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EDITORIAL

The joke that ignited the country

Do not agree. Do not disagree. Do not post. Do not speak out. Do not choose a side. Do not stand out.

In the hours following Charlie Kirk's assassination, the world shattered into a million pieces of emotion, tragedy and confusion. On Sept. 15, "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" aired at its regular time. However, little did everyone know that a few-minute-long monologue would spark outrage. Following the controversy, on Sept. 17, ABC made the decision to pull the plug on the show.

Kimmel said in his opening segment that Trump and his allies were "desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them" and trying to "score political points from it." He also stated Trump's reaction to Kirk's death as "how a four-year-old mourns a goldfish."

In the script, Kimmel discussed how right-wing supporters were politicizing the tragedy, and also emphasized Trump's rather nonchalant response when asked how he was holding up.

"I think very good," Trump said. He quickly veered off topic with a statement about construction, stating that "By the way, right there you see all the trucks, they just started construction of the new ballroom for the White House."

While it's fair to say that Kimmel jumped the gun prematurely in an overall sensitive and emotional situation, the bigger press comes from the media's reaction to this comment.

Challenging viewpoints has been a foundation of the constitution, and while some saw Kimmel's comment as distasteful, the rise of cancel culture has created a society blind to the persuasion of groupthink.

A study done by Pew Research Center on how political parties view cancel culture showcased that "36% of conservative Republicans who had heard the term described it as actions taken to hold people accountable, compared with roughly half or more of moderate or liberal Republicans (51%), conservative or moderate Democrats (54%) and liberal Democrats (59%)."

We have created a society that is a guillotine for truth. A filter bubble posing as justice, per se.

The truth is that the current climate of censorship or cancel culture only helps celebrities and hurts middle and lower-class America.

For many celebrities and influencers, being "canceled" only boosts their significance in the algorithm; what many people forget is that the innocent bystanders are also affected by this censorship.

Sure, Kimmel underwent a six-day hiatus



James Ellis | Cartoonist

from his spot on late-night television; however, it's plausible to claim he still would have been able to create income for himself. As for the behind-the-scenes workers for his show, they most likely had to scramble to replace those finances.

What we can take away from the Jimmy Kimmel censorship is that it ultimately reinforces the overrun attention economy that our society has created. This should make us nervous.

On June 29, Paramount paid Trump \$16 million to settle a lawsuit because of a "60 Minutes" interview with then-Vice President Kamala Harris. Shortly after this, the FCC approved an \$8 billion merger between Paramount and Skydance, ultimately showcasing the political influence of the current administration on our media consumption.

As of 2021, Trump had been banned, at one point or another, from Amazon, Apple, Discord, Facebook, Google, Pinterest, Reddit, Shopify, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitch, X and YouTube for violating platform policy.

Recently, Trump sued YouTube over his account suspension following the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol. YouTube proceeded to temporarily suspend the president's account, and in response, the lawsuit was settled for \$24.5 million.

The majority of censorship could be prevented if the media didn't become a partisan game of hurt feelings and accusations.

The First Amendment is supposed to protect freedom of speech. However, the takeaway from the Kimmel situation is that indirect pressure from the government or lawsuits appears to continue holding the hierarchy in place.

After Kimmel's show returned to ABC on Sept. 23, he opened with a lengthy monologue hitting on a variety of topics from Tylenol to Stephen Colbert. Towards the middle, commented on his hiatus.

"Thanks to (all) who supported our show, cared enough to do something about it, to make your voices heard so that mine could be heard... people who I never would have imagined like Ben Shapiro, Clay Travis, Candace Owens,

Mitch McConnell, Rand Paul, even my old pal Ted Cruz, who, believe it or not, said something very beautiful on my behalf," Kimmel said.

Notable figures, celebrities, and politicians around the world were beaming with support of Kimmel, not because of what he said, but because of the shocking censorship he received.

Republican politician Ted Cruz spoke out by saying "if the government gets in the business of saying we don't like what you, the media, have said, we're going to ban you from the airwaves if you don't say what we like, that will end up bad for conservatives."

The biggest lesson we can learn from this is that publicly supporting messages, regardless of their controversy, is critical.

The top priority is understanding that it takes courage to speak up in a government-created society of censorship. Cancel culture is not doing anyone favors. Stand firm in your opinion and be loud in your delivery, and as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Not every hobby has to be a side hustle

LEXIE RODENBAUGH
Arts & Life Writer



College culture — especially at a school like Baylor — frames every hobby and pastime as a way to 'get ahead' in the workplace. Nothing can be just for fun anymore. Reading fiction turns into reading self-help novels, scrapbooking your college memories turns into posting your every move on LinkedIn and even

playing or watching sports turns into a networking opportunity.

We can't just let a hobby be what it is — a chance to wind down after a long day or preserve our sanity when we only have 30 minutes of alone time. We're stuck in a web of performative productivity.

Turning hobbies into hustles is a gateway to a toxic workplace environment. The job market rewards endless achievement, and social media rewards the performance of it. We've internalized the idea that hobbies are only valuable if they can be posted, monetized or listed on a resume.

It's difficult to remember that we have 40-50 years to devote our lives to our careers, and college is not the time to waste the little bit of independence we have left. College should be a time to test passions, but it should also be a

time to rest. We deserve spaces where no one asks if we'll "do something" with our art or our playlists. A hobby doesn't have to be content — it can simply be comfort.

A Gallup poll surveyed 6,000 college students enrolled in October 2024 and stated that "about 1/3 said they considered dropping out during that fall semester, citing emotional stress and mental health struggles as the main reasons."

If this feels inevitable, that's because the system is built to make it so. Universities market "career readiness" as a selling point, measuring success in internships and LinkedIn connections rather than student joy. Social media algorithms reward the same thing, amplifying videos about morning routines and productivity hacks while burying anything that isn't optimized

for engagement.

Add in the pressure of rising tuition and a shaky job market, and it starts to feel irresponsible to do something purely for pleasure. We've been taught that every hour has to pay rent.

I recently fell victim to this system, specifically with painting banners. I used to paint banners for free, as a gift to my friends and family — no questions asked. People were constantly asking me if they could pay me, what my business Instagram handle was and how I could waste this time without making an income from it. I got pressured into selling them, making an Instagram and promoting my business to my friends instead of simply gifting my talents.

Although it's definitely helping my bank account, it's taken a hit on my

mental health. Adding money into the picture has made me anxious, and I've even skipped classes to finish a banner so that I don't upset any customers. It took the joy and relaxation out of the hobby, leaving only a small weekly income and a huge stressor.

I'm slowly learning that hobbies don't owe me anything — not content, not income and not a line on my resume. They're supposed to give, not take. I don't want to stop painting banners, but I do want to stop believing that every brushstroke has to earn its keep. Maybe the best thing a college student can do right now is to keep something private and useless — read a book you'll never post about, dance in a dorm room with no camera on, paint a banner that no one pays for. Joy doesn't need a price tag to matter.

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Disciplines converge in Baylor Fellows Program

JULIANA VASQUEZ
Staff Writer

Despite coming from a vast range of backgrounds and interests, the roads of 10 Baylor professors converged this year in the Baylor Fellows Program.

Launched in 2011, the program honors professors who excel as teachers and hope to continue to grow as educators. Provost Nancy Brickhouse selected 10 fellows for this year's cohort, led by Senior Fellow Dr. Kevin Magill.

This year, the fellows will work under the theme "Ethical Technology Use and Improve Digital Literacy," seeking to understand how emerging technology impacts their classrooms and could be utilized to serve them.

Magill is an associate professor of secondary education and the associate chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction within the School of Education.

As a part of the 2024-2025 cohort, Magill said the sense of community the cohort had built was a huge part of what made the experience amazing. Magill plans to draw on his experiences from last year to inform his approach to helping this year's cohort.

"Last year, creating that community allowed us to do so much early on, so I'm hoping we can do that straight away, so that we can really narrow our focus and develop in that way," Magill said.

Dr. Meredith Palm, psychology and neuroscience lecturer and psychology adviser, said she found her niche in teaching during her time as a graduate student in psychology at Baylor.

Regarding her invitation to be part of this program, Palm continuously emphasized how grateful she was to have been chosen for the honor, echoing the words of the other fellows.

"It's a really big deal to be



Photo courtesy of Baylor University

INNOVATION 2025-2026 Baylor Fellows: Kevin Russel Magill, Ph.D., Halli Carr, D.N.P., Emily Clark, M.A., Matthew Cordon, J.D., Ivy Hamerly, Ph.D.; Ginger Hanchey, Ph.D., Ben Johansen, Ph.D., T. Philip Nichols, Ph.D., Meredith H. Palm, Ph.D., and Michael W. Thompson, Ph.D.

recognized in this way, and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to grow as a result of this opportunity I've been given," Palm said.

Dr. Halli Carr, a clinical associate professor of nursing and DNP-adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner track coordinator, was also selected for the cohort. As an educator, Carr is currently passionate about artificial intelligence and its ethics within the healthcare and education fields, especially as a teacher in an online program.

Director of the Legal Writing program and A. Royce Stout Chair of Law at Baylor Law School Dr. Matthew Cordon said that fundamentally, he is a writer, which led him from a career as a news reporter to a legal scholar.

In recent days, though, AI has forced Cordon's legal writing

department to rethink how it goes about teaching legal writing. His field has never had to put so much scrutiny on generated legal text and whether or not it's true.

"We're focusing right now heavily on ethics ... the AI tools don't know language the way humans do," Cordon said. "Understanding those risks and minimizing or eliminating them is important, but also taking advantage of AI's ability to handle large amounts of data faster than any human could, that's going to save a lot of time, and that's ultimately going to help clients."

Dr. Mike Thompson is a professor of electrical and computer engineering. Thompson said he's been following AI for a while, examining its strengths and weaknesses.

"When generative AI came out,

I knew some of the basics of it, and was really amazed by some of the capabilities, and also frightened by some of the capabilities," Thompson said. "So I just wanted to jump in and continually learn about it and get to the point where I felt like I could help people understand how to leverage AI for better purposes."

As a former high school English teacher and a current associate professor of curriculum and education, Dr. Philip Nichols said that this year's theme of technology in the classroom is incredibly relevant to his background and research. Nichols said his teaching at Baylor has ultimately prepared him to become a better teacher overall.

Dr. Ivy Hamerly, senior lecturer of political science and the director of the international studies major, said

she was initially an English major before pivoting into comparative politics.

Hamerly has already begun implementing smart AI use in her classes, something she hopes to further practice through her time as a fellow.

"I created an assignment where [my students] write a policy memo using Microsoft Copilot," Hamerly said. "I tell them to think of the AI tool sort of like an unreliable coworker who might save you time, but might introduce all kinds of new mistakes that you need to fix."

Emily Clark, lecturer in museum studies professor, is nestled away in the Mayborn Museum, where the Museum Studies professors have their classes. She said she's excited to see how AI can help museums lighten the workload when it comes to creating exhibits and programming.

"A lot of museums are trying to do a lot with a little, especially smaller museums," Clark said. "There might only be three people on staff, so having some of these tools to help them streamline creating exhibits or building programming, creating curriculum for a summer camp, these tools can be really impactful collaborators."

Clark also said that she believes museums will be an important hub for educating the general public about AI and safe AI practices.

Overall, this year's fellows are excited to be a part of the new program, with each one echoing sentiments of excitement about meeting new people and exchanging new ideas.

"I probably speak for everybody, and they probably say the same thing," Carr said. "I feel like it is a privilege to get to teach here, and I am grateful for it every day ... and this fellowship is just an example of a way that it allows me to be creative and grow as a faculty member."

ROTC cadet 1 of 17 nationally selected for training program

RHEA CHOUDHARY
Staff Writer

When Baylor Army ROTC Capt. Bernard Sheppard first arrived on campus nearly two years ago, one of the first cadets who personally introduced himself was Baylor senior Jackson Balsavias. Sheppard said the St. Louis native stood out immediately as articulate and forward-thinking, exactly what Sheppard hoped for in a cadet.

"Jackson is crushing it on the Air Force side, he's crushing it in his extracurricular activities and now he's going to be a top-tier fighter pilot," Sheppard said.

His reputation for discipline and drive is what helped Balsavias become one of 17 cadets nationwide, and the only Baylor student, selected for the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training program. The program, held at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, is the Air Force's most competitive pilot track and the only internationally run undergraduate pilot training in the world.

Sheppard, who has trained Balsavias since his sophomore year, said the accomplishment is the combination of years of consistent work ethic and leadership.

"We have hundreds, if not thousands, of pilots selected every single year through ROTC," Sheppard said. "But Jackson is one of very few that were selected for this very, very elite program."

However, for Balsavias, the process of getting there was anything but easy. Applicants are ranked on GPA, physical fitness, flight aptitude testing and commander evaluations, and only the ten top scorers are chosen.

"They basically just take all of that data, plug it in and whoever has the top scores is who they take," Balsavias said.

While the application alone is rigorous, Sheppard said what distinguishes Balsavias is the way he has managed his time at Baylor. Alongside ROTC duties, he has held multiple leadership roles, including being vice wing commander and chaplain for the detachment, president of Brothers Under Christ fraternity and a member of the Blue Knights color guard. According to Sheppard, few cadets nationwide could take on that workload and continue to excel academically, physically and personally.

"He's one of those people who never seems to slow down," Sheppard said. "Whatever he's doing, whether it's school, ROTC or his fraternity, Jackson gives



Photo courtesy Jackson Balsavias

TOP GUN St. Louis senior Jackson Balsavias will be flying this ENJJPT-specific T-38C Talon plane, which is the Air Force's primary fighter jet trainer.

everything his absolute all."

Balsavias said he has been motivated less by personal achievement and more by his approach to service.

"Honestly, the most important thing about me is just my faith in Jesus Christ," Balsavias said. "I believe we accomplish the mission better if everybody feels included."

As he prepares to begin training in Wichita Falls, Balsavias said he's grateful for the mentors, teammates and Baylor community who have made his time at Baylor so meaningful. For him, the program is not just the next

step in his Air Force career, but also an opportunity to continue leading with the values that brought him here. Those values of determination, service and faith, are what carried him through the application process and will continue to strengthen his future career as a fighter pilot.

"At the end of the day, I don't want people to remember me just as someone who worked hard," Balsavias said. "I want them to remember me as someone who put others first, lived out my faith and made everyone around me feel like they belonged."

Baylor professor among 5 national scholars awarded humanities grant



Photo courtesy of Baylor University

SCHOLARSHIP Baylor History Professor Robert Elder was one of five national scholars selected for the National Endowment for the Humanities \$60,000 Public Scholars grant.

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Mary Thurmond, Sam Gassaway, Brady Harris

Michael Trigg, redshirt senior 21 receptions, 284 yards, 4 TDs	Kobe Prentice, senior 16 receptions, 235 yards, 5 TDs	Josh Cameron, redshirt senior 27 receptions, 407 yards, 3 TDs	Kole Wilson, senior 21 receptions, 274 yards, 2 TDs	Ashtyn Hawkins, sixth year 20 receptions, 271 yards
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AERIAL ATTACK Baylor’s receiving corps ranks among the most explosive in the nation, with five different players surpassing 200 yards — tied for most in the country with No. 11 Texas Tech. The Bears’ “YAC” — yards after catch — is fueled by a speedy collection of deep threats who keep their eyes on the prize.

YAC-ING ‘EM UP

Dynamic receivers have made Bears nation’s top passing offense

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Editor

Kobe Prentice cradled his hands by his helmet, orange-clad defenders well in the rearview.

Night-night.
Prentice breezed through the end zone, splitting through the Oklahoma State defense for his fifth touchdown in 16 catches. The senior Alabama transfer has been nothing if not efficient.

Saturday’s score was a 73-yard sprint, with the final 40 coming after the catch. It’s part of an unassailable tide of Baylor receiving threats spilling out from a unit with nearly unmatched depth. The Bears have five 200-yard receivers, tied with No. 11 Texas Tech for tops in the Big 12; no one else in the conference has more than three.

“The strongest piece of the roster is that position group,” head coach Dave Aranda said of the receivers. “The most invested into a position group is that group.”

That group has helped redshirt senior Sawyer Robertson become the nation’s leading passer in yards (1,713) and touchdowns (17) at incredibly high dropback volume. He’s been prolific, and much of that credit is owed to the arsenal at his disposal.

“There’s so many weapons, there’s really not a go-to first [option],” Robertson said after Saturday’s win.

Redshirt senior Josh Cameron’s 407 yards lead the team and rank third in the Big 12. After leading the team in receiving last season, Cameron has increased his production by over 20 yards per game and is on pace to eclipse 1,000 yards if he plays 13 games again this season.

“A lot of us used to play running back when we were kids, and so I feel like that’s where it comes from,” Cameron said of the unit’s success after the catch. “Whenever we kind of get the ball in our hands, it’s like, okay, ‘How can I

get vertical? How can I get that explosive 20-plus yard play?’ So whenever the ball is in our hands, we’re always thinking touchdown, not first down.”

Tight end Michael Trigg has finally broken out as a top target after years of displaying tantalizing potential. The 6-foot-4, 240-pound athlete freely shifts around the offensive formation, lining up in-line, in the slot and out wide. He’s already caught in a career-high four touchdown passes as a redshirt senior and looks to be in no danger of slowing down.

“He’s great — big frame, runs well, catches the ball really well,” Robertson said of Trigg. “So whenever he’s open, I just got to get it close to him and he makes a play.”

A pair of former Texas State transfers — sixth-year Ashtyn Hawkins (271 yards) and senior Kole Wilson (274 yards, 2 TDs) — round out the top end of an explosive receiving corps.

“We just have to capitalize on what they give us,” Wilson said. “We have a lot of playmakers and we have a great quarterback, so they know if they play us [in man-to-man defense], it’s pretty much over for them.”

The depth has forced some players out of the Bears’ 2025 plans entirely. Aranda confirmed this week that Louis Brown IV, a senior San Diego State transfer who battled for a starting job well into fall camp, will redshirt the rest of this season with the option to return in 2026.

“I think with some of the depth that we have at receiver, it’s probably the best for all people involved in this that he does that,” Aranda said. “I think there’s been the emergence of a couple other guys at receiver that really have kind of allowed us to find this space.”

Aranda said there are “still more guys in there that can contribute” in Brown’s stead, and hopes the move will open up more opportunities for the rest of the room. Cameron pointed to sophomore Jadon Porter and freshman Taz Williams Jr. as potential options to step up.

“Every time I go to the film room, I see Taz,



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

THE APPRENTICE Senior wide receiver Kobe Prentice races upfield during the Bears’ 42-7 win over Samford Sept. 13. The Alabama transfer has tallied a team-high five touchdowns receiving.

JP, those guys are always in there, just watching some kind of film, just trying to get better, really just trying to elevate their game,” Cameron said. “So seeing those young guys stay ready and just knowing I can trust them, that’s the main thing. I’m really excited to see what they bring to this offense.”

For now, Baylor’s aerial attack remains at the top. The Bears lead the nation in explosive drives per game, a metric that counts drives

that average at least 7.5 yards per play. Prentice’s catch factors into that, as does the Bears’ game-opening drive against Oklahoma State, which featured two Wilson catches for 61 yards and a score.

In an offense as unpredictable as Battleship, the hits just keep coming.

“I feel like a lot of that is just, honestly, God-gifted talent,” Cameron said. “We got just so many explosive guys.”

Carr drives cultural continuity for Baylor MBB

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Redshirt sophomore guard Cameron Carr is the lone player on Baylor’s current roster who has ever shared a practice court with last season’s team. The former 4-star and ESPN top 100 recruit enters the season carrying the burden of an expected leader for the Bears.

Carr began his college career at Tennessee, but entered the transfer portal midway through his sophomore season. A thumb injury had kept the lengthy, 6-foot-5 guard from seeing much playing time after an early exit against Austin Peay on Nov. 17.

Carr entered the portal in December; by Jan. 23, he was committed to head coach Scott Drew’s Baylor Bears.

When he first signed, Carr’s journey to the Brazos seemed spontaneous. Baylor was in the midst of a down year while the SEC powerhouse he left was

experiencing a renaissance. But Carr’s ties to the green and gold trace all the way back to high school.

Carr transferred to Link Academy in Branson, Mo., for his final two years of high school. There, he played alongside former Bear (and current Toronto Raptor) Ja’Kobe Walter and under the tutelage of former Baylor assistant coach Bill Armstrong, now the head coach at McNeese State.

Carr’s connections to Baylor kept him from staying on the transfer market very long. Having seen Walter’s experience with the program, he quickly sought to become part of the Baylor culture.

“Ja’Kobe’s my guy,” Carr said. “He definitely did play a role in me coming here. Seeing what he had done, coming here and being a one-and-done. Him achieving all the goals he had wanted to achieve and knowing that I could possibly do the same thing if God leads me down that path.”



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

THE VET Tennessee transfer Cameron Carr, who transferred to Baylor midway through last season, is the longest-tenured Bear.

Midseason transfers are ineligible to compete in games, so Carr joined the Bears’ practice squad. It was a challenge, but he looks back on his first semester in Waco with gratitude for the

learning opportunity.

“I met a lot of good people on that team and built some really good bonds,” Carr said. “I want to give a shoutout to VJ [Edgecombe] as well, watching him come in here and develop

and now get to be playing at the next level was inspiring to me.”

When all of Baylor’s rostered players left the program over the offseason, Carr had the opportunity to re-enter the transfer portal — but instead, chose to stay with the Bears out of trust for the program. Carr is now using his experience with Drew as an opportunity to be a leader in the locker room for the Bears this season.

“These past months together, we’ve gotten to bond a good amount,” Carr said of Drew. “He knows he can trust me on the court to go out and do what I need to do, but also that I can coach my teammates and hold my teammates accountable as well.”

Throughout his efforts to become that locker-room leader, Carr carries a chip on his shoulder as the only player on Drew’s roster that could remotely be referred to as a returner.

“I got to learn from last

year’s team by being a part of it for a bit,” Carr said. “This year kind of is a reset, and having the same thing over again, where I’m just learning how to be better from what I took away from last year.”

Amid the program’s roster overhaul, Baylor enters the season as a relative unknown, receiving little recognition from national pundits. Carr views this not as discouraging, but rather as an opportunity to lead his team to prove the spectators wrong.

“We’re all carrying a bit of a chip,” Carr said. “Knowing that people are looking down on us, like, ‘Oh they’re not going to be as good as what they think,’ or doubting the people we brought in. It’s an opportunity for us to prove what we are.”

Baylor will host an open exhibition at the Foster Pavilion at 4 p.m. on Oct. 10 against Grand Canyon. The Bears will officially open their season at Foster Pavilion on Nov. 3 against UTRGV.

‘Exploding Kittens’ to exploding TikTok

How freshmen dining hall food reviewers rose to fame

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

Three out-of-state freshmen walked into North Russell Hall one fateful August day. They began a friendship over a card game of “Exploding Kittens” that would later spark a campus-wide sensation in the form of a TikTok account under the name “Noro Food Reviews.”

Coopersburg, Pa., freshman Andrew “Drew” Thomas, Phoenix freshman Felix Hall and Boston freshman Kyle Campbell make up the squad behind [noro.food.reviews](#), a TikTok account dedicated to rating Baylor dining hall food.

“We all lost [Exploding Kittens] and it was like ... we all won at the same time,” Campbell said. “We won at the game of friendship.”

The account was meant as a casual documentation of their first weeks at college, according to Hall.

“We just thought, ‘What if we start making this channel where we do food reviews?’” Hall said. “That’d just be fun.”

The first few videos featured Hall and Campbell alone, and garnered a few clicks and passing scrolls, but once Thomas was added to the mix, the page began to take off in the group’s outer circles, with videos reaching up to 20k views.

“Triangles are the strongest shape,” Thomas said. “We all tie it together.”

The first memorable review took place at Penland Dining Hall, the trio’s favorite place to eat on campus. Thomas said the group fiercely defends Penland, not just for its food variety, but for the cultural atmosphere the hall creates between cuisine, students, faculty and staff.

“It’s the biggest dining hall — the most welcoming, just a giant melting pot of people,” Thomas said.

Hall said the group’s approach to reviews isn’t planned ahead of time; they just hit the record button and critique on their in-the-moment observations.

“We want to shed some light on the workers every day, and on the food and everyday life of freshmen,” Hall said.

The page has since gained traction across campus. Hall said one of his leaders in a pre-med class shared their video with all the other students.

“I definitely expected my close friends to think it was funny,” Hall said. “But now, people come up to us that we don’t even know and tell us they saw our videos.”

Even amidst rumored competition from a



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

FOOD-TASTIC Members of the Noro Food Reviews TikTok account offer ratings for desserts and snacks Tuesday evening at Penland Dining Hall.

“South Russell food review” page, the group said they remain confident they will stay at the top of Baylor and Waco food reviews.

“We have no rivals,” Thomas said. “Pretty much on top.”

The trio said they have plans to expand to Instagram reels, hoping to reach a larger audience.

“We might start posting a few reels, like re-upload the ones we already have and then maybe upload them at the same time,” Hall said. “We have some plans for future episodes.”

Other plans include finally trying the food at Memorial Dining Hall, and hopefully expanding their reviews to local Waco food stops. The group also hinted at an intramural flag football team with its own social media spinoff.

“We are also going to be expanding a little bit in our universe of content by starting an intramural flag football team where we will be having a social media [and] Instagram account and uploading clips, stats, videos — a little bit similar to what we do with the food reviews, but just for football,” Hall said.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

CAMPUS CRITICS Felix Hall (left), Kyle Campbell (right middle) and Drew Thomas (far right) pose for a photo with a Penland dining hall employee.

FUNNY MAN AT FOSTER



Lariat file photo

CRACKIN’ JOKES Alumni and internationally renowned comedian ventriloquist Jeff Dunham will take the stage at Foster Pavilion Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Want to learn more about Baylor’s concert and entertainment series? Scan the QR code to get the scoop.



Hottest trends to hop on for ACL 2025

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

It’s finally upon us — Austin City Limits weekend one! Now comes the tricky part: finding the perfect outfits for your three-day escapade.

If you’re eager to know what some of the most commonly-spotted looks will be at Zilker Park this year — whether that’s to try out these fun trends or to avoid them and stand out from the crowd — here is a brief fashion forecast.

WESTERN WEAR

No one is surprised by this prediction. With the integration of country sounds into pop music, cowgirl boots, hats and fringe are bound to be everywhere you look. Even if you’re not a committed country music fan, these classic felt and leather pieces are trusty. They really help to tie an outfit together and provide texture to less elaborate elements of your outfit.

If you somehow don’t have cowgirl (or boy) boots yet despite attending a Texas university, get them at DSW or Target for a quick fix. Or, if you’re looking to thrift them, try Studio Grocery on Washington Ave.

LEOPARD PRINT MINI SHORTS

Tate McRae might not be performing at ACL, but her fashion taste has undoubtedly inspired music festival-goers nationally. These printed hot pants-style shorts, sometimes sequined, can be worn with just about any white or black top, and look best paired with chunky black boots for an elevated flair to the look. Brownie points if yours have a low-rise waist!

BABYDOLL TANKS & DRESSES

Goodbye, tight, restrictive corsets, and hello, flowy babydoll freedom! The flower bud shape of these tops and dresses gives an effortless, airy, youthful look to the wearer, and go well especially with the rising trend of low-rise pants, shorts and skirts. If you’re going for a more natural, glowy look this time around, pay a visit to Brandy, Aéropostale or Hollister, which are bringing back this Y2K trend.

MATCHING SETS

Popstar princess Sabrina Carpenter in all her vintage, feminine flair, is the icon behind the upward tick in soft, pastel matching sets, which makes for a very put-together, yet stand-out look. These two-piece sets can come in ruffled, bloomer and tank sets in gingham and floral patterns. While these sets can be found in most trendy women’s sections, Princess Polly and Cider have especially darling collections.



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

FOLDING RAVE FANS

A good, old-fashioned fan has got to be the most efficient way to cool off in the middle of Zilker Park in the sun, and these ones never run out of juice, like the handheld battery-operated ones do. Plus, it’ll serve as the cherry on top to your outfit, and makes for a dynamic photo prop.

These cooling accessories come in neons, glittery finishes and even reveal quirky, punny printed messages when snapped open, so pick whichever one best suits your look.

STATEMENT BELTS

While statement belts might be cycling out in the regular fashion world, they just really bring music festival fits together in a way that no other accessory can. Leather wrap-style ones and brassy, metal-stamped chains can add the texture and shine you might be needing to any dress or skirt.

Y2K WRAPAROUND SUNGLASSES

This futuristic eye look is inspired by the ultimate party girl, Charli XCX. The electronics icon might not be making an appearance at ACL, but audiences at fellow pop artists, such as King Princess and Doja Cat, will likely be sporting these sunnies. I’d say your best bet at tailoring these to your unique look will lead you to Amazon, where several versions of these sunglasses abound.

LABUBUS & BAG CHARMS

Now that your outfit is put together, it’s time to flaunt what makes your bag unique — how you adorn them. Yes, your bag deserves to dress up too! As much of a fad as labubus and bag charms might be, they’ll be abundant at ACL. Feel free to hop on this unserious trend, even if yours is an off-brand lafufu version of these slightly creepy little keychain dolls.

‘Chunk’ overcomes broken jaw to win Fat Bear Week

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

After a week of voting and deliberation, Katmai National Park and Reserve announced the Fat Bear Week winner yesterday. Bear 32, a brown bear also known as “Chunk,” was crowned the fattest of them all, weighing in at over 1200 pounds.

Katmai National Park and Preserve hosts Fat Bear Week to showcase the impressive feeding efforts of 12 brown bears. The tradition started in 2014 and quickly gained international acclaim over the past years, with 2024’s Fat Bear Week racking in over 1.4 million voters from 160 different countries. With all eyes on them, these bears have spent nearly three months fighting in a battle of size — survival of the fattest.

Belton senior Savannah Fish says the week helps remind her the beauty of God’s creation, and how academics, while important, are not everything.

“It reminds me that there are greater rhythms to life than an academic schedule,” she said. “And, it helps me appreciate the beautiful world around me that God created.”

According to Explore.com, Brooks River in Katmai is home to these fat bears. While their roundness projects a wholesome and decadent aesthetic,

this pound packing is far from overindulgent. These bears rely on fat storage to survive the harsh, Alaskan winter months. With a bountiful supply of fresh salmon from the Brooks River, these bears pack on hundreds of pounds with the largest recorded bears weighing in at over 1400 pounds, the rough equivalent of twice the combined weight Indy and Belle, Baylor’s own bear mascots residing in the Bill and Eva Williams Bear Habitat.

Regardless, when asked how our Baylor bears stack up against their fat and furry cousins, Mansfield senior Annabeth DeMarque thinks our bears should win top prize.

“I think our bears would rank No. 1,” she said.

A live stream camera near the river let voters follow and track the salmon munching movements of their favorite bears, while educating the public on conservation efforts and the importance of feasting times for bears. According to Explore.com, “Fat bears are successful bears.”

The March madness-style single elimination tournament highlights the struggles these bears go through to maintain a healthy life for themselves, and for their offspring, hallmarking each bears individual struggles within the park.



Kalena Reynolds | Opinion Editor

A broken jaw from earlier in the year threatened Chunk’s survival, but he inevitably made a comeback with his winning title. For voters, his resiliency was the most impressive feature of his success. According to Explore.com, bear activity monitors noted a freshly broken jaw in June 2025.

“Chunk used his determination and adaptability to persevere through injury. He will need that ability indefinitely,” Explore.com says. “His broken jaw is a permanent disability that will never return to normal. Resilience in the wake of pain and conflict is written on Chunk’s face.”

Frisco senior Kayla Schlotman also noted the impressive nature of Chunk’s win, and the inspiration his legacy has and will leave.

“It’s shocking that the winner had to overcome a pretty huge setback,” she said. “I feel like he had the biggest obstacle, but he still won. That is really inspiring, I think, to us all.”



James Ellis | Cartoonist

What to know before the curtain rises on ‘The Life of a Showgirl’

HANNAH WEBB
Focus Editor & Copy Editor

It’s showtime.

Taylor Swift has always been bold when starting a new era, but the way she announced “The Life of a Showgirl” was different. Sitting by her now fiancé on his podcast, smiling like she had been keeping the secret for months — which she had. Swifties were refreshing X at midnight, hoping for a cryptic sign in Times Square or a coded Instagram story.

Instead, she casually revealed her twelfth studio album on New Heights with Jason and Travis Kelce. It was a classic Taylor move to choose such a public stage while making it feel like an inside joke between her and him.

From that moment, the excitement began. We got the mint-green briefcase, the orange palette and a tracklist full of titles that sound like short plays. We’ve gotten the vinyl variants and countdowns galore. Then came the Spotify pop-ups — small lyric teasers that only make sense once the songs are released.

“My infamy loves company.” “You wanna take a skate on the ice inside my veins.” “Everyone’s unbothered till they’re not.” “Oftentimes it doesn’t feel so glamorous to be me.”

These lines are rawer than her glittery Vegas style suggests. They belong to someone who understands that sequins can cut a little.

The first act is already set: “The Fate of Ophelia” kicks off the album and is expected to be the lead single. If you know Taylor, you know her opening tracks set the tone (like State of Grace, ...Ready for It?, Lavender Haze). Starting with Ophelia says a lot. She draws from tragedy, fragility and the tale of the beautiful girl who couldn’t handle the spotlight. It’s not subtle, and it’s meant to grab attention.

Then there’s the movie: The Official Release Party of a Showgirl. At barely 90 minutes and with limited screenings, it provides just enough information to excite fans. Theories are already spreading — about it being filmed during her mysterious Toronto Eras Tour shoot, that it’s a visual album or that it’s secretly part one of something larger.

Taylor never creates anything short, so why would this be different? Perhaps it’s misdirection — she’s teasing a dazzling little film while planning a bigger reveal just out of sight.

What about the other songs? Each one seems



Associated Press

to invite interpretation. “Cancelled!” practically writes itself — a self-critique about online outrage or a jab at the culture that has tried to cancel her for two decades. “Eldest Daughter,” appropriately a track five and the longest on the album, feels like her most personal track in years, turning family dynamics into metaphor.

“Father Figure” could be seductive or eerie, depending on where she decides to take it. Then there’s the title track featuring Sabrina Carpenter, which feels almost too perfect. Sabrina opened for her on tour, and now she’s part of the story. That’s show business for you.

The excitement of a Taylor album isn’t just in the songs. It’s also in the treasure hunt. The orange door she walked through at the last Eras Tour show. The orange-and-mint outfit from a year ago that now seems prophetic. The Spotify playlist filled with tracks produced by Max Martin and Shellback, hinting at the production style. She has been teasing this era for years, and now she’s bringing us into the inside joke.

So what can we expect during the release? A pop record that sparkles but still has a bite. A film and an album that’s likely short for a reason. A curtain-raiser that might not show everything. She understands that no matter how many hints she leaves, the best surprises are the ones she keeps hidden.

Because here’s the truth about showgirls: the feathers, the sequins, the lights — that’s not the real trick. The trick is what they hide, all while smiling.

“The excitement of a Taylor album isn’t just in the songs. It’s also in the treasure hunt.”

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SAFETY & SECURITY from A1

offers programs and resources.”

According to the report, campus burglaries increased by 18 reports, and on-campus stalking increased by 25 reports since last year. This sharp increase is contrasted with other categories like rape, murder and aggravated assault, whose numbers have remained relatively the same year by year.

“The increase in our number of burglaries this year is largely as a result of things that were happening at [Clifton Robinson Tower],” Johnson said. “We had offices that were being entered into and wallets and purses being taken out of offices.”

Johnson said that motor vehicle thefts, applying to anything with an engine, are also included in burglary reports. Furthermore, each incident is counted as one report, which was a "driving force" behind the increase in burglary statistics this year, she said.

For the increase in stalking reports, Johnson explained how federal guidelines impact how reports are categorized as stalking and the potential wide range of offenses.

“A majority of that was ex-partners texting, calling, leaving gifts at doors,” Johnson said. “Because it

can be through a third party, it can be through someone else. They don't even have to make direct contact with the person who is the victim in these cases. [But] we still have to report it as stalking based on how the guidelines are set for us."

Johnson said that for a report to be characterized as stalking, there must be more than one occurrence, and one has to occur on Clery geography, which includes the Baylor campus and surrounding streets, the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work and several other Baylor properties like the Louise Herrington School of Nursing and Truett Seminary. Additionally, a stalking report also encompasses unwanted electronic communication, like text or email.

“So it’s very rare that we get reports of what people think stalking is — with someone hiding outside the bushes with binoculars,” Johnson said. “So we in our office, like Clerly, always err on the side of caution and include something as a report rather than exclude it.”

Johnson emphasized that her office maintains a proactive approach to Clery crime. Whenever a report is received that appears to violate policy or is close to it, outreach is

Stalking and Burglary Reports 2022-2024

	2022	2023	2024	% Increase
Stalking	40 on-campus reports	42 on-campus reports	67 on-campus reports	59% increase from 2023
Burglary	4 on-campus reports	4 on-campus reports	22 on-campus reports	450% increase from 2023

Mackenzie Grizzard | Assistant News Editor

CAMPUS ALERT Baylor saw a steep incline in burglary and stalking reports on campus from 2023 to 2024.

made immediately.

"We'll meet with them, offer whatever support and resources are available, including resolution options if they want that," Johnson said. "And then we'll try to ... carry forward, allowing them autonomy to keep the reins in terms of what happens next."

Additionally, the annual report includes updates reflecting the Stop Campus Hazing Act, which was enacted in December 2024, amends the Clery Act to increase transparency

and require institutions to implement prevention measures against campus hazing.

"Hazing really has no place in our community, has never had a place in our community, and this federal legislation brings some greater clarity on transparency to how we share about incidents of hazing that do happen on our campus, as well as how we report in our Clery reporting information," Dr. Sharra Hynes, vice president of student life, said.

The rest of the report includes

updated emergency response and evacuation procedures, reporting resources, emergency notifications, crime prevention and awareness, sex offender registration, drug and alcohol policies, fire safety and other training materials.

"We go above and beyond to be able to ensure the safety and security of our community, and that comes alongside with our partners that we have within the community," Donald J. Rodman, senior director of public safety and security, said.

CAREER DAY from A1

of opportunities related to his majors, though mainly business-related ones.

“All the people there were super great,” Johnson said. “I had some definitely good interactions. Being a freshman, I don’t always have that much that I can offer, so I was really appreciative of the time that they took just to chat with me and talk about my trajectory.”

Rylander said even freshmen or sophomores not looking for jobs or internships immediately could attend Career Day to get their professional headshots and see the opportunities available.

“The thing that you can do at career day is just see what’s out there,” Rylander said. “Talk to different employers to see what you can do to be ready for when you do want an internship.”

Middletown, R.I., freshman Thomas Miller said he joined the line

to get his professional headshot as soon as he arrived.

"I feel like I should make an effort to get involved in career things, even if it doesn't seem fun or too relevant right now," Miller said. "What really sealed the deal for me was the free headshots."

In preparation for Career Day, Rylander said the center created a new AI Copilot to help students find jobs that match their major and skills.

"It allows a student to put in their resume or even tell them what their major is and some skills they have, and the agent's going to tell them which employers they need to go see," Rylander said. "It will also explain what skills you have and [how] what major you have applies to those different employers. So not only will it do that, but it will help students articulate their value."

Littleton, Colo., junior Emma

Dewitt said she prepared for Career Day by finding the employers on Handshake relevant to her majors — human resources management and supply chain management — and applied for their available internships.

"I feel like all the employers I talked to really wanted to talk to me and have a good connection," Dewitt said. "Once I told them I already applied for their internships, they were more interested."

Overall, Rylander said it is essential for students, regardless of their major or classification, to understand how their current work can be applied to future employment, including their involvement in events like Sing or Pigskin.

"It's really just the piece about understanding about the skills that you have," Rylander said. "Those skills that you're building right now transfer into a variety of different things."

DIRECTOR from A1

Similar to Hess' call to Baylor, he also said he felt called to the medical field during his time at Baylor.

"I knew that I enjoyed science, and I had a growing awareness that living out the gospel meant serving others," Hess said. "As a lot of young adults do in that season of life who are contemplating health care, I had this sense that service, science and a commitment to the gospel coalesced together in a place of calling to medicine."

In 2007, after working for Baylor Scott & White in Gatesville and helping facilitate a community health needs assessment with Waco Family Medicine, Waco Family Medicine offered Hess a job. There, he discovered his heart for helping residents and joined their faculty in 2011.

Since then, Hess has given lectures at Baylor and volunteers with the Hillis Scholars program as a mentor for pre-medical students. He said he will continue to be a mentor for this program and engage with other pre-health students and activities.

"I'm eager to see where there might be opportunities to continue to build connections across the university with the health center as well as to envision students for a life of service in medicine or a medicine adjacent discipline," Hess said.

Dr. Sharra Hynes, vice president for student life, said Hess' ideas so far have been innovative and thoughtful.

"I think students are really going to love him, and I think he's going to bring really strong leadership in that space," Hynes said.

