. Why did going to church on Sundays feel like a chore? Why didn't I enjoy reading my Bible?

It wasn't until I ended up in a place of intentional worship that I finally felt touched by the Holy Spirit. It was just me and God. I realized that He sees and recognizes my every action and knows me better than anybody else ever could. I didn't need validation from others anymore. I would always be noticed by God, and He is the only authority to judge and reward me. Receiving recognition is a great thing, but when it becomes our main motivation, it's a problem.

I encourage every person reading this to periodically reflect on your intentions and self-awareness. It's such a small and simple thing, but it helps us exponentially in our faith journeys.

"A lack of both intention and self-awareness is what leads to Performance Christianity — a lifestyle that on the outside is dedicated to Christ, but is ultimately selfish beneath the surface."

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Baylor sets record retention, graduation rates

KRISTY VOLMERT
Staff Writer

This year, Baylor celebrates its record-breaking first-to-second-year retention rate and four-year graduation rate.

Baylor's retention rate for the Class of 2027 stood at 90.93%, just one student short of 91%, according to Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Academic Affairs J. Wesley Null. Null said administrators plan to grow this rate through the implementation of the Strategic Enrollment Management plan.

"We have a coordinated plan that communicates what specifically we're trying to accomplish and focuses on the student populations where we know we want to do better," Null said.

The goal of the SEM plan centers around the growth in the diversity, prestige and

quality of student enrollment in ways that will lead to increased retention and graduation rates as well as overall success, according to Null. He said he hopes the plan will reach a retention rate of at least 92% next year for the current freshman class.

"It's going to be hard for us to get there and win, but our SEM plan has us achieving that rate by at least fall 2027," Null said.

The university's four-year graduation rate is also setting records. Now reaching 71.3%, it exceeded the goal that had been set for 2027 and increased by about 4% since 2022.

According to Provost Nancy Brickhouse, a college's four-year graduation rate says a lot about the success of its students and academic programs.

"Graduating in a timely way is one of the best ways

to keep a Baylor education affordable," Brickhouse said.

Null said that this increasing graduation rate proves that administration and faculty have helped lower student costs.

"Students are doing a better job transitioning to a best-fit major sooner and are doing better in their classes, otherwise they wouldn't be able to get done in four years," Null said.

President Linda Livingstone said she is just as excited to see Baylor thriving in these areas.

"Retention is a key indicator of undergraduate students' successful adjustment to university life, and I'm deeply grateful for the tireless work of our faculty and staff who support the success of our students," Livingstone said.

Not only are graduation and retention rates increasing, but student diversity and



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

STAY CLASSY The class of 2028 gathers in McLane Stadium for their class photo during the annual Sign The Line event before signing their names on the gold line outside the stadium.

applicants are on the rise as well, according to Livingstone.

The overall undergraduate enrollment represents 48 U.S. states and 41 foreign countries, with a makeup of 31.7% underrepresented

minorities, 40.6% students of color and 41.6% male students, all of which show a notable development in student diversity.

According to Null, these statistics show that students

enjoy life at Baylor.

"Retention is one of the best measures of student satisfaction. I think getting above 90% really shows that our students are enjoying Baylor," Null said.

First-year living experience propels Baylor to top rankings

MACKENZIE GRIZZARD
Staff Writer

Living Learning Communities, resident chaplains and resident faculty are just some of the aspects of Baylor first-year living that achieved its ranking in the top 10 for learning communities in the U.S. News and World Report.

The U.S. News report specifically recognizes Baylor's first-year and LLCs, ranking them No. 7 and No. 6 in the nation.

Dr. Rob Engblom, senior associate director for resident learning, said Baylor's faculty involvement in student housing is a reason for this recent ranking.

"It's such a robust, multi-pronged kind of approach to community development and helping students be successful," Engblom said. "It helps [students] feel like Baylor is their

home away from home."

According to Engblom, the recent renovation of first-year communities Ruth Collins, Memorial and Alexander Halls contributed to Baylor's high ranking.

"When we create more desirable environments that are conducive to student success, it translates," Engblom said.

Curtis Reynolds, Baylor's vice president of business and chief financial officer, detailed the new renovations on Baylor's campus, particularly in student housing.

"Alexander and Memorial Halls have opened following an extensive renovation, and we added a staff front desk in the entrance of Memorial to provide an additional layer of safety," Reynolds said.

Along with Baylor's selection of first-year communities, LLCs are distinguished by academic



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

HOME AWAY FROM HOME Baylor's several Living Learning Communities provide a unique first-year experience as freshmen get acclimated.

classifications like Hallie Earle Hall's Science and Health LLC or extracurricular interests like Penland Hall's Outdoor Adventure LLC. This style of programming is what sets Baylor apart from other universities in the report, according to Engblom.

"It's an opportunity for students

to do life with others who are from a similar academic background or interest," Engblom said. "They're top-notch, highly relational and they're really invested in the success of our students."

Resident chaplains in campus housing also contributed to Baylor's

ranking, Engblom said.

Chaplains are Truett Seminary students that are trained by a Spiritual Life adviser to guide students during their time at Baylor.

The collaboration of Baylor faculty and chaplains in-residence are what sets the university apart, according to Vice President of Student Life Dr. Kevin Jackson.

"We now have faculty in-residence in every residence hall we have on campus, and that was a goal we've had for some time," Jackson said.

Baylor's first-year communities and LLCs continue to strive for something that, according to Engblom, is hard to find elsewhere.

"I think you'd be hard-pressed to find stronger, more caring communities than in our residence halls at Baylor," Engblom said.

Baylor University College of Arts & Sciences presents
The Beall-Russell Lecture in the Humanities

THE POWER OF STORIES



ISABEL ALLENDE

October 9, 2024

3:30 p.m. | Grand Ballroom | Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center

Lecture is free and open to the public.

For more information, visit baylor.edu/beall-russell.



Baylor University

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Leaping into October



PAWS ON THE FIELD On Sunday, Baylor women's soccer faced off against TCU, but that wasn't the only competition on the field. The annual corgi race graced the field during



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

Horsin' Around



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

UP AND OVER Sophomore Caroline Muth races through Fences during Baylor equestrian's 19-1 victory over Tarleton State in the final scrimmage Sunday at Willis Family Equestrian Center.



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

HURDLES Junior Lauren Jorgenson turns the corner during Fences as the Bears toppled Tarleton State 19-1 Sunday afternoon at Willis Family Equestrian Center.

Called to Go

HeartFire Missions held a prayer and worship night at the Hurd Welcome Center on Monday for all students. Speakers like Will Bowden, director of Baylor Baptist Student Ministries and Scott Drew, Baylor's head basketball coach, shared their stories. HeartFire is an organization "empowering a new generation of world changers" that sends students on missions trips around the world to spread the Gospel.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

SPEAKING OUT Baylor Men's Basketball coach Scott Drew gives a heartfelt speech at the Called to Go event at The Hurd Welcome Center on Sept. 30.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

FULL SURRENDER A student raises his hands in praise at the Called to Go missionary outreach event held by Heartfire Missions on Oct. 30. Heartfire led a worship service followed by an empowering informational panel where students were encouraged to undertake missions and spread the Christian faith.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

IN MEDITATION With his head lowered in prayer, a student reflects at the Called to Go outreach event by Heartfire Missions group. The organization brought attention to the need for student missionaries, bringing a wide variety of speakers in to enlighten the students on the good of mission work.

Truth in Body

Artist William Downs' most recent exhibit entitled "Truth in Body" opened on Sept. 17 at the Martin Museum of Art and will be on display until Dec. 22. The exhibit aims to capture what it means to be truly human through the expression of black and white painted figures.



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

MONOCHROME Black and white waterpainted figures on canvases are a staple of artist William Down's work.



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

TALES FROM ALL OVER The "Truth in Body" exhibit features work that is currently on tour across The United States.

Sweet victory: Sing champs Kappa Omega Tau to defend win at Pigskin

BELLA WHITMORE
Intern

Pigskin and Homecoming weekend are fast approaching, meaning practice is in full swing for those representing their letters in upcoming performances. With all eyes on them after their first place win this past Sing season, Kappa Omega Tau prepares not only to defend their title, but to have fun while doing it.

It is no secret that practicing and preparing for Pigskin is tricky and time-consuming for participating students. On top of the many hours put into practice, there is a certain added pressure to being the defending team, according to Pittsburgh senior and KOT member Luke D'Ambrosio.

"Since the spring, our seniors graduated, and we added new members who will now be participating in Pigskin this fall," D'Ambrosio said. "Winning first place ensures that we hold ourselves to a high standard in preparation for Pigskin. As the winning Sing act, we feel obligated to bring a performance of the same caliber for Pigskin."

Both Pigskin and Sing performances require time, energy and planning to polish acts to winning standards, said Highland Park senior and Sing co-chair Luke Martin.

"We practice for two hours, five days a week in order to make everything as similar as possible to the performance last spring," he said.

KOT's 2024 Sing performance, "Sweet Gingerbread Man," was choreographed to "Hard to Handle" by The Black Crowes and "Everybody" by Backstreet Boys with lyrics



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photographer

FRESH OFF THE PAN Instead of crumbling under the pressure, Kappa Omega Tau took the cake with their Sing performance in February. Their choreography was crisp and their song selection was sweet. The judges just couldn't resist — that's how the cookie crumbled.

modified to fit the theme. In the act, gingerbread boys come to life on a dining room table but have to run, run as fast as they can when one of them is eaten. In the end, the boys celebrate after gluing their broken gingerbread friend

back together with icing.

Martin talked about what it's like to recreate such an energetic act with a new set of members.

"Having the opportunity to recreate our act from last Spring alongside 90 of my favorite

people is the biggest blessing," Martin said. "Everyone in KOT has a love for this act, and we are so excited to get to put it back on stage. We are grateful and gracious for the ability to dance and sing, especially for a seven-minute act about gingerbread men."

KOT is a fraternity unique to Baylor. As the "Knights of Tradition," alongside guarding and upholding Baylor traditions, KOT greatly values honoring Biblical tradition and giving all the glory to God, according to D'Ambrosio.

"We have the opportunity to inspire joy in those who watch our performances and we try to be the best at what we do to advance God's love in this way," D'Ambrosio said.

Martin also discussed the spiritual core at the center of KOT's performances and how it impacts the group going into Pigskin this fall.

"The Lord has blessed this group of men with dedication and heart, but most importantly daily devotion and reliance in all we do," Martin said. "We wouldn't be able to do anything in this tradition without Him."

Pigskin this October, however, is far from where it ends for KOT. According to Martin, KOT plans to share the joy of their gingerbread gig across the state.

"Following Pigskin, we will be performing at Texas A&M for Songfest, hosted by Chi Omega," Martin said. "We are blessed and grateful for this opportunity to present Baylor Sing at another campus and showcase our act one last time."



Photo courtesy Michael Mastrodicasa

MUSIC THERAPY Through his dual passion, safety Michael Mastrodicasa uses his off time playing piano to recharge and reorient his football skills.

Football player finds his forte on and off the field

KALENA REYNOLDS
Staff Writer

While Austin senior Michael Mastrodicasa plays safety on the football team, off the field, he trades his pads for a piano. He posts his skills on his Instagram account, "Pianodicasa," all while balancing a neuroscience degree.

Originally, Mastrodicasa said he planned on only focusing on his neuroscience degree in college, but after COVID-19 took over, his focus shifted. He honed in on his athletic skills, ultimately landing him an offer from Baylor that he couldn't refuse.

Mastrodicasa always had a passion for music. He started playing trombone in middle school. By high school, he was faced with a choice between band and football, and though he picked the latter, his passion for music never left him. His sister would later be the one to reignite it.

"I had to pretty much give up my formal trombone studies," Mastrodicasa said, "And then, throughout high school, I had a musical itch in me that I couldn't really satisfy. I'm a big fan of music. I've always been a fan of video games and music soundtracks and orchestras and symphonies."

Katelin, Michael's sister, began taking piano lessons at a young age and continued progressing throughout her teenage years into adulthood. During Michael's senior year, amid the coronavirus pandemic, Michael was inspired by his sister to start playing piano and immediately felt at home amongst the keys.

"COVID came around, and I was going into my senior year of high school," Mastrodicasa said. "And we had a piano in the house, and I'd heard my sister play a lot growing up. I think it was just one random day that I got the inspiration. Like, 'What if I just sit down and start playing around?' and 'I wonder how fast I can pick this up, or if it's even a possible thing.'"

Mastrodicasa didn't know at the time that piano

would become such a significant part of his life, he said. This skill eventually turned into something that would not only clear his mind, but also improve his capability on the field.

"There's a lot of creativity that goes into football and how you approach things," Mastrodicasa said. "A lot of the work ethic is very similar to piano. There's almost like a hyperfixation when you're trying to learn a song. I think the same can be said when you're trying to master a football technique or when you're trying to get in the zone for a game. It's very similar to just sitting at the piano for hours, just losing yourself in the music."

Because Mastrodicasa is passionate about both piano and football, one of his greatest obstacles has been figuring out how to prioritize time in his otherwise busy schedule to play piano.

"Music is this beautiful, artistic thing that helps him think outside of the formulaic processing of football," Katelin Mastrodicasa said. "That's what helps him balance it out. He's got an outlet. He's got something that's different. I think if his entire life was football, he would not be the person that he is today. I think balancing them has been something that he's had to learn, and appreciating them for their differences is something that has been learned as well."

Mastrodicasa's Instagram serves as a place to keep track of his progression in his musical journey while also sharing his passion with his family while away at college.

After graduation, Mastrodicasa plans to attend medical school and foresees that music, specifically piano, will continue to be a large part of his life and, ultimately, a place of mental clarity.

"If I was able to maintain the hobby while I'm playing football, I think I'll be just fine later on in life," Mastrodicasa said. "So I think it'll always be a hobby, for sure, and if, for whatever reason, it becomes more than that, it's definitely a welcome thing."

YouTuber, Baylor alum opens Waco soda shop

KALENA REYNOLDS
Staff Writer

Baylor alumna and YouTuber Brooklyn McKnight opened a new soda shop in Woodway alongside her husband, Dakota Blackburn. The shop's grand opening was on Friday.

McKnight originally got her vlogging start on her mom's YouTube channel, "Cute Girls Hairstyles," then eventually started her own channel with her twin sister, Bailey. They both majored in entrepreneurship at Baylor, and McKnight said she has been implementing those skills towards her new business venture: Sip City.

"So it's been about a year that we've had Waco in the works," McKnight said. "And obviously, I have a tie to Waco. You know, I graduated from Baylor as well, and the community there's just awesome."

The shop carries a variety of beverages including soda, energy drinks, blended drinks and sparkling water — all mixed and blended with different flavors and creams in order to make delicious, handcrafted personalized drinks, she said.

"When we first opened about a year ago... a lot of it was just sampling drinks, trying out our own concoctions, making the ratio of syrup to carbonation — to everything, perfect, so that it tasted really great," McKnight said.

So far, most popular drink combos from the Woodway location include Dr Pepper, McKnight said. One of them, called the "Dallas," includes Dr Pepper mixed with peach, vanilla and vanilla cream.

The menu also includes a variety of edible cookie dough flavors, including cookies and cream, chocolate chip and confetti.

McKnight said how grateful she was to be able to implement her business in the area where she got her degree, which also enabled her to give back to the community.

"I was able to support other businesses at my time there, and it's just awesome to be able to see that go first full circle with other students," McKnight said.

McKnight and her husband plan on opening two more Sip City locations in the next two years, but locations have not been announced yet.

Loveland, Colo., sophomore Ryan Jensen said that the soda shop was very cute and in a nice location.

"It was cute and it was modern," Jensen said. "The line was super long. It was like way down the street and around the corner."

Jensen also said that it was inspiring to see a Baylor alumna accomplish this type of entrepreneurial quest and hand drinks out the window of her very own shop.

"It's really fun to actually see her in the environment," Jensen said. "I think it's really cool that a Baylor grad was able to accomplish something that big and then bring it back to where it all started."

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Baylor football amps up for clash with No. 16 Iowa State

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

From blowing a two-score lead against Colorado to a failed comeback against No. 22 BYU, Baylor football has been only a few plays away from sitting atop the Big 12. But after failing to find one more first down in Boulder and falling into a 21-0 deficit against the Cougars, the green and gold are still hanging on to the idea of proving themselves.

Since redshirt junior quarterback Sawyer Robertson took over in Week 3, Baylor (2-3, 0-2 Big 12) has seen him set career-high marks twice. But without the wins, Robertson's gritty performance has been overshadowed by the team's failure to start and finish games. A bounce-back opportunity for the Bears doesn't get any easier to find as they ready to face No. 16 Iowa State at 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Jack Trice Stadium in Ames, Iowa.

"You don't play to get close. Nobody remembers the guys that get close to winning; they remember the guys that do win," Robertson said. "Putting it all together and getting a win is really important. We want to do that. I think everybody is tired of getting close."

The close calls have forced head coach Dave Aranda to find a different way to teach game plans. However, a change in the technical approach can only do so much as the Bears search for a game day fix.

"The change would be playing four quarters of football. I think that would be the start of it. Whether it's this past game, we have two of our most stalwart guys on defense just not read and diagnose the key basic plays. And I take responsibility for that," Aranda said. "We've got guys that can do it, and we've got to hold them accountable to do it."

Despite struggling in the first half to find a steady advantage, Baylor has outscored opponents 72-20 after the halftime break this season. However, in the first quarters of their previous four games, the Bears have been outscored 45-13.

"Nobody in the Big 12 Conference has played

better in the second half," Iowa State head coach Matt Campbell said about Baylor's strong play after the halftime break. "Their kids are playing really hard. As the game goes, they just keep getting better and better."

After receiving one-game suspensions, sixth-year senior linebacker Linton and redshirt junior tight end Michael Trigg will be back on the field against Iowa State. Eight other players missed the fight with No. 22 BYU due to injuries, but Aranda only noted that sixth-year senior linebacker Garmon Randolph and senior right tackle Campbell Barrington returned to practice on Monday with the expectation of participating on Saturday.

With 10 players out against the Cougars, Aranda rolled on with a "next man up" mentality. Questions still remain on how many key contributors could miss extended time, a possibility that could lead to more run-time for players deeper on the depth chart who were forced into key minutes against BYU.

"I think the guys that stepped up played really strong in their absence. I thought that some of the mistakes and the errors that led to points early in that first quarter and first half were not those guys," Aranda said. "To build depth in those types of situations is kind of a silver lining to it."

In addition to injuries, freshman Connor Hawkins took over the place-kicking duties for redshirt junior Isaiah Hankins. Aranda noted he made the switch because "we have to be better at kicking field goals."

For the first time this season, Baylor's special teams unit will be matched in performance by Iowa State. The Bears have players leading the Big 12 in kick return average (Jamaal Bell's 36.0 yards), punt return average (Josh Cameron's 19.3 yards) and punting average (Palmer Williams' 53.4 yards). The Cyclones bring an approach of prevention, as they've allowed the fewest explosive plays on special teams of any other Big 12 school.

"They've got big bodies, and they're mobile enough to get on you, and they can out-physical you at the point of attack where they can create

really strong double teams. And not only do they pressure, but their returns are really strong," Aranda said. "Last week for us on special teams is probably our toughest game, probably the one game that we were below the standard. So we need to respond in a major way."

Robertson and the Baylor offense are in for their toughest test yet, as Iowa State has allowed the fewest points per game (7.3), passing yards per game (102.5) and touchdowns (3) of any team in the Big 12. The Cyclones are coming off a 20-0 win over Houston (1-4, 0-2 Big 12), allowing just 72 passing yards.

"I'm expecting them to be a really great challenge, like everybody has been in this conference so far," Robertson said. "That's why you play the game, for matchups like that and to play against competition like that. I'm looking forward to it."

Excited for another chance to right the ship, redshirt junior defensive end Jackie Marshall felt the defensive unit needed to play free. After recording eight sacks as a team against Colorado, the Bears could not chase one down against BYU. Even without the stats or results, Marshall kept it simple when asked about the team's next steps.

"I'm always ready to go. After a loss or a win, I think everybody on this team is ready to go," Marshall said.

Kickoff is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Jack Trice Stadium in Ames, Iowa. The game will be broadcast on FOX, marking the fifth-consecutive nationally televised game for the Bears, who were only broadcast nationally five times total in 2023.



Sawyer Robertson (13)
Kassidy Tsikitas | Photographer



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

STICKY HANDS Redshirt junior wide receiver Josh Cameron snags a pass in Baylor's 34-28 loss to No. 22 BYU Saturday at McLane Stadium.

Thompson, baseball focus on culture, development in fall

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

In the third year under head coach Mitch Thompson, Baylor baseball is back on the diamond searching for its first postseason berth since the veteran head coach took over. The Bears went 22-31 in 2024 and almost doubled their Big 12 win total from Thompson's first season.

With a brand new season comes a brand new style of fall ball for Thompson's Bears. The green and gold will have three free and open-to-the-public scrimmages each week during the fall to showcase the team's talent as each guy competes for a

starting job.

"I think this is the most depth we've had both on the mound and position player-wise. I think that it's exciting to see. And you know, when I say that there's competition on the field, there's definite competition at every position," Thompson said. "It'll be fun sifting through the guys and sifting through the options that we have and watching the cream rise to the top."

The Bears made strides in Big 12 play, staying in Big 12 Tournament contention until the final weekend of regular season play. Despite the heartbreak of coming up short, Thompson maintained the core

of key contributors that led to the competitive shift from 2023 to 2024.

"We just have to keep getting better, but we have to win. It's tough to build if you can't keep your guys here. So I was thrilled that the guys all wanted to stay," Thompson said. "As we keep building, the idea is to get good and win. And that's the plan, to continue to make those steps and be able to do that."

All three Baylor bats who hit over .300 in 2024 decided to return for their second season in the green and gold. Redshirt senior outfielder Enzo Apodaca (.333 AVG), 2024 Second-Team All-Big 12 senior designated hitter Wesley Jordan (.331 AVG) and senior outfielder Ty Johnson (.313 AVG) all trotted out for fall ball with a big focus on being intentional with everything they do leading up to the season.

"How you do anything is how you do everything. I think that's really building a culture around here that's going to get us more wins," Johnson said.

The Baylor lineup will be consistent, with five other Opening Day starters returning to Baylor Ballpark. Senior catcher Cortlan Castle and senior third baseman Hunter Teplansky have been signposts on the infield since their sophomore seasons in 2023. Redshirt junior first baseman and outfielder Gavin Brzozowski and redshirt senior outfielder Hunter Simmons will look to make up for lost time after missing breakout opportunities due to early season injuries in the first week of 2024. Senior shortstop Tyriq Kemp

also started on Opening Day and flashed power potential toward the back end of his first season in Waco.

While the lineup will be filled with experience, the pitching staff endured a makeover during the summer. The green and gold added pitching coach Sean Snedeker in the offseason who came to Waco with 31 years of experience churning out MLB talent. With a resume full of big leaguers, Snedeker has prioritized developing the talent on the roster and emphasizing throwing strikes.

"A lot of guys are just pitching with swagger. I know we've only seen a small sample size of it so far, but we've seen so many guys go out there with confidence. They're just trying to fill up the strike zone and that's all they're focused on," Johnson said. "It's showing to be super successful."

Baylor's pitching staff in 2024 was led by left-handed pitcher Ethan Calder, who enters his junior season after finishing fourth in the Big 12 in ERA (3.23). Calder's 5-3 record and 41 strikeouts boosted him into the starting rotation by the end of the season. The rest of the starting rotation moved on from Baylor, with junior right-handed pitcher Mason Marriot being drafted by the Arizona Diamondbacks in the sixth round of the MLB Draft and redshirt freshman right-handed pitcher Collin McKinney transferring to Arizona.

But even with key departures, Thompson brought in a talented group of JUCO transfers, including Tyler Junior College junior right-handed pitcher Grayson Murry, Blinn College redshirt sophomore right-

handed pitcher Lucas Davenport and McLennan Community College left-handed pitcher Stefan Stahl. Baylor also added a strong freshman class with right-handed pitcher Brayden Bergman being named Perfect Game USA's No. 20 best freshman prospect to make it to campus, and left-handed pitcher Carson Bailey, who struck out two batters in his first intrasquad inning of the season.

"Carson Bailey has been a really good arm. A lot of the JUCO transfer arms are really good, [they] fill up the zone a lot," Calder said. "Grayson Murry is a different look. So we have a lot of different things that we've added and a lot of strike throws, which is definitely good."

The Bears opened in the fall with 50 guys on their roster, and they will need to cut down to 40 by spring. Seven of Baylor's pitchers are a part of the 16-player freshman class who are already taking strides towards being impact players on the 40-man roster. Across the first two scrimmages, the staff recorded 20 strikeouts across 18 innings while only walking five batters.

"We're excited about what we have. There's multiple [freshman pitchers] that are guys that you can really dream on," Thompson said. "That's exciting. We just have to grow them now up every day."

Baylor baseball will hold intrasquad scrimmages throughout the fall. The Bears will play on Thursday, Friday and Saturday this week. First pitch times will be announced weekly on Baylor Baseball's social media channels.



Foster Nicholas | Sports Editor

THROWIN' GAS Redshirt senior right-handed pitcher Gabe Craig uses the two-seamer in Baylor's first intrasquad scrimmage Friday at Baylor Ballpark.

Tennis star Cristina Tiglea brings experience to Baylor

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

Most 11-year-olds spend their days playing Nintendo Switch, watching hours of brain rot TikTok videos and adjusting to the perils of middle school.

When Cristina Tiglea was 11, she left home to join the Italian national tennis team.

"I always wanted to play tennis," said Tiglea, a senior Texas Tech transfer. "There were some days where I'm like, 'I don't have a life; I feel kind of lonely,' because I left home when I was 11 to go practice with the national team. So it was kind of hard. I didn't have a normal childhood, just like the other tennis players. But I just realized that that's my life, and I want to keep going."

Born into a family of professional athletes — Tiglea's mother and aunt played tennis and her father played rugby — the Milan, Italy native always hoped to make her mother's dreams a reality.

"I started to play tennis when I was four or five," Tiglea said. "My mom and aunt were both professional tennis players, but they couldn't spend a lot of money or invest in their pro career because back then there was Communism, because they are Romanians. So there wasn't enough support from my grandparents. And I said to myself, 'I have to carry on; I have to make this dream come true.'"

"When I was 11 or 12, I felt different than the other kids that were still at school, still playing with the toys, video games," Tiglea said. "Whenever they were inviting me to do something, I was like, 'No, I have tennis; I'm



Photo Courtesy of Baylor Athletics

LOCKED IN Senior Cristina Tiglea kicked-off her season at the ITA Women's All-American Championships on Sept. 25 in Cary, N.C.

sorry.' For me, it was a job. If a professor was asking me, 'What do you want to be in five years?' — I want to be a tennis player. That was my first answer. So, no Plan B."

Italian law dictates that prospective national team members finish their middle school education. Tiglea, therefore, would alternate: a week practicing with the national team, a month of school and private lessons from her tennis coach and then back again to travel with the national team.

The lifestyle often took her away from her parents for long stretches of time.

"I also have a little sister, that sometimes I regret[not spending] enough time with

her, but what I'm doing is also for them," Tiglea said. "I put a lot of sacrifice, but I never felt like that was too much, leaving from a very young age. Actually it helped me to grow there, and I feel more mature."

With interest pouring in from American scouts, Tiglea decided to shirk conventional wisdom and head stateside. She moved from Milan to Lubbock to enroll at Texas Tech, where she played her first three seasons of college ball. Then, an awkward exit.

Two weeks before Tiglea was set to represent the Red Raiders at the NCAA Tournament, she entered the transfer portal. Pressure mounted immediately, as

some called her a "betrayer." Several coaches badmouthed Baylor coaches and players and gave her a hard time about her decision, which she says was made for personal reasons.

Baylor cared about her as a person, she said; Texas Tech just wanted her as a player.

"That thing made me realize that I wasted my time there," Tiglea said.

After leading the Red Raiders to a second-round finish in the NCAA Tournament, she packed up and headed to Waco, where she plays a key role on the team. When asked about individuals, Baylor head coach Joey Scrivano thinks

first of Tiglea.

"Immediately, I think of Cristina Tiglea, who transferred from Texas Tech and is, I think, currently 27th-ranked in the country," Scrivano said. "So that's gonna be a big deal for her, that event in her mind, she's going to be trying to earn a spot in that event. All of the girls are, but that's a player that definitely is going to be having more of a short-term focus [ahead of November's NCAA individual championships.]"

Tiglea's presence has immediately been felt off the court, where she's hit it off with other players. Sophomore Zuzanna Kubacha said their

relationship stretches back to Tiglea's Texas Tech days, when her congeniality immediately stood out to the then-freshman.

"When I first met her, when I first saw her at Texas Tech, back then we still didn't know that she was going to come here," Kubacha said. "I literally did not know her, and I did not know any other girl from their team personally, but she was the only one who smiled, and even not knowing me said 'Hi,' and said 'How are you?' and started talking to me."

"From Day 1, she's super supportive. She's a leader. We can tell that she's a leader on our team. She's taking things in her hands, she's not waiting for anybody to speak up, to stand out. She's the one who's taking care of us."

Tiglea kick-started her season on Sept. 25 at the ITA Women's All-American Championships in Cary, North Carolina, where she lost in two sets after drawing No. 3-ranked Celia-Belle Mohr in the first round.

There's an added layer of pressure on early-season qualifying tournaments now that the NCAA's Individual Championships have been pushed to the fall, but Tiglea is ready for the challenge. This is what she lives for.

"I love tennis; I have so much passion," Tiglea said. "I'm really excited and thrilled to finish my college career here. And I have this positive vibe, like, good feeling that we're gonna do so good during the season in the spring.... I can't wait."

Five-star wing Tounde Yessoufou commits to Baylor

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

Baylor men's basketball secured its first commitment of the 2025 cycle Wednesday with five-star wing Tounde Yessoufou, who committed to the Bears over USC and Arizona State.

Yessoufou, the No. 17 recruit in the country, moved to the United States from Benin before enrolling at Santa Maria (Calif.) St. Joseph. He dominated the Mountain League, leading the Knights to a 31-4 record while averaging 32.3 points, 10.2 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 2.6 steals on 52% shooting.

"I felt the energy, the brotherhood," Yessoufou said during his commitment livestream. "The coaches, they were super, super genuine — not that the other team wasn't genuine, but I felt like something was right, and it feel like home."

"I went to their practice facility and I saw them practicing. I feel like coach Scott Drew — great guy, he looks like he trusts his players to just do the right [thing] and play the right way. And that's something I want to be a part of."

Drew has been on an all-time recruiting heater since the pandemic. Between the 2021-25 classes, he's earned commitments from six different five-stars in the 247Sports Composite, plus former five-stars Yves Missi (who reclassified up a year) and freshman forward Jason Asemota.

Yessoufou is currently slotted as Baylor's No. 8-ranked recruit of all time, joining nine other recruits from the 2021-25 classes in the top 15. He'll be the second of that group to finish his high school career in California, joining Missi, who graduated from Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep.

Pairing powerful slashing athleticism with a V-8 defensive engine, Yessoufou



Foster Nicholas | Sports Editor

CALL IT OUT Baylor men's basketball head coach Scott Drew has landed eight five-start prospects to Waco since 2021. The Bears started official practices on Monday, Sept. 23, at the Foster Pavilion.

offers strength and two-way ability rarely seen in Waco. He's also flashed shooting and playmaking upside, though he'll likely need to speed up his release to consistently make



I felt the energy, the brotherhood. The coaches, they were super, super genuine.

TOUNDE YESSOUFOU
| BAYLOR MBB FIVE-STAR WING

three-pointers at the next level.

"Yessoufou is a physical specimen," Adam Finkelstein, 247Sports' director of scouting, wrote of the 6-foot-6, 210 pound Baylor commit. "He's long, strong, and athletic with a chiseled frame. He's also a relentless competitor who plays with a constantly high motor. He's one of the most consistently productive players in the class, not just because his physical tools can be overwhelming, but because he's continued to develop his skill-set, and diversify his attack."

Yessoufou is the first commit in a 2025 class that could shape up to again rank among the best in the nation. The Bears have secured top-15 classes in three of the past four years, peaking at No. 6 in 2024.

Baylor men's basketball will open the 2024-25 season on Nov. 4 against Gonzaga at Spokane Arena in Spokane, Wash. Tipoff time is still to be determined.

Men's Basketball Non-Conference Schedule:

@ Gonzaga Nov. 4
@ Arkansas Nov. 9 (Dallas)
Vs. Sam Houston Nov. 12
Vs. Tarleton Nov. 17

@ St. John's Nov. 21 (Bahamas)
@ UVA/Tennessee Nov. 22 (Bahamas)
Vs. New Orleans Nov. 27
@ UConn Dec. 4

Vs. ACU Dec. 9
Vs. Norfolk State Dec. 11
Vs. Arlington Baptist Dec. 27

POP AT THE POLLS from A1

Celebrity endorsements can be difficult to trust, he said, as celebrities may be paid to endorse certain candidates and do events with them. "I think a lot of times celebrities say they do the education, but they're like 'Oh I get a check, and I just have to say this? I'm definitely going to do that,'" Stroka said. Stroka said celebrity endorsements can be unfair toward voters, as celebrities aren't on the same playing field as a typical American.

"A lot of times, a normal voter isn't going to be able to relate to someone with all that fame and money," Stroka said. Dr. Benjamin Kleinerman, a professor of political science at Baylor, said most of the research done on celebrity endorsements proves that they are not very effective in swaying political opinions. "I think most everyone feels essentially the same way these students do," Kleinerman said.

TOP NOTCH from A1

"It's also the case that universities committed to a strong undergraduate education are often good at more than one aspect of it," Brickhouse said. "We are good at both undergraduate teaching and undergraduate research. Our commitment to our students is multifaceted and is revealed by high rankings in multiple categories." Among the different categories, Baylor was ranked No. 6 for learning communities, No. 7 for first-year experience, No. 11 for undergraduate entrepreneurship, No. 23 for undergraduate research, No. 26 for undergraduate teaching and No. 26 for most innovative schools. Dr. J. Wesley Null, vice provost for undergraduate education and academic affairs, said the report ranking Baylor highly in learning communities and first-year experience highlights the collaboration between the Academic Affairs division and the Student Life division of the university. "Things like our faculty and residence program... the mentorship that our faculty provide to our students - that's a serious thing that we take at Baylor that has to do a lot with our Christian mission and the desire by our faculty to get to know students on a personal level and help them achieve

their goals," Null said. Baylor ranking highly in undergraduate entrepreneurship, research, teaching and most innovative schools shows how seriously Baylor takes research and high-quality teaching, Null said.

Whether you're a current student or an alumnus, you need to be proud of that.

DR. J. WESLEY NULL | VICE PROVOST FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

"If a... student decides to come to Baylor, they're going to have, I think in many respects, the best of all worlds in terms of a serious research university, an R1 university

that's also deeply committed to its Christian identity, but then also expects our faculty to be high-quality teachers at the same time," Null said. "So I think we're occupying a space where we integrate all of those things in a way that's powerful to students ... and I think it's our Christian mission that enables us to do that." An area that Baylor can improve on based on the report is its retention and graduation rates, Null said. He said Baylor moved up in terms of fall-to-fall retention, with the freshmen rising to 90% based on a three-year average done by U.S. News. Null said Baylor had a 90.9% retention rate with the class of 2023. "But even though we've made improvements, we need to do better because there are institutions that are doing a little bit better than us in those spaces, and we need to redouble our efforts to do better," Null said. Faculty, students and alumni of Baylor should care about the report because it highlights the continued improvement of a Baylor education, Null said. "These kinds of rankings... help to extend and enhance the value of a better education, the quality and the standing in the world of a better education," Null said. "And whether you're a current student or an alumnus, you need to be proud of that."

COMMITTED TO CARE from A1

nursing programs in the nation. Nursing was also indicated as Baylor's most popular major, making up 11% of 2023 undergraduates, according to the report. In order to get accepted, students must keep their GPA at or above 3.0 for all pre-requisites, hold a lab science GPA of at least 2.75, complete 43 of 59 required pre-requisite courses prior to application and score at least an 80% on the HESI exam. The school offers a FastBacc program for graduate students who have a bachelor's degree in a non-nursing discipline. This offers students the ability to earn their Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 12 months. Alumna Maury Robertson works as a labor and delivery registered nurse after earning her bachelor's through the FastBacc program. "My experience as a student was amazing," Robertson said. "It was definitely stressful at times because of the fast

pace, [but] I thoroughly enjoyed each and every class." Their motto, "learn, lead, serve," drives the foundational commitments of the school as it seeks to educate students to become not only nurses, but also great leaders who are capable of serving, leading and sharing their faith with others. "All of the concepts and classes have a foundation in faith, and I think that makes the program so desirable," Robertson said. Dean of Nursing Dr. Linda Plank said she is proud to see such a growth in the school as students accept the challenges and pursue their passions towards becoming the healthcare providers they feel called to be. "This special calling to serve others through academic excellence results in qualities that are unique to a Baylor nursing graduate and instantly recognized and appreciated by patients, employers and the community," Plank said.

HEALTH MATTERS from A1

Dr. Heather Clinton, Baylor staff nurse practitioner, said if a student is unsure about whether they feel something concerning, they are always welcome to come into the Health and Wellness Center. "Although breast cancer is very rare in the college-age population and very rarely causes death, we can conduct

a clinical health exam to check and either refer students to another doctor or encourage them to go to their primary care provider if we see anything out of the ordinary," Clinton said. If that's the case, Clinton said it's good to catch it early. "When a patient is able to detect it in an early stage,

they can then be sent to appropriate locations that can provide them with the help they need," Clinton said. "Again, while our office does get the occasional student concerned about a possible detection, this is not a daily concern we see from the student population as a whole."



Cameron McCollum | Photographer
QUICK, EASY, LIFE-SAVING Though breast cancer is rare in the college-age female population, checking early and often is vital in catching the disease.

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