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Baylor, it’s time to raise student workers’ wages

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

There are many benefits to having an on-campus job, such as flexibility, convenience and building your résumé. However, the pay rate is not one of those benefits. Undergraduate, graduate and international students all have the opportunity to work on campus, which is why Baylor places an average of 4,000 students in student worker jobs every year. Of course the process of becoming a student worker can vary depending on what type of student you are.

For undergraduate students, all that is required to become a student worker is that you are currently enrolled and are in good academic standing. On-campus employment jobs are part-time jobs equal to or less than 20 hours per week that are located on Baylor’s campus. These may be funded through Federal Work-Study, Texas College or University Work-Study dollars. Community Service Federal Work-Study Program jobs are for students who have Federal Work-Study eligibility. These are organizations where the university provides a sponsorship through Federal Work-Study dollars for students to gain important work experience.

For graduate students, there is the opportunity to have a graduate assistant job, and jobs



James Ellis | Cartoonist

not tied to academic programs are considered internships for graduate degree level students (Graduate Student Employee Biweekly). These positions are project-based and related to the student’s major or field of interest. Assistantships, fellowships or other similarly related positions are categorized as students with work related to their degree program and are managed through the graduate school. Graduate assistants do not receive the same benefits as teaching assistants or research

assistants and are similar to an on-campus undergraduate job with the exception they perform higher levels of work.

As for international students, the main requirement they must fulfill is having work authorization to work in the U.S. before applying to work for the university.

What do all these types of student workers have in common? They are all underpaid. Student workers at Baylor are typically paid minimum wage, but some positions offer competitive

pay, and the pay for specific positions can vary depending on the department and the role. For some positions, like those in the Campus Recreation department, workers can earn \$13 per hour. Part-time teaching assistants can earn \$18.75 per hour. Those last two are more doable for students, but the number of positions with pay like these are few and far between on Baylor’s student job board.

The argument could be made that since Texas’ minimum wage is \$7.25 per

hour — which is the same as the federal minimum wage which was set in 2009 — Baylor is paying its student employees a reasonable amount. Except we’re no longer in 2009. It’s 2025, meaning Baylor students are dealing with over a decade-long inflation rise. The dollar had an average inflation rate of 2.48% per year between 2009 and now, producing a cumulative price increase of 48.07%. This means that today’s prices are 1.48 times as high as average prices since 2009, according to the Bureau

of Labor Statistics consumer price index.

We haven’t even discussed the cost of living in Waco for students. It is unfortunately accepted among students that housing has become outrageous and unaffordable for those who are working minimum wage jobs as a full-time student. The average monthly rent for a single-bedroom apartment in Waco is \$1,035. If someone is getting paid minimum wage, 20 hours a week, for one month, they are making roughly \$580 at the end of the month. That’s not even including other expenses. Yikes. Another argument could be made that the university could just raise the amount of hours a student worker is allowed to work in a week. Unfortunately, federal law requires that a student’s total work hours for all on-campus jobs cannot exceed 20 during the school term. However, a student may work full-time during periods when school is not in session or during the student’s annual break. So there is not much Baylor can do unless federal law changes.

But what Baylor can do without federal regulation getting in the way is determine the student wages that it gives out. Whether it’s through one of the many fundraising events the university does throughout the year or through donors, Baylor needs to allocate more money to its student workers if it really wants its students to be successful.

‘Self-help’ influencers have gone too far

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Staff Writer



By now, almost everyone has seen the viral video of Ashton Hall’s morning routine, where the comically muscular man takes six hours

Self help is a great thing, but it’s only great when we remember that the “help” is more important than the “self.”

to meticulously prepare for his day. Although reactions to this video have been skeptical of the efficacy of Hall’s quarter-day “life-changing” routine, the video still signals that our infatuation with self-help has gone too far. Hall, a former running back at Alcorn State University, is up before 4 a.m. (according to his video, at least). At 3:52 a.m., he rips a bandage off of his mouth that keeps his lips sealed overnight and promises “life-changing sleep.” Two minutes later, he screws open his first bottle of Saratoga Spring Water — which has benefited greatly from the product placement. He takes a swig and then carries the bottle around with him for much of the morning as he completes his routine. You can watch everything he does on his TikTok, but some of the most notable things Hall does include swan diving into his rooftop pool, cleaning his face with a banana peel, and, of course, dousing his face in a bucket of ice water on two separate occasions.

As Hall’s six hours of personal time comes to a close, the video wraps up, leaving most viewers laughing at such an unrealistic ritual. Although audiences are largely mature enough to not take Hall’s post seriously, the existence of a man who sincerely believes in a 3 a.m. to 9 a.m. morning routine full of Patrick Bateman-esque

rituals might be on its own enough to take a cold, hard look at what self-help has become.

HEALTH OR WEALTH?

Alongside his avant-garde practices, there’s something else present in almost every scene of Hall’s self-care documentaries: displays of wealth. Whether it’s walking outside to his high-rise balcony for 20 minutes of push-ups or slapping on a gold Rolex just to run wind sprints, opulence is everywhere. It makes it pretty hard to determine whether Hall is advocating for health or wealth.

We should stay healthy to be happy, or so we can be around longer for the ones we love. But recently, early morning self-care routines have become attractive because of an obsession with billionaire best practices. It has me wondering if we care more about the impacts of a morning routine on our health, or on our bank account.

SELF-HELP OR HELP OTHERS?

The term “self-help” has become one of ultimate admiration in our society. Hitting the gym, focusing on school or work, maintaining a

healthy diet and other forms of self-improvement are now more venerated than ever. And for the most part, that veneration is warranted. These practices make people better and stronger, giving them more energy and ability to help those around them.

But helping others isn’t really at the forefront of the self-help discussion. Just take a look at the caption on Hall’s post: “[Between] 4:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m., no one’s calling or distracting your productivity ... They are asleep. 8:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m. is the opposite.”

“ME” TIME VS. “WE” TIME

Hall probably doesn’t mean this, but it sounds an awful lot like he’s saying that we should prioritize our needs over the calls of others, that “me” time is more important than “we” time. This thinking makes self-help completely worthless — if not to help other people, why are we improving ourselves in the first place? Yet it sadly seems like the interpretation we are headed toward.

Self-help is a great thing, but it’s only great when we remember that the “help” is more important than the “self.” Christians and non-Christians alike should remember that the greatest benefit of getting stronger is not a six-pack or a penthouse; it’s the ability it gives us to lift others up.

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DIADELOSO



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

BACK N' FORTH Students and Waco residents gathered to ride "Pirates Revenge," a back and forth swing ride on Fountain Mall.



Brady Harris | Photographer

SIC 'EM The Diadeloso letters were colorfully painted for spring this year.



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

SITTIN' PRETTY Students lined up to get caricature portraits outside the Student Union Building during Diadeloso.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

SPLAT! Students gear up for the "Splatter Room," where they could throw paint with no bounds.



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

SWEET TREAT Many food trucks were present during Diadeloso, including Kona Ice with their self-serve snow cones.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

STEPPIN' UP Students compete against each other at the Jacob's Ladder attraction.

Baylor celebrates Graduate Student Appreciation Week with movie nights, free parking giveaways

EMILY SCHOCH
Staff Writer

Baylor is shining a spotlight on its graduate students this week with a series of events celebrating Graduate Student Appreciation Week, offering everything from free food to professional development workshops in recognition of their academic contributions and campus involvement.

Throughout Graduate Student Appreciation Week, a variety of events were planned to honor and celebrate the contributions of graduate students. The week kicked off with a “Bring Your Own Dinner + Dog Picnic” Sunday evening on Fountain Mall, where students, faculty and their families enjoyed desserts and drinks provided by the Graduate Student Association.

On Monday morning, the Graduate Research Center hosted a "Donuts & Coffee" event, offering the first 25 attendees a GSA coffee mug. Wednesday featured the "GSA Assembly & Pizza Lunch" in the GRC, during which newly elected officers were announced and updates on graduate student advocacy were shared.

Thursday's schedule includes "Pop's Lemonade with the Deans & Doors Prizes" at the Graduate School, providing an opportunity to meet the deans and win prizes such as a year of free faculty/staff parking, gift cards to local businesses and dining hall vouchers.

The week concludes on Friday evening with a movie night at Cinemark, featuring a screening of "The Lost King," with tickets available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Dr. Sara Dolan, GSA
faculty sponsor and
associate dean for professional



Photo courtesy of Robbie Rogers

EARNING THEIR FLOWERS Baylor hosts Graduate Student Appreciation Week from April 7-11 to recognize the work and research that graduate students conduct.

development, said Graduate Student Appreciation Week is a way to gather graduate students while celebrating how far they've come in their academic journey. It is also a way to show the Baylor community the amount of research graduate students conduct in order to further undergraduate education, she said.

“Graduate Student Appreciation Week is a national event designed to honor the hard work and dedication of our graduate students,” Dolan said. “The Baylor GSA participates in this event to share with the Baylor family the importance of graduate students to the

university's mission. Provost Brickhouse often says that graduate students are the engines that drive the research enterprise, and this week gives all of us an opportunity to celebrate them."

Callie Myers-Price, collegiality and community committee co-chair of the Graduate Student Association, said via email that Graduate Student Appreciation Week is a way to put a spotlight on graduate students showcasing the hard work and research that goes into earning a master's or doctorate degree.

“The Graduate Student Association is a student-led organization and prioritizes leading through service,” she

said. "This includes creating a community that advocates for the diverse needs of graduate students as well as celebrates their accomplishments. Graduate Student Appreciation Week is a special opportunity to dedicate time to celebrating graduate students for being who they are — change agents leading the next generation of worldwide impact."

Many graduate programs are also joining in the celebration by hosting their own events. Some are organizing meals with faculty and students, while others have given out small gifts to show appreciation, Dolan said.

"Departments that have graduate students have been

encouraged to host their own events for their students," Dolan said. "Some are hosting meals for faculty and graduate students, some have purchased gifts for their students ... it's been neat to see what different departments do to honor the contributions and hard work of their graduate students."

Although not all graduate student actively participate in GSA, the association — and Graduate Student Appreciate Week — includes all students.

"All Baylor graduate students are members of GSA when they enroll. Each can be as involved as he or she wants to be. Any student can run for a GSA officer position," Dolan said.

Dolan explained that there are many roles within the GSA, and by choosing to be a part of the association students can participate in improving their respective academic department.

“Every department has a GSA representative who serves as a liaison and votes on behalf of the students in their department, and GSA is always looking for energetic people to fill those roles,” Dolan said. “GSA events are mostly social in nature to offer graduate students from different programs across campus and beyond to get to know one another and build community and connection to Baylor.”

AI sparks piracy concerns

COLE GEE
Staff Writer

Social media was ablaze after Open AI introduced the new GPT-4o, which allows users to use the AI to generate images. Sam Altman, Open AI CEO, said they were receiving so many new users that the “company’s servers were melting.”

This could be traced back to the popular Studio Ghibli trend, where users prompted the image generator to turn selfies, memes or art into the famous anime style of Hayao Miyazaki.

In the past, Miyazaki has made his thoughts on AI animation clear. Back in 2016, he was able to view an early demo of an AI generated video. When asked his thoughts on the emerging technology he stated his disapproval.

"Whoever creates this stuff has no idea what pain is whatsoever," Miyazaki said. "I am utterly disgusted ... I strongly feel that this is an insult to life itself."

While plenty of people were using the generator for fun, other figureheads in the animation community shared this same sentiment, believing that AI is beginning to replace or trivialize the toils of hard-working animators. Other animators and artists argue that this is the next natural step in the evolution of art in the 21st century.

Baylor graphic design professor Genaro Rivero has been working in the field for over a decade and has been teaching at Baylor since 2023. On the topic of AI, he is a lot more open to emerging technology and puts emphasis on teaching his students how to properly utilize it.

AI is not gonna take your job, alright? First and foremost," Rivero said. "But the designers that are embracing AI, using AI and educating themselves in this new technology will take their jobs. Why? Because AI makes everything faster. It makes the things that we as designers don't want to do."

Rivero also argues that AI is just the latest notch in a long line of emerging technologies that have convinced artists they'd be replaced. Just like how people thought the camera was replacing landscape painters, or that the printing press would make art too accessible to the public. Even now in modern times, digital tablets and computers allow people to draw art without a pencil or paintbrush.

As technology improves the way people create and consume, art will also change.

"Now, going back to art and art history, the apprentice used to do painting and then the master came in and signed it," Rivero said. "So what will be the difference now if you are just using another tool or if you paint digitally?"

Still, Rivero emphasizes the ethics that need to be upheld by those who use the technology. The ethic of the technology is called into question regarding art styles and credit.

Many animators and artists have called out Open AI for allegedly scalping their work to train their AI algorithms. Recently, the New York Times filed a lawsuit against Open AI for improper use of their content.

Recent court cases have labeled AI art as “uncopyrightable.” On March 18, 2025, a court panel ruled that there needs to be a legitimate “human authorship” to support a copyright claim.

“AI cannot process the ‘what ifs’ or ‘how might we,’ meaning the technology is not good with curiosity,” Rivero said. “That is where our advantage is, and artists or designers should not be worried. We control the story, and as long as we stay curious and explore different ideas, AI will not harm our creative process.”

Despite the arguments against emerging technology, some animators still believe AI can be used in resourceful and ethical ways. Sage Hansen is a professional 3-D animator, and YouTuber with over 100,000 subscribers. When he first studied animation back in 2009 at Texas A&M, he never could imagine what AI was capable of. However, now he and many other designers are trying to adjust to the new technology.

"So I think AI right now, we see it and we think of it as cheating, but I think over time artists will get better with it and it'll just be another tool," Hansen said. "But it'll never fully replace artists. I don't think that'll ever happen."

Hansen believes AI could be used to remove the filler in the animation process. Depending on the animated scene, it may take up to 11 months just to animate two minutes. So if this technology can help save them time and energy, then it's certainly worth exploring, he said.

"It's so many moving pieces, and it's frame by frame, and AI can probably get that shot done quicker so that artists can maybe move on to spend more time in other areas," Hansen said. "We all have limited time. Time is money. We need to be able to make things a little bit quicker. And I think overall, artists are okay with making things quicker."

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Students take root within community garden

BELLA WHITMORE

Intern

Every Saturday morning, a group of green-thumbed students are up and devoting the first day of their weekends to getting their hands dirty and reconnecting with nature. From the colors of the sunrise to roly polies digging in the compost, to harvesting the produce, the Baylor Community Garden offers a space of calm and community to wrap up a busy week as a student.

As the semester is ending, academics are cranking up, especially for upcoming graduating seniors. For Hingham, Mass., senior Graham Butterfield, the Baylor Community Garden allows him a moment of rest amidst all the chaos.

“There are a few reasons I love being a part of the garden,” Butterfield said. “As a college student, my weeks are filled with classes, club meetings, office hours, research and work, so the garden is a great way to rest and reset on Saturday mornings.”

For Belton senior Justin Demsky, the garden is more than just a place of mental escape. It’s also a place of self-expression and an outlet to express different passions and interests.

“It can be arduous work, but in the end it’s good work, it’s kind work and I love everything about it,” Demsky said. “As of right now, I think it’s impossible for me to express just how much joy comes from harvesting vegetables that you planted in the soil that you made with people around you. I am still working in the garden, my hands still get dirty, and I am still smiling when I think about it.”

Despite the common misconception, the community garden attracts more students than those with environmental or science-based majors. According to Charlestown, R.I., sophomore Reagan Tremblay, the garden cultivates community from all across the academic spectrum.

“I love getting to know people in different majors and grades that I usually wouldn’t get the opportunity to meet,” Tremblay said. “Making friends who are always interested in going to the Farmer’s Market after the garden or getting



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

GREEN THUMB The Community Garden serves as a place for students of all majors to relax and rejuvenate the community.

coffee has quickly become one of my favorite parts of the weekend.”

The beauty of gardening and working with one’s hands has spanned across time and even holds deep spiritual significance, Butterfield said.

“The garden also serves as a way for me to deepen my appreciation for God,” he said. “Throughout the scriptures, we see so many agricultural references and garden analogies, so it’s nice getting out and serving God’s creation. My garden time is one of my ways to bask in the Lord’s presence and abundance. For any spiritual folks, this is a great way to get in touch with God and see the miraculous things he has done for us.”

According to Demsky, the garden is a fulfilling way to escape the feeling of being overwhelmed that most students often experience daily.

“I would say if you love nature, if you love stories, if you love people or that little feeling of joy that sprouts in unexpected places, come to the garden,” Demsky said. “In today’s world, which often feels like an endless rush into a million directions at once, the garden gives people a space to breathe, connect and explore the wonders of the world beneath their feet.”

Beyond the needs of the students involved in the garden, the community also makes it a priority to give back, making sure their hard work goes to a good cause.

“You should volunteer for an opportunity to appreciate nature and give back to your community,” Tremblay said. “We are doing good work serving others experiencing food insecurity and helping to mitigate food waste for our planet.”

The Baylor Community Garden is open to all who are willing to participate, Baylor student or not. Anybody in the Waco area is encouraged to participate, Demsky said.

“Whether you dig your hands in the soil or grab a shovel for the compost bins or simply join us in the mornings to listen to the wind and the stories and paint the garden beds when you can, we would love to have you because everyone is welcome,” Demsky said.

Review: ‘A Minecraft Movie’ brings memes, silly chaos

SHANE MEAD

Staff Writer

Upon a deep dive into the depths of YouTube, one may come across something that shimmers like diamonds in the incandescence of a torch — my childhood channel. There may be some skits, Lego builds or basketball trick-shots, but the topic that reigned supreme was Minecraft.

The game took up a chunk of my childhood. I, fortunately, was one of those kids who knew the lyrics to every Minecraft cover song and didn’t miss a minute of the 800 Minecraft Hunger Games episodes between BajanCanadian and JeromeASF.

So yes, last weekend, I was locked in my seat, ready to reminisce on the adventures I once took in the historic video game.

“A Minecraft Movie” is crazy, but in ways that made it enjoyable. Unfortunately, my theater was too old and boring to take part in the TikTok trend of raving over memes like “Chicken Jockey” and “flint and steel.” This was perhaps somewhat fortunate since the movie was not stopped early, and no buckets of popcorn were slung.

The memes played a major role in the humor of this film, and I really don’t think it should have gone any other way. I mean, how could you even make a movie in the world of Minecraft serious? It’s time to have fun and enjoy the possibilities that come with a movie in a Minecraft setting — starting with the animation.

The animation in this film was absolutely incredible, and exactly what you’d expect to see on the big screen. The way Villagers moved, the flow of lava, the burning of torches — everything looked great, and came as a bit of a surprise for me considering I didn’t really see much praise for the animation before watching.

Some moments did look pretty cheesy, but certainly not to the point of ruining my movie experience. There were some lighting issues that made characters look out of place in the Minecraft world, and the flying scenes looked flat-out bad. But the cheesiness is at least expected in a children’s movie.

Again, let’s give these animators a raise. There’s some incredible stuff that I really wish they got more credit for. There were a few minor mishaps in filming live-action in an animated world, however, the pure animation itself was amazing. I can’t praise it enough.

The storyline seemed all over the place, but in my experience with movies targeted for younger audiences, that’s typically how it goes. I didn’t have any problem with the pacing and I really loved how they went about introducing the characters to the Minecraft world.

Think about your first time playing Minecraft, trying to figure out what exactly you’re supposed to do and how to survive. And then night comes



Photo courtesy of IMDb

along after just 10 minutes, the mobs come out, and things get scary. That’s exactly how it plays out for our characters, and I thought they nailed it.

None of the acting was exceptional, and it seemed like Jack Black was just getting paid to play himself rather than Steve, yet somehow they made it fun. Whether it be stupid and funny moments from Garrett, played by Jason Momoa, or ridiculous one-liners from Vice Principal Marlene, played by Jennifer Coolidge, I found myself laughing more than I thought I would.

The one thing I think played a huge part in my enjoyment of this film is the nostalgia it provides, specifically the constant references or Easter eggs. The Minecraft music throughout, chicken jockey cameo, 20-minute days, tribute to the late Technoblade and even DanTDM making an appearance were just a few of the handful of references that remind Minecraft players of the game they’ve forever loved.

I really enjoyed my experience with this one. The reviews seem to be quite polarizing, but I just don’t think the negative reviewers get the vibe that this thing is supposed to be silly and fun.

My only regret is not seeing this opening night because the crowds seemed to be more hype than they were for “Avengers: Endgame.” It sounds funny to say, but Avengers and Minecraft are cultural staples of our generation, so next time something similar releases, I’m making it a point to be there on opening night.



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

GROOVY Celebrate your Earth Day this year with songs like “The Trees” by Rush, “Oh, What A World” by Kacey Musgraves or “I Feel the Earth Move” by Carole King.

Songs for your Earth Day playlist

KALENA REYNOLDS

Staff Writer

April 22 is Earth Day, and whether you’re celebrating by planting a garden or educating yourself on ways to live more sustainably, you’ll need some music to accompany it. Here is a list of the top five songs for your Earth Day experience.

Some are deep cuts, and others are popular hits, but all are equally as passionate and nostalgic. These serotonin-inducing songs will leave you inspired and joyful.

“Harvest Moon” by Neil Young

If you haven’t experienced love yet, this song will piece together what you’re missing out on. If you have, then you know what I’m talking about. “Harvest Moon” is the epitome of spine-aching nostalgia and passionate love combined in one. It’s an intimate cut but perfect for a day of celebrating the earth.

When creating your Earth Day playlist, do yourself a favor and add this to the mix. It’s a versatile yet unique pick that will bring a musical aroma of joy, bound to make you want to grab the hand of the person next to you and slow dance.

“The Trees” by Rush

Written in about five minutes, this unique take on an environmental song will bring a fresh light to your playlist. While themes revolve around oak and maple trees, many have tried to overanalyze the song; however, in a magazine article, Rush drummer Neil Peart said the song doesn’t have a deeper meaning and is a play on “if trees acted like people.”

“I was working on an entirely different thing when I saw a cartoon picture of these trees carrying on like fools,” Peart said.

“April Come She Will” by Simon & Garfunkel

It is scientifically impossible to be mad while listening to Simon & Garfunkel;

“April Come She Will” is no exception to that clause. A folk classic hit of the ‘60s duo, this song will captivate listeners while ringing in the beauty of spring. Earth Day should be about gratitude and reflection; this song is just that. It’s simple yet breathtaking and adds excellently to the rotation of songs for the holiday celebrating our planet. It resonates with vintage minor guitar progressions that complement the legato lyrics about nature and the approaching summer months.

“I Feel the Earth Move” by Carole King

Between the driving piano and unforgettable chorus, the genius of Carole King glimmers throughout “I Feel the Earth Move.” Versatile enough for your dad’s road trip playlist or your evening dinner party, this song is a safe bet for your Earth Day playlist.

This one is bound to excite listeners and add a nostalgic touch to your collection of songs. Ensuring your bases are covered for “danceable” songs means adding this one to the playlist. This song defines timelessness and brings an upbeat addition to the mix.

“Oh, What A World” by Kacey Musgraves

This psychedelic country hit off Musgraves’ “Golden Hour” album simmers with eclectic guitar and ethereal lyrics. Between hints of slide guitar and a catchy guitar riff over the chorus, it’s impossible to be in a bad mood while listening to this song.

Even if country isn’t your usual slice of pie, this unique take on the genre is hard to dislike. It’s fresh, airy and has an undeniable beauty. Aside from the unique instrumentation, it also has repeating synth vocals at the beginning of the song and during the last chorus, creating a unique gritty layer in the background that ultimately produces a fresh and addicting experience for the listener.

Spring football rolls on

Sawyer Robertson poised for massive senior season

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

Sawyer Robertson's breakout season forever altered the trajectory of Baylor football.

With head coach Dave Aranda on the hot seat, preseason starting quarterback Dequan Finn out indefinitely and the offensive line struggling to adapt to Jake Spavital's new scheme, the Bears looked like they might limp to the finish line.

But Robertson, a Mississippi State transfer who threw more interceptions than touchdowns as a sophomore, changed the equation. After sitting behind Will Rogers for two seasons in Starkville and losing camp battles to Blake Shapen and Dequan Finn in Waco, Robertson's career teetered on the edge of a "what-if."

Those four lost camp battles lit a fire under the Lubbock native, who took over in Week Three when Finn went down — and never looked back. Robertson closed the regular season on a six-game win streak to save Aranda's job and secure the program's second winning season of the 2020s. He finished the season with an 83.7 QBR, fifth-best nationally and highest in the Big 12.

"Sawyer's up there all the time, wants to get better," Aranda said. "There's confidence with him, and there's confidence in him, and there's equally or even greater confidence with guys for him. I just think that there's such a belief in what he can do, and when he talks, people listen."

For the first time in his college career, Robertson is entering spring ball locked into a starting role. Write

it in pen or in Sharpie — wherever he goes, the team follows. That security has opened the door for him to lead more fully, offensive coordinator Jake Spavital said.

"He knows it's his team and he's doing a great job with it," Spavital said. "He's trying to take that leadership role over. Last year at this point, he was just trying to win the quarterback competition. And now he's put together a pretty solid year. He knows what he needs to improve individually ... but where you notice him the most is just the leadership role that he has."

In 2024, Robertson threw for 3,071 yards, 28 touchdowns and eight interceptions. No other Big 12 quarterback reached the 3,000-yard mark on fewer than 456 attempts — Robertson did so with 368. His 28 touchdowns through the air ranked second in the Big 12 behind Colorado's Shedeur Sanders, a projected top-five NFL draft pick.

"I do think they've got a pretty good vibe of how the offense is and how we can play with a tempo and we can spread it around," Spavital said. "I think that Sawyer is getting very good with his checks. I'm giving him a ton of freedom right now, which is fun to watch because he's learning that sometimes it's too hard to do it. He's taking too long to do certain things — but that's just the trial and error of what you do in spring."

Spavital has coached plenty of elite college quarterbacks in his time, from Johnny Manziel and Kyler Murray to Geno Smith and Brandon Weeden. The biggest similarity he sees between Robertson and most of those players,

he said, is football IQ.

"I think just the intelligence side of it all," Spavital said. "You could literally just call a formation and Case [Keenum] could get you in the right play. And I challenged Geno with that, and Will Grier and even Brandon Weeden, and a lot of guys over the years. And that's what I'm doing with Sawyer: I'm letting him check, I'm letting him call."

High praise from fans and coaches can easily get to a quarterback's head; appearing on a preseason award watchlist is an easy dopamine hit. Robertson pointed to the long developmental road ahead of him, saying he's "keeping his head down" and preparing the way he always has.

"I'm not where I wanna be," Robertson said. "I'm off social media, which helps a lot. Now, sometimes it'll get sent to me by a family member or a friend. And that's fine, it's just part of it. But like I said, I know my weaknesses and things that I'm trying to attack right now, and so blocking that stuff out is important and deleting social media is something that's helped a lot."

Back-to-back disappointing seasons in 2022 and 2023 lowered expectations across the program. In the NIL and transfer portal era, Baylor seemed at risk of falling behind. Robertson is spearheading hope for the opposite.

"He's a great leader as a mentor to that quarterback room," Aranda said. "I know defensively, guys have a ton of respect for him and just the dog that he is and the learner that he is and the communicator that he is. We're blessed to have him."



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor
TAKIN' SHOTS Offensive coordinator Jake Spavital said he wants redshirt senior quarterback Sawyer Robertson to throw it deep more in 2025.

Cornerbacks fueled by competition under Gonzales

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

After giving up 246.3 passing yards per game in 2024 — a bottom-five mark in the Big 12 — Baylor football is searching for a level-up with new leadership in the cornerback room.

First-year defensive pass-game coordinator and cornerbacks coach Paul Gonzales, who spent 13 years on staff at TCU, is looking to make his mark with an experienced secondary. Supporting head coach Dave Aranda, who will once again be calling the plays on defense, made Baylor the perfect next stop for Gonzales.

"The opportunity to learn from coach Aranda was a big piece of this," Gonzales said.

"Staying in the state of Texas and being able to recruit kids from this state is a big deal for me as well. That's what I've been able to do for the majority of my career. I'm just excited about what we're building here. This place has the bones and the pedigree to be a championship-level program."

Following a breakout start to his career and earning a second-team freshman All-American nod, junior Caden Jenkins failed to capitalize in year two with the Bears. Being flagged for the most pass interference calls on the team, Gonzales noted eye discipline as something he wanted Jenkins to work on before taking the job at Baylor.

"I think in the past, he's kind of been a

little bit more worried about the receiver and let the referees be a factor in [isolation] plays," Gonzales said. "Today, I thought he did a good job of going up and playing the football. There's been improvement there, so that's been good to see."

Redshirt sophomore LeVar Thornton Jr. joined Jenkins in the cornerback rotation in 2024, playing in all 13 games. Thornton finished with eight tackles, a fumble recovery and an interception, but the green and gold struggled to stay disciplined on defense. The third-year Bear is banking on improving that moving forward.

"We will use last year [as motivation] because I know we were probably one of the worst defense coverage units in college football," Thornton said. "This year we just need to stop being so handsy and stop grabbing, stop with all the [pass interference penalties] and all the easy free yards that we were giving to other offenses."

Redshirt sophomore Ohio State transfer Calvin Simpson-Hunt was a late addition to the team, landing on campus in late January after winning a national championship.

"I'm happy with how he's picked up the scheme and the progress he's making," Gonzales said. "He's made some plays in the spring, which has been good ... For the most part, I've been extremely pleased with how he's been."

Simpson-Hunt saw action in nine games en route to the 2025 CFP National Championship, totaling two tackles on the season as a reserve. The former four-star recruit was the No. 16 prospect in Texas and initially held an offer from Baylor before landing with the Buckeyes. Now onto his second stop, he has used his trip to the postseason to fuel his new teammates.

"Going through that, I know, personally, what it takes or how much work has to be put in to reach that far [and] to even get to that level in the first place," Simpson-Hunt said. "We are definitely going to be up this year compared to previous years that I've heard [about]. Defense is definitely gonna be a factor on this Baylor team."

With the trio battling for play time, the rest of the room is doing the same, as Gonzales came to Baylor with the mentality that everything needs to be earned.

"Right now, it's probably still a work in progress as far as the depth," Gonzales said. "Right now, it's just about getting comfortable with the schematics, getting comfortable with my coaching style and executing the techniques the way we need them executed at a high level ... We'll get to the 15th practice and kind of reevaluate the room and figure out, do we need to add anything to it?"

Redshirt junior Reggie Bush II and redshirt senior Tevin Williams III are the only other Bears on the roster who saw time in the cornerback rotation in 2024. Gonzales noted that each of them have taken strides in spring practice and elevated into leadership roles.

Redshirt sophomore MJ Artimore Jr., redshirt freshman Kyler Beaty and redshirt freshman Christian Cunningham didn't see action in 2024 and are competing for playing time. Three-star recruit Leo Almanza Jr. is the only freshman in the room. With Gonzales' daily "evaluation" mentality in the spring, a good offseason could earn Almanza Jr. a role.

"I think that's kind of the new college football now — like every four or five months, you have to re-examine your roster and figure out where we can get better and where we can improve," Gonzales said. "For me, there's no starters. Everybody's competing for the job. I think that's a big deal for them to understand that like, 'Hey, nothing's been set in stone here.' And I feel good about where we're headed."

The opportunity to battle a Sawyer Robertson-led offense already separates players in the room, creating valuable learning moments and development opportunities. So far this spring, Gonzales has been encouraged by the competition between the offense and the defense.

"We go against a really good quarterback every day in practice, and that's going to help us get better," Gonzales said. "The receiving corps on that side is very, very athletic and gives us problems. So that's been good for us, too. You take that iron-sharpens-iron mentality every day to these 15 practices and you'll come out of it a lot better than you were before you started."

The Bears will practice again on Thursday as they work their way toward the Baylor Blitz on April 26 at McLane Stadium.



Brady Harris | Photographer

CAMP BATTLE Redshirt sophomore cornerback Calvin Simpson-Hunt (left) practices jams against redshirt freshman cornerback Kyler Beaty (right) in the team's individual period during a Baylor football spring practice at the Allison Indoor Practice Facility on Saturday.

Green’s return strengthens lefty-loaded staff



BACK ON THE BRAZOS Sophomore left-handed pitcher Mason Green (left) fist-bumps redshirt senior right-handed pitcher Cole Stasio after striking out the side in the top of the first inning Tuesday night at Baylor Ballpark.

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

For the first time in 338 days, sophomore left-handed pitcher Mason Green trotted out of the Baylor baseball dugout and started for the green and gold in Tuesday night’s 6-2 loss against Texas State at Baylor Ballpark.

Although he lasted just one scoreless inning in his first appearance back from a lingering injury, head coach Mitch Thompson had plenty to be excited about.

“Mason Green showing back up, being out there and getting through that first inning [was a positive],” Thompson said. “Even though he wasn’t perfectly sharp and he was trying to find some stuff a little bit. But to strike out three guys was big. It was good to have him back out there.”

Green’s outing started rocky, allowing a walk on a full-count pitch that bounced up to the plate and a single five pitches later. As he readied to challenge the heart of the order, Green grabbed at his foot. Initially, Thompson and a trainer jumped out of the dugout to check on him.

The 6-foot-2 pitcher waved them back as he took off one of his cleats and tossed it back to the dugout. As the team scrambled around looking for another shoe that would fit right to replace the torn one, Green waited eagerly on the dirt.

Five minutes later, it was back to baseball. And the fresh kicks worked wonders.

“The lace went through, and it was kind of loose,” Thompson said. “[He needed a] 12 1/2 so Carson Bailey threw them off and here we go. I haven’t seen that one at all. It was kind of weird.”

Green struck out the next three batters he faced to escape the two-on, no-out jam he found himself in. As the 21st consecutive left-handed starter for the Bears, Green utilized his breaking pitches efficiently and had at least two strikes in the count against all five batters he faced.

Baylor’s unprecedented run of left-handed starting pitchers is the only time in program history such a string has come together. With the addition of Green into the fold, there is no sign of the streak snapping this season.

Junior Ethan Calder and freshman Carson Bailey have been fixtures in the rotation since Opening Weekend, while redshirt senior Bryson Bales, junior Stefan Stahl and redshirt sophomore Caleb Jameson have all seen time on the bump as starters. The only left-handed pitcher on the roster who hasn’t started at least one game this year is sophomore RJ Ruais, who started two games in 2024.

Baylor and Cincinnati are the only two teams in the Big 12 rostering seven left-handed hurlers. Arizona State and West Virginia are the only other teams nearby with six. With the fourth-best ERA in the Big 12 (4.27) and the fewest walks allowed, Thompson has been pleased with the different vantage points the Bears’ pitching staff brings.

About 25% of Major League Baseball pitchers are left-handed, a number that mirrors the estimated 20-25% population in the NCAA. However, MLB found that only 10% of the population is left-handed, making elite left-handed pitching hard to find and extremely valuable.

Coming into Tuesday, 46.8% of Baylor’s innings had been thrown by left-handed pitching, a number that will only increase if Green can stay active and efficient.

After retiring the side in the first, Green came off the field with a smile. Sophomore catcher JJ Kennett sprinted over to the foul line to meet him, patted his chest and hugged the left-hander to signal the end of the outing.

“He’ll give us a lift and give us another quality arm to use from here on out,” Thompson said.

The Bears (21-10, 5-7 Big 12) will be back in action at 6:30 p.m. Friday to open a three-game series against Texas Tech (9-20, 5-7 Big 12) at Rip Griffin Park in Lubbock.

Bowden brings experience to postseason bound Bears

AIDAN O’CONNOR
Sports Writer

During his time on the ATP tour, former No. 1 player in the world Andy Murray was a force to be reckoned with. Few could keep up with him, but at just 17 years old, Baylor men’s tennis sophomore Louis Bowden was one of those few.

“[Andy Murray] was always my idol growing up,” Bowden said. “I got good enough around 16, 17 that I was able to hit with him. It definitely pushed me to play better and work harder. And then also Jack Draper — he was pretty young a couple of years ago when I was coming up — and just watching him train and stuff was pretty inspirational.”

Bowden grew up learning from top players like Murray and current ATP No. 6 Draper. He developed into one of the most promising British players in juniors. Throughout his time in juniors, he appeared as a finalist in numerous tournaments across Europe, won the 2021 J3 Les Franqueses del Vallès title and reached the main draw of some of the world’s most prestigious junior tournaments, including Wimbledon and the Australian Open.

“He understands the competition, he understands the level,” Baylor men’s tennis head coach Michael Woodson said. “He knows what it takes to win at the highest level of junior tennis and the junior Grand Slams, and I think we need that.”

Bowden’s success in juniors gave him the option to go pro or play college tennis. He drew significant interest from universities. While the option of going pro was tantalizing, Bowden still wanted the college experience.

With more collegiate experience on tour after graduating than in past years, he realized he could do both. After many visits and careful consideration, one place stood above the rest: Baylor.

“I liked the coaches,” Bowden said. “I got to know the coaches well and heard great things about the program. I knew some of the guys on the team and knew they were great players ... [and] I just wanted to get a good education at Baylor.”

Bowden had an up-and-down freshman season. It was hard to find playing time on a ranked team, and he was still adjusting to college tennis. He found success, earning the 2024 Texas Region Rafael Osuna Sportsmanship Award and the 2023 Team Big 12 MVP during the Big 12/SEC Challenge.

Even with the bright spots, Bowden couldn’t keep the accolades rolling. He finished the year with a losing record in singles and played just

three doubles matches.

“In the first year I struggled to make the doubles lineup because a lot of the guys were very, very good at doubles,” Bowden said. “I got to watch a lot of them playing and see how good they were at the net and how aggressive they were. It was good to see. This year, I’ve been able to play a bit more, and from watching the first year, I’ve been able to try to be a bit more aggressive.”

Bowden spent the entire summer tightening up his game to break into the lineup in 2024-25. He focused on becoming more aggressive at the net and improving his serve. He made strides across the board and entered the new season ready to prove himself in dual matches.

“He’s put a lot of time in on his serve, on his transition game, movement at the net and doubles, and I think you’ve seen a ton of improvement in those areas,” Woodson said. “I think the biggest thing for him is he’s just much more comfortable in dual matches.”

The work during the summer paid off immediately, as he improved on every front this spring. In singles dual matches, he sits at 7-7, up from 8-10 last year. In doubles, he’s jumped to 9-5 compared to 1-1. Much of that success can be attributed to the connection he’s built with junior Zsombor Velcz.

“We didn’t really practice before the coaches said, ‘OK, let’s put you guys together,’” Velcz said. “I feel like we got used to each other pretty quickly. We felt our rhythm. I felt like we had a couple of good wins [that] just helped us, helped the team to secure doubles points and maybe win matches.”

Velcz and Bowden had success together right off the bat, starting out with four straight wins. Now in Big 12 play, Bowden hopes to carry that improvement into the most important part of the year.

“Louis is a bulldog,” Woodson said. “He’s a huge fighter. He loves to compete all the time, no matter what it is. On the court, off of the court, anything that we’re doing in practice — he wants to be the winner, and I think that makes a huge impact on the team.”

With the Big 12 and NCAA Team Championships only a couple of matches away, Bowden’s experience and growth have set him up to make a real impact. From his experience playing on big stages to becoming a reliable dual-match option, whether in singles or with Velcz in doubles, Bowden hopes the Bears are primed to acquire some new hardware.

The 16th-ranked Bears will be back in action against Texas Tech at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Hurd Tennis Center.



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BRAZOS DANGER

from A1

treated water upstream, making it available for reuse in case of drought, according to Scott.

Scott said this kind of indirect reuse could help extend the city's water supply. "It won't be perfect, but it will help sustain us," Scott said. "We've got to find a way to use [surface water] more conservatively ... then do projects like this where we're recycling the resource itself as much as possible."

Groundwater should be treated as an emergency resource, not a primary supply, since it's non-renewable in many regions, Scott said. Surface water, though more sustainable, is becoming harder to predict due to changing rainfall patterns.

Scott also pointed to technology as a tool for improving river management; sensors across

the Brazos basin now track water temperature, flow rate and nutrient levels in real time. As these systems grow, water authorities will be better equipped to respond to rapid changes.

"The more information they have, the better they can make decisions about what's going to happen tomorrow," Scott said.

Public engagement is another key factor, as agencies like the Brazos River Authority hold board meetings that are open to the public, giving residents the opportunity to stay informed and offer input.

"The best thing the public can do is get educated and actively engage the River Authority," Scott said. "That's the best way people can make a difference."

DEMOLITION

from A1

with \$60,000 of it being from student government."

According to Self, the need for more indoor spaces on campus incentivized student government to invest in both decorative renovations and the replacement of outdated furniture in the Sid Richardson Building. He also went on and said that the new space intends to open up space within campus hotspots, such as the Moody Memorial Library, during busy hours throughout the week.

“

We were able to answer that with, ‘We’re bringing in new furniture. We’re renovating the carpet, and we’re also fixing up some of the paint on the walls.’

Student Body Internal Vice President | Landon Self

"Every student goes through Sid Rich at some point throughout their Baylor journey, and we thought it would be really cool for student government to take initiative and renovate a study space that can be more conducive and more effective for students to learn and study as a group," he said.

Self mentioned that the bill proposed by Academic Affairs first arrived at the desks of the Finance Committee and the Campus Improvements and Affairs Committee. Although the latter initially rejected the bill, citing the significant allocation and possibility of redistributing these funds elsewhere, Ebeling led an appeal that culminated in the bill's eventual passing with over 30 votes in favor and three against.

"Some of the questions that came up were, 'What exactly are we funding? What exactly is this fund going to?'" he said. "We were able to answer that with, 'We're bringing in new furniture. We're renovating the carpet, and we're also fixing up some of the paint on the walls.' That's what we're working on, and it was received well. The senate voted yes, and it was a really exciting process."

Ebeling said the passing of this bill will bring renewed interest to one of Baylor's less-developed yet still heavily trafficked academic buildings, as well as add variety to students' study options on campus.

"There's a lot of need on campus for more spaces for students, and so this adds one," she said. "3,000 students are in Sid Richardson alone every single week, and that's not including any of the departments that are housed in Sid Rich. It's a space that needs to be reformed in the heart of campus on Fountain Mall."

LIFETIME HONOR

from A1

civilizations in Meso-america, and I also teach a class on environmental archaeology," Hoggarth said. "My research is an interface of both those different aspects."

Hoggarth also hopes to establish a field school at Baylor specifically, to inspire students into the field of archaeology like she was."We would be bringing Baylor students down to the field school to expand on what they learn in the classroom to real life," Hoggarth said. "That's really the best experience you can get."

For those interested in pursuing archaeology or anthropology, Hoggarth advises to seek out as much mentorship as possible. "The more you talk to people, the more opportunities you get," Hoggath said. "I could never get my research done if it was just me — it's really everyone

working together."

Liana Donsbach, recent Baylor graduate and former student of Hoggarth, said she is excited to work with Hoggarth again this summer.

"Since I never got to experience her in the classroom, I'm pretty sure I got the better end of the deal because I got to see her in action in the field," Donsbach said via email. "Her excitement and commitment to the project was contagious."

Baylor's anthropology department is yet another facet of the university's R1 status, and global collaboration, which is continued focus according to Provost Dr. Nancy Brickhouse.

"We also have empirical work that says — how do we create a world that is accessible to all," Brickhouse said. "How do we create a world that enables flourishing?"

FACING CUTS

from A1

and Hill Counties. There are more seniors relying on the organization than there are funds and drivers available. As of now, the organization has said there are still around 416 seniors still waiting to receive services.

Rachel Salazar is the current director of volunteers and coordinator of senior centers. Her work handles the more social side of Meals on Wheels, providing seniors the chance to talk and make new connections. She even has a favorite client by the name of Maxine, a 107-year-old senior who has been using Meals on Wheels since she stopped driving.

"My latest favorite is our 107-year-old client," Salazar said. "She just turned 107 in February and we visited her and she just loves it. To her, Meals on Wheels is a reason to get up and face the day because she knows that someone's coming."

Salazar said in many cases the social connection that drivers make with their clients is sometimes "more important than the meal itself." Meals on Wheels Waco plans multiple events to foster fun and social interactions with elderly citizens, from bingo to card games to even a golf tournament.

As the needs and costs for elderly

citizens continue to rise, now more than ever they need others to advocate for themselves where they cannot, Salazar said.


"Advocate for seniors, be the voice for seniors and talk to your representatives," Salazar said. "Tell them to make sure that senior services are not set aside. They should be prioritized because everyone will get old. So we need to make sure that senior services will be in place permanently for a long time. And the other part is donate. Every little bit helps."

Meals on Wheels released a press statement regarding the mass termination of the ACL last week.

"We express urgent concerns about the loss of legacy knowledge, expertise and access to services resulting from yesterday's significant termination of Administration for Community Living (ACL) staff and dissolution of offices critical to older Americans.

"Our organizations collectively represent thousands of community-based organizations that provide daily life-sustaining services to millions of older adults in nearly every urban, suburban and rural community across America."

SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

WHEE! Students, faculty and Waco residents celebrate Diadeloso on Fountain Mall. The iconic Baylor holiday had a state fair aesthetic with slides and other rides for people of all ages.

24-25 YEARBOOK

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