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EDITORIAL

Don’t defend hatred with religious beliefs

Love thy neighbor. Christian or not, you’ve heard these words. While the Bible might be full of confusing parables and themes open to interpretation, “love thy neighbor” is a simple, universal phrase. The word “love” appears in the Bible over 300 times, and the exact phrase “love one another” is mentioned 14 times — twice by Jesus himself. In fact, “love thy neighbor” is the second “great commandment” outlined in the Bible, second only to loving God.

Representing other cultures does not negate your own Christianity, the same way being a student at Baylor does not automatically make you a Baptist.

If you consider yourself a Christian, you are called to follow God’s commands, and Scripture acts as a guide. Even if you don’t consider yourself a Christian, being kind to others is just in good taste. But somewhere along the way, we lost sight of these commandments. Christians have gotten caught up in interpretation rather than truth, using words created in love to spread hate. Recently, the East Village Dining Commons introduced halal chicken

at students’ request. “Halal” comes from the Arabic word “lawful” and simply means the animal was slaughtered with minimal suffering, and the name of Allah is invoked before slaughter. “Allah” means God in Arabic and is linguistically similar to “Eloho,” the Aramaic translation of God, and the word Jesus uses in the Bible. “At Baylor, ‘Love thy neighbor’ are not just words ... they are a way of life,” reads Baylor’s official website, under its values and vision section. An integral part of Baylor’s mission is a caring community — something that’s somehow gotten lost in translation. Something as simple as chicken turned into an online theological frenzy, with our Christian community spewing obscenities and discriminatory statements. Food cannot be “un-Christian,” but spreading hate always has been. Representing other cultures does not negate your own Christianity, the same way being a student at Baylor does not automatically make you a Baptist. The individuals who are harassed online are as much God’s children as you are, and your faith is not validated by the hate you incorrectly attribute to God’s name. As students, we represent Baylor as a Christian university as much as you, and we reflect God’s love by showing the same compassion and care to our fellow students. Belonging to a Christian university like Baylor isn’t passive — it’s a daily choice to respect and uphold the ideals for which it stands. Baylor proudly boasts international student enrollment from 90 countries and added “Pro Mundo,” or “For the World,” to its mission statement in 2023. The fact is, Baylor cannot have the international presence it strives for without representation and inclusion on all fronts. According to Baylor’s Office of Institutional Research, the population of Muslim students has increased



James Ellis | Cartoonist

by 105% since 2018, no doubt due to Baylor’s continued international recruitment efforts. It is not enough to use these students as statistical bragging rights — they deserve to be cared for, supported and able to eat at the university they pay thousands of dollars to attend. Baylor cannot and will not maintain its diverse international enrollment if it is not intentional in its support for those students. International students will not seek out or stay at an institution whose students and faculty do not respect them. We cannot make a name for ourselves as a Christian institution without following the ideals of Christ, and that starts most basically with loving others because He loved us first. Imagine an international student whose first experience with

Christianity is hateful online rhetoric. If the “caring community” we so gratefully proclaim on the university website doesn’t include all members of the Baylor community, we have failed at our Christian mission. To our international students, you have a place here just as Christian students do. The hate you might see online does not mean Baylor doesn’t want you here; we do. You broaden our worldview and make us more well-rounded students, and we hope our university can offer you support on an institutional, academic and cultural level. Bears, it’s OK to be firm in your faith; in fact, it’s honorable to stand in conviction while living in a world that sometimes seems to demonize faithfulness. But using your faith as a weapon against others is a gross misrepresentation of all we stand for

here at Baylor. No matter what faceless usernames say on the internet, Baylor is not “soft” or “woke” for fulfilling its written Christian mission of love. Our university is not “less Christian” because of inclusivity efforts. Online discriminatory and hateful statements will not change Baylor’s mind, but they hurt the real-life students who walk alongside you on Fountain Mall. If you don’t believe in halal chicken, don’t eat it. If you don’t believe in Islam, you aren’t forced to worship it. But do not shame others online for not worshipping in the same way you do. Religion is never a platform to be hateful, and if you are using it as such, you are not upholding Baylor’s values the way it intends.

Waco will be harder to leave behind than I thought

O’CONNOR DANIEL
Reporter

If someone told me several years ago that I was going to move 850 miles away from my hometown to attend college in Texas, I wouldn’t have thought them crazy, necessarily. But if they had told me I would come to see Waco, a town in Central Texas, as home, that would’ve taken some convincing. Papa Jack’s Barbecue was the first restaurant I ever visited in Waco, and that trip alone was enough to put my parents at ease. The owner, Mrs. Kim, sat down at our table, typed her number into my phone and said to call if I ever ran into trouble — “because I’ve got three grown boys who’ll come straighten things out,” she said. There it is. That’s Waco. Situated by the Brazos River, Waco is the kind of town where locals extend hospitality as if it’s their second nature. Gas station attendants mean it when they say “have a good day.” Fellow students’ families have you over for Sunday dinner and send you home with leftovers, knowing college kids don’t cook for themselves.



From modest Texas bungalows to takeout-only breakfast tacos, Waco doesn’t put on airs. Reflecting on my past four years here, I’ve examined the small-town charms, people, history and culture. It’s Waco in the conversations at George’s with someone who’s lived in town for 50 years and insists on paying for your meal. It’s Waco in the inability to walk for exercise because you pass by too many friends sitting on their porches. Waco is sitting at a picnic table with my roommates, ruining other folks’ exercise. It’s the lady at the thrift store who will help people put outfits together with the enthusiasm of a Hollywood costume designer. Pretty much everyone I know lives within a three-mile radius of each other. My neighbor, Mr. Leo, resonates with Waco as he takes care of his 90-year-old mother in the home where he grew up, mowing our lawn every week and installing security lights to ward off intruders. He worries about us. Waco is walking to the pizza restaurant down the street every Thursday or driving to Cinemark for \$5 movies on Tuesdays. It’s in the randomness of a birthday camp out at the Llama Ranch and jumping off a cliff at Lake Whitney into the Brazos. People say Waco can feel isolated. Dallas traffic is isolation. I’d rather hit every pothole on 11th Street. I’ve realized that Waco is humble —

not flashy. Waco is authentic.

I don’t want to leave the place I’m writing from, unlike the hometown I was dying to escape. Waco’s people, its pace and its weirdness have become part of me.

As graduation approaches, I have to ask myself what’s next. Here I am, a senior, standing on the edge of the next chapter. In the spring, I’ll graduate. It feels like yesterday I was in Athens, Ga., writing my college essay: “Now I’m standing on

the line separating childhood from adulthood, with high school almost in my rear view mirror and college, that GREAT BEYOND, looming ahead.” And now, somehow, I’m back on that line again. But this time, I don’t want to leave the place I’m writing from, unlike the hometown I was dying to escape. Waco’s people, its pace and its weirdness have become part of me. Sure, Dallas-Fort Worth — where around 35,000 Baylor Bears live — is only 90 miles up I-35. And if I end up there, it won’t be completely unfamiliar territory. But cities like Dallas or Nashville, Tenn., come with their own kind of pressure. They’re fast, polished and career-driven. That’s not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, that’s probably where the jobs will take me. But wherever I land, leaving Waco won’t be easy. Mr. Leo told me how sad he’ll be when my roommates and I move out. “The cycle keeps on going,” he said. “Girls move in, stay three years, then they leave.” I can only hope I’ll carry with me what Waco taught me to appreciate: what’s real and what doesn’t try to sell itself as more than it is. I hope I don’t lose that, even if I trade potholes for rush-hour.

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News

‘The well has run dry’

SNAP funding to return after nearly two weeks

JULIANA VAZQUEZ
Staff Writer

Forty-two million Americans have had their dinner plans up in the air as the government shutdown threatened America’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

After 43 days in shutdown limbo, a funding bill passed the Senate and the House. President Donald Trump officially signed it into place Wednesday night, reopening the government and restoring SNAP benefits.

That doesn’t lessen the sting of nearly two weeks without SNAP benefits.

America’s financial year begins on Oct. 1, with enough funding set aside to support essential government programs like SNAP through the end of the month.

“Bottom line, the well has run dry,” the United States Department of Agriculture stated on its website. “At this time, there will be no benefits issued November 1.”

So once Nov. 1 rolled around, with the government still shut down, states scrambled to pick up the burden left by SNAP.

Although the USDA has an additional \$6 billion in savings to utilize in times of need, Dr. Jeremy Everett, Founder and Executive Director of the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, stated they have not elected to use those right now.

“[This has] never happened before,” Everett said. “We’ve



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

GONE IN A SNAP The Pantry, Baylor’s on-campus food store located in room 100 of Sid Richardson, provides groceries and other items for students in need.

always chosen to use whatever rainy day fund we had to be able to fully fund SNAP benefits.”

This move has put low-income families and students in counties like McLennan in a difficult spot. Everett said this will be the difference between families and students choosing between paying the rent, medication or food, with some users potentially skipping meals to pay for

other essentials.

“That’s only going to be heightened when you don’t have that money that you’re dependent upon to be able to help cover your food expenses through SNAP program,” Everett said.

Dallas senior Lila Finke said food assistance programs like SNAP are vital to America’s most vulnerable communities.

“Having SNAP benefits

and having food is like the least the government could do to help low-income families that have no other way to provide for their families,” Finke said.

Everett stated the idea that SNAP recipients are unwilling to work is a common and dangerous misconception when it comes to understanding the necessity of SNAP benefits. Likewise, those who utilize SNAP

benefits generate income for McLennan County’s grocery stores. With SNAP paused, those benefits also vanish from the local economy.

“We’re losing about \$8.2 million ... due to the disruption of benefits,” Everett said. “That has a potential to linger.”

Although states are beginning to release SNAP funds in partial payments, these payments are limited and

skewed. The Texas Tribune reported that some Texans have received about 65% of the typical month’s SNAP allotment, while others have received “as little as \$16 for two people or no payments at all.”

Everett encouraged those struggling with food insecurity to turn to the resources their community offers them as a beacon of hope.

“So many people are stepping up,” Everett said. “That represents a lot of good people and communities all across our country.”

Everett mentioned local organizations such as Meals on Wheels, Shepherd’s Heart and on-campus resources like The Store and The Fridge.

Students with a meal plan also have the opportunity to donate unused meal swipes, which is as easy as a quick conversation with a Baylor Dining representative at the cash register. Students who would like to use these donated swipes can apply online to receive them.

Everett called on students to attest to their faith and do whatever they could to help those struggling with food insecurity, whether that be by donating to a food drive or donating their unused guest swipes.

“It’s important that we understand that we’re called to be faithful,” Everett said. “So we just have to continue to show up for people in poverty because our faith compels us to do so.”

Gather Dance members groove across all genres



Photo courtesy of Abby Rathburn

DANCIN’ Freshman Vice President Justin Buzoff, Instructor Coordinator Abby Rathburn, Media and Marketing Lead Rachel Staszko, Secretary Jenny Ku and President and Founder Gianna Dominique are on the board for Gather Dance.

ARDEN BERRY
Staff Writer

Gather Dance members meet on Sunday nights, sometimes to pirouette and other times to pop-and-lock.

Pennington, N.J., junior Gianna Dominique, president of the club, said she founded Gather Dance this semester to give students a space to learn a variety of dance genres in a relaxed setting.

“Starting it was time-consuming, and I was doing it all by myself, so it took a while,” Dominique said. “Once it was all put together, it was just so easy and rewarding, and it’s been so fun to see everyone come.”

Dominique said the club has had 50 people attend at least one meeting, with about 15-30 members attending each week.

Los Alamos, N.M., freshman Sofia West said she appreciates that Gather Dance teaches a variety of dance styles.

“I feel like a lot of the clubs here on campus were only hip-hop or only ballet, and it’s nice because you get a little bit of everything,” West said.

West said she danced ballet throughout high school, but that other dancers in Gather Dance grew up practicing different styles.

“It’s nice to have a variation of everything so that you can learn as a dancer but also grow your own skills,” West said.

Houston freshman Onyinyechi Ogbuji said she taught herself to dance by learning the choreography in “Dance Moms.”

“I’ve been looking for a club or a team

that I could dance with no added pressure of competing or anything like that, and Gather Dance has really been that outlet to where we can just come together and just dance and change up the styles each week,” Ogbuji said.

So far, Ogbuji said they have done hip-hop, ballet, contemporary, jazz and musical theater dances.

“We did a jazzy musical theater dance from a soundtrack from Annie, and I would never forget that day because ... that was my very first dance class ever in my entire life,” Ogbuji said. “And the dance was really easy to learn. I loved dancing.”

To teach a variety of dances, the club uses different dance teachers. Columbus, Ohio, freshman Abby Rathburn is the instructor coordinator for Gather Dance.

“My job is mostly just coordinating with people who want to teach,” Rathburn said. “Just giving people a chance to share their own choreography.”

Dominique said members of the club can reach out to Rathburn to teach their choreography.

Rathburn said she became interested after meeting Dominique at Late Night and has found joy in dancing with the club since joining.

“This club’s purpose is just to provide people with an avenue to dance and find joy in that,” Rathburn said. “I felt like in high school I struggled sometimes to like see the joy every day, but having it especially on Sunday nights is a great start to our week.

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BLOCK PARTY Isaiah Austin rejects Oklahoma’s Cameron Clark during Baylor’s 66-64 loss to the Sooners on Jan. 18, 2014, at the Ferrell Center. Austin averaged 3.1 blocks per game in 2013-14. Lariat file photo

From ‘nuisance’ to new man

Isaiah Austin, the highest-ranked recruit in Baylor MBB history, reflects on his journey

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Baylor’s highest-rated recruit in school history, a projected first-round pick in the 2014 NBA draft, was almost completely removed from the team.

Isaiah Austin first heard of Baylor in the eighth grade when, having just moved to Arlington, he saw a figure in a green and gold sweatshirt sitting in the stands of his first middle school basketball practice.

“Paul Mills was sitting up in the top of the basketball gym, and my coach pulled me aside and told me that he was there from Baylor to watch me play,” Austin said. “I remember telling my parents how excited I was to have a college coach there to watch me. I didn’t know anything about Baylor, but I began to take basketball a little more seriously after that.”

The 7-foot-1 center committed to the Bears early in the recruiting process, signing the summer after his sophomore year. Austin finished his high school career as the third-highest-ranked recruit

in the Class of 2012.

“I wanted to go where I was loved and where I was wanted,” Austin said. “Coach [Scott] Drew created that.”

Austin came to Baylor in the fall of 2012 and was considered one of the best players in the country, and he knew it. The projected lottery pick quickly became a fan favorite through his dominant defense in the paint and prolific three-level scoring ability, which was extremely rare for a center in college basketball at the time.

Austin also became known for his attitude, both on and off the court.

“I wasn’t the easiest player to deal with,” Austin said. “I was very egotistical and thought I knew everything, but at the end of the day I didn’t know s---.”

Austin became known in Waco for his competitive emotions while playing basketball. Nighttime visitors to the Ferrell Center in 2013 could expect to see Austin’s dominance on the court, accompanied by a multitude of outbursts at the coaching staff.

“The families used to sit behind the home bench at the Ferrell,” Austin said. “Any given night, I would be cussing

out Coach Drew and the rest of the staff if I didn’t like something that was happening. I was cursing at grown men, disrespecting them in front of their wives and children.”

The 2013 season, Austin’s freshman year, ended with an NIT tournament championship for head coach Scott Drew and the Bears. Austin shone in the championship game against Iowa, posting 15 points, nine rebounds, four assists and five blocks.

Austin declared for the NBA draft following the tournament, hoping to be a top-five pick. The freshman began to prepare for the combine, but his plans were thrown off course when he tore a ligament in his rotator cuff. He was forced to pull his name out of the draft.

“Teams began to tell me that if I got healthy and played another season of college ball, then I could still go as a top pick,” Austin said.

Despite his elite play, though, Drew and his staff were wary of Austin’s attitude and ego. They were conflicted over whether they wanted the five-star center to return to Waco.

“At the time, Coach Drew and the staff didn’t want me to return,” Austin said. “I was so uncoachable and such a bad teammate that they weren’t sure if they wanted to risk bringing me back.”

Austin desperately wanted to come back to play for the green and gold, but first, he had to face the music. Baylor’s entire coaching staff staged an intervention, featuring his parents and high school coach, telling him he needed to sign a contract of personal conduct to return.

“We wanted to assist Isaiah in any way we could,” Drew said in a 2014 interview with Yahoo Sports. “We thought the best thing was to bring everyone up to see him and that when Isaiah found out, he knew that he had a united front behind him.”

The intervention worked. Austin rejoined the team with a new attitude.

“I had to agree that I wouldn’t be a nuisance to the team and that I would step up as a leader,” Austin said. “That night alone changed my life for the better for the rest of my life.”



JUMP AROUND Isaiah Austin contests a shot during Baylor’s 74-69 loss at No. 24 Texas on Feb. 26, 2014. Lariat file photo

ISAIAH >> A5

Coaching fatigue, ‘Jerry Jones Effect’ hit college coaches

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Joey Scrivano sat down in the lobby of the Hurd Tennis Center and rubbed his hand across his temple.

“The head coaching position is being devalued more than ever in the history of all sports,” said Scrivano, who has spent 24 years at the helm of Baylor’s women’s tennis program.

“Everybody wants to lead, but then nobody wants the accountability,” Scrivano said. “It’s players, it’s administrators, it’s fans, it’s parents ... it’s everybody.”

Having coached at Baylor since 2003, the six-time Big 12 coach of the year is familiar with the highs and lows of the profession. The current extent of devaluation, he said, is something new.

“It’s the Jerry Jones Effect,” Scrivano said.

The long-tenured tennis coach believes this change in the way people view head coaches began with former Oakland Raiders head coach and owner Al Davis.

Davis, who played college football at Syracuse, served as the head coach for the Oakland Raiders from 1963-65. By 1972, he was the primary owner of the Raiders until he died in 2011. Under his reign, the Raiders saw immense success growing into a perennial playoff contender throughout the 1970s and 1980s and won three Super Bowl titles along the way.

“The difference there is that Al Davis was a hell of a coach,” Scrivano said. “He played, he became an owner, but he also had a deep understanding of what it took to build a team. Everybody started emulating what he was doing, but without any of the knowledge to



THE TIMES ARE A-CHANGIN’ More than two decades into his Baylor tenure, six-time Big 12 Coach of the Year Joey Scrivano says head coaches have never been valued less. Photo courtesy of Baylor Athletics

do it.”

Scrivano sees fatigue rising among head coaches in the sports world, and is not afraid to credit overbearing administrators and players who are unwilling to let head coaches do their job.

“It started in pro sport and just spread everywhere, even as far down as Pop Warner football,” Scrivano said. “In our sport, with tennis, that’s one of the biggest challenges right now.”

The way high-level collegiate tennis functions has caused coaching to be increasingly difficult.

The USTA junior tennis circuit is almost a requirement for players to compete at the

Division I collegiate level. The circuit, which begins as young as age four, is fully focused on individual competition that puts both the player and the player’s parents in charge of their performance and success.

This is the cause, Scrivano said, of the lack of respect that collegiate head coaches receive in today’s game.

“In tennis, up until an athlete comes to college, the athlete is in charge,” Scrivano said. “Growing up, the parents are the ones paying; they’re the ones leading the program. The athlete gets to college and it’s the other way around. It’s a very different setup, and sometimes it’s frustratingly difficult to get somebody to buy in.”

Coaches are often surrounded by people who believe, loudly, that they could do the job better. Scrivano is no stranger to coaching in that sort of environment.

“I don’t think any college is immune to this,” Scrivano said. “When you have receipts of success, that helps a lot, but a lot of people still want their opinions heard on a lot of different things. That isn’t always needed.”

The perspective is shared by professional coaches, too. Longtime Miami Heat coach Erik Spoelstra has become known for his outspokenness in promoting coaches to ignore outside factors and trust the work they can control.

Boston Celtics head coach Joe Mazzulla, when asked about outside pressure on his job, famously made his feelings clear.

“We’re all going to be dead soon anyway,” Mazzulla said. “It won’t matter anymore, so with that [perspective] there’s zero pressure.”

Still, Scrivano has refused to give in. He’s fighting to bring value back to the head-coaching position.

“I still love what I’m doing,” Scrivano said. “It’s just very different than it used to be.”

Scrivano, who has won 11 Big 12 regular-season titles with the Bears, hopes to use his influence as a long-tenured head coach in the tennis world to push for an improvement in the treatment of head coaches across all sports.

“The programs that understand this devaluing of the head coaching position, the ones that really figure it out and let people like me do their job well, end up finding success,” Scrivano said. “You probably could start thinking in your mind over what pro sports do that, and I guarantee you they’re winning a lot.”

Agbim’s journey fuels Baylor’s new foundation

MARISSA ESSENBURG
Sports Writer

When Baylor men’s basketball tipped off practice this fall, there wasn’t a single returning player on the floor. No starters, no bench pieces, not even a walk-on who had donned the green and gold before.

But for fifth-year guard Obi Agbim, that blank slate wasn’t intimidating; it was familiar.

Agbim’s college career has taken him throughout Colorado to Wyoming, and finally to Waco, making Baylor his fourth school in five years. Along the way, he learned how to adapt to new coaches, teammates and systems without losing sight of who he is.

“I feel like this is where God needed me to be,” Agbim said. “It’s a blessing being here, and being here just gives me an opportunity to focus on basketball. The fan base is real, the coaching staff is real and I’m just excited to be here.”

When he arrived in Texas for the first time this summer and met a roster full of strangers, he already knew what it would take to turn uncertainty into opportunity.

That opportunity came early. In July, Baylor represented the United States at the FISU World University Games in Germany — a chance for the completely rebuilt roster to compete together for the first time.

And no one seized that moment quite like Agbim.

The 6-foot-3 guard averaged 20 points and five rebounds per game, leading the Bears to a silver medal and earning tournament MVP honors in the process, giving Baylor fans an early glimpse of the leadership and poise that define his game.

“This may be Baylor’s most energetic team,” Agbim said. “The energy they had when they were recruiting me was unbelievable.”

But for the former Mountain West Newcomer of the Year, it wasn’t just about the energy and it wasn’t just about basketball.

“Being able to play somewhere where you can play basketball but also grow your faith and learn more about Christ, that really stood out to me,” Agbim said. “Growing my faith and understanding that there are things that are way bigger than basketball.”

And it’s not just Agbim who believes he’s found the right fit. When he signed with Baylor, head coach Scott Drew said Agbim embodies everything Baylor basketball strives to be.

“Obi will be a great addition to our team and is someone who really represents our ‘Culture of JOY,’” Drew said. “He has a great work ethic, and the Baylor family will love watching him play every night.”

Throughout his college basketball career, Agbim has built a reputation for consistency and composure, regardless of the jersey he’s wearing. From scoring bursts at Northeastern Junior College to leading Fort Lewis to back-to-back NCAA Division II tournament runs, and averaging 17.6 points, 3.2 rebounds and 3.4 assists in a breakout senior season at Wyoming, when he emerged as one of the nation’s most efficient perimeter scorers. Agbim has proven he can adapt and produce anywhere he plays.

Looking ahead into his final year of college basketball, Agbim said his focus is on keeping things simple and being fully present in the moment.

“I want this team to stay in the present and approach every day with the mentality that we get to be here, and we get to do this,” Agbim said. “If we take it one day at a time and win the day, not getting too much ahead of ourselves, it’ll all take care of itself. Baby steps to make bigger steps.”

It’s that mindset carrying weight for a team looking to define its identity in a brand-new era of Baylor men’s basketball.

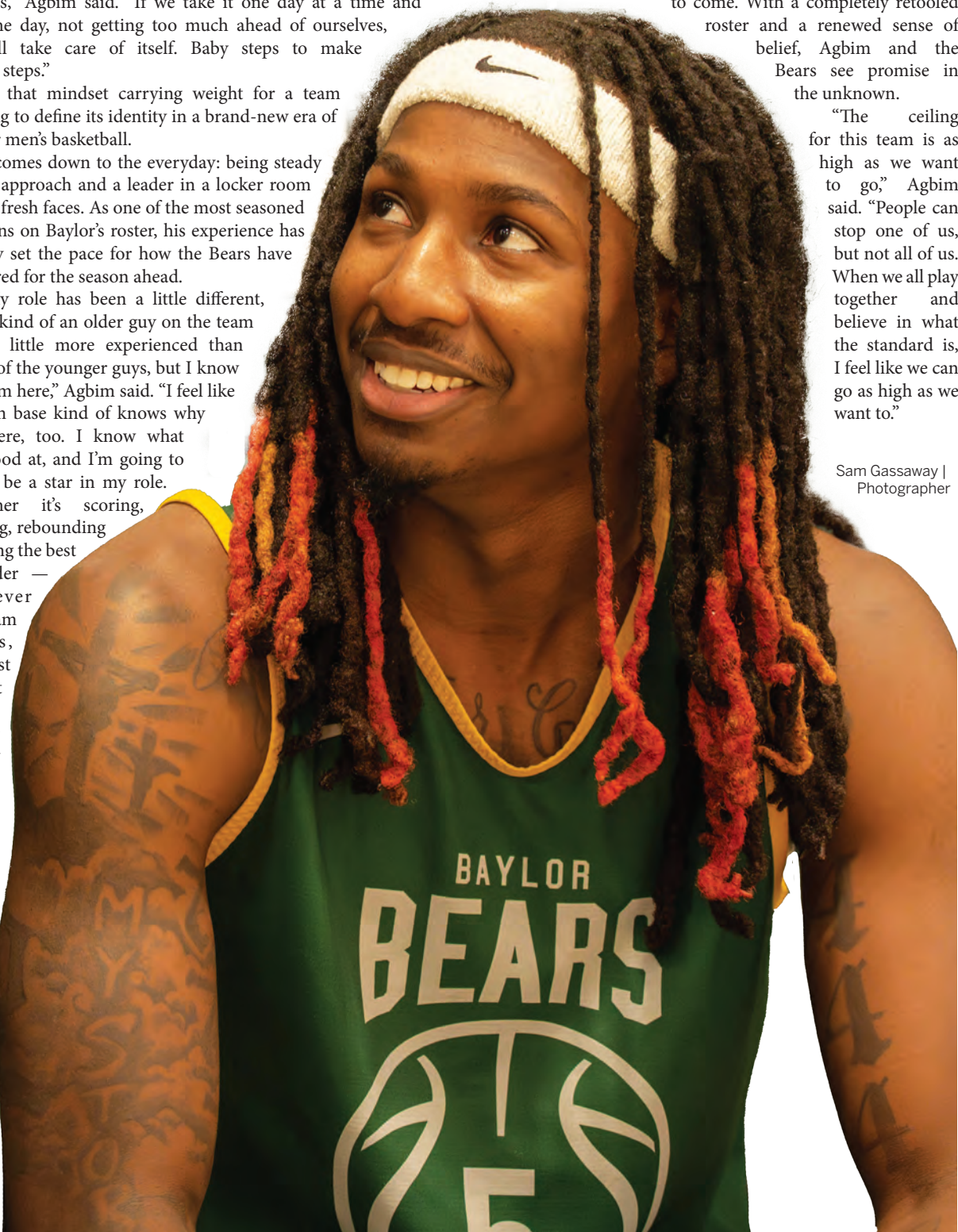
It comes down to the everyday: being steady in his approach and a leader in a locker room full of fresh faces. As one of the most seasoned veterans on Baylor’s roster, his experience has quietly set the pace for how the Bears have prepared for the season ahead.

“My role has been a little different, being kind of an older guy on the team and a little more experienced than some of the younger guys, but I know why I’m here,” Agbim said. “I feel like the fan base kind of knows why I’m here, too. I know what I’m good at, and I’m going to try to be a star in my role. Whether it’s scoring, passing, rebounding or being the best defender — whatever the team needs, I just want to be a star in my role.”

Coming off a disappointing 2024-25 season, Baylor enters a new era, one that could shape the program’s direction for years to come. With a completely retooled roster and a renewed sense of belief, Agbim and the Bears see promise in the unknown.

“The ceiling for this team is as high as we want to go,” Agbim said. “People can stop one of us, but not all of us. When we all play together and believe in what the standard is, I feel like we can go as high as we want to.”

Sam Gassaway | Photographer



ISAIAH from A4

The following season, 2013-14, was something special.

Averaging 11.5 points and 5.5 rebounds per game, the monster center anchored a Baylor team that, when counted out, made an electric run in the NCAA Tournament to the Sweet Sixteen.

Austin did exactly what was asked of him,

and as a sophomore grew into a leader on the court for a Bears team that featured four future NBA players — Cory Jefferson, Royce O’Neale, Taurean Prince and Ishmail Wainwright — as well as NFL journeyman Rico Gathers.

Austin, who finished the 2014 season as a projected first-round pick, was forced to medically retire from basketball. The discovery of an irregular heartbeat at the draft combine led to the center being diagnosed with Marfan syndrome.

Marfan syndrome is a genetic disorder that affects the body’s connective tissue that holds all the body’s cells, organs and tissues together. Continuing to compete at a high level would have been too dangerous to risk, rendering Austin’s NBA dreams impossible.

Austin was still honored at that year’s NBA Draft, being selected with an honorary first-round pick and added into NBA 2K15 as a free agent. He spent a few years bouncing around other professional leagues after being medically cleared to play in November 2016, before ultimately turning to coaching.

Austin is still involved in the basketball world. He now serves as an assistant coach at Florida Atlantic under former Baylor assistant John Jakus.

“John and I have always been very close, because he was my best friend when I was at Baylor,” Austin said. “He showed me that being a good human is much more important than being a good basketball player. I heard from him every week of my life, even when he was off winning national championships, up until he called me and asked me to join him here at FAU.”

As his career has taken him from front-office positions for the NBA’s league fellowship development program to now coaching at the Division I level with his friend, Austin remains tied to Baylor.

“Coach Drew does the best job in the country of keeping a relationship with his players open and honest,” Austin said. “We have a group chat of about 50 of us that he texts every week, just sending encouragement to all of us.”

Austin has no regrets about the way his basketball career turned out. Now 32 years old, he looks back on his time at Baylor as a period that shaped him into the man he strives to be.

“I owe so much to the coaching staff at Baylor and will always be grateful for everything they did for me,” Austin said. “They changed my life in a way that now I am able to live my life in full fruition, and profess my faith in a public way without any shame. I learned there to strive to live every day the way Christ did, and that still echoes in the way I do things now.”



Lariat file photo

LEGENDARY Isaiah Austin shoots a layup against Iowa State at the Big 12 Conference Final on March 15, 2014, in Kansas City, Mo. Iowa State defeated the Bears 74-65.

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Composition student pair synthesize in ‘Genesis’

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

Inside Alinea, Baylor University’s electronic sound lab tucked away in the Marrs McLean Science Building, two student composers are wiring together an entirely new kind of concert experience.

Dallas senior Carson Iltis and Austin junior Dylan Plant are set to debut “Genesis,” their first full-length electronic music production created in the lab, at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in Jones Concert Hall. The one-night-only performance blends live instrumentation, immersive sound design and curated lighting effects into what the pair calls an “audio-cinematic journey.”

Iltis and Plant began their project in a small course on electroacoustic composition, where the two were introduced to synthesizers, sound design and digital composition tools. As each composer developed their own electronic music style, they began to gravitate toward each other’s unique compositional style.

“By the time we got to our end-of-semester project, I told him, ‘Hey, I really like what you did,’ and he said, ‘Well, I really like what you did,’” Iltis said. “Then we decided to try something together — and now we’re doing a whole production.”

Their new work, “Genesis,” serves as both a title and a theme.

“We settled on the name ‘Genesis’ as the beginning of something,” Iltis said. “We think this could be the start of a long-term collaboration, something that grows beyond Baylor.”

Both musicians began working with electronic sound systems only about a year ago. The process was full of trial and error, they said.

“There were a lot of fails,” Iltis said while laughing. “Lots of screeching, lots of buzzing, lots of weird stuff that came from these things. But learning how to refine that was a challenge and [is] slowly becoming more successful.”

Plant said he agreed with Iltis, stating the collaboration they developed helped keep them focused on creating great music.

“You get in front of all these knobs, cables and cords, and you make something you think is great until someone walks in and says, ‘That sucks,’” he said. “Having each other helps us stay honest and push it to where we both like it.”

Their creative process involves as much sensitivity and collaboration as traditional composition.

“Sometimes one of us will play the same melody while the other just changes stuff at random until we hit a sound we love,” Plant said. “It’s like painting with sound.”

For instance, during one section of the



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

BARS ON BARS Dallas senior Carson Iltis (left) and Austin junior Dylan Plant (right) work on their music project, “Genesis,” in Jones Concert Hall.

program, Iltis said he plans to perform live piano using contact microphones that will feed into a computer, allowing Plant to alter the sound in real time.

“I’ll play something, and what comes out of the speakers will be completely altered,” Iltis said.

With inspiration from electronic music pioneers Daft Punk, Nine Inch Nails and the German music group Moderat, the duo aims to make electronic music accessible and engaging for all listeners.

“We want to bridge the gap between people who hear electronic music and think either club beats or weird noise,” Iltis said.

The performance will incorporate lighting

and surround-sound elements to create what Plant described as “a cinematic experience,” all delicately programmed to combine full sensory engagement with immersive storytelling.

“We want it to feel like you’re walking into a movie theater,” he said. “You walk in not knowing what to expect and walk out feeling like you’ve gone on a journey.”

Both students credited Senior Lecturer in Composition and Computer Music Dr. Ben Johanson for his support. He was their electroacoustic professor.

“He literally gives us the key to the room and says, ‘Go mess with stuff,’” Iltis said. “When something breaks, he comes and fixes it and lets us keep learning.”

And mess with stuff they did. Together, they created a production that not only showcases their artistry but also expands audience perception of what’s possible for modern composition projects.

“Most people here don’t even know this technology exists,” Plant said. “So it’s exciting to show that electronic music can be just as expressive as anything else we perform.”

For now, “Genesis” signifies the start of a fulfilling and vigorous artistic development — one both Iltis and Plant plan on refining for future projects.

“This has been one of the best experiences I’ve had at Baylor,” Iltis said. “We’re just excited to show everyone what electronic music can be.”

Baylor professor gives voice to immigrants in new culinary book

ALEXIA FINNEY
Staff Writer

A tradition has lived on for generations: tamales bubbling over a large cooking pot, the smell of masa and fresh spices filling the air, friends and family gathered around a long table savoring the taste of their culture’s food. Despite the warmth and joy these traditions evoke, one Baylor professor says a harmful immigrant narrative in the U.S. is gaining ground.

John and Nancy Jackson Endowed Chair in Latin America and Professor of History Dr. Felipe Hinojosa and his co-author, Dr. Rudy Guevarra, released the book “Culinary Mestizaje: Racial Mixing and Foodways Across the United States” in July 2025. By providing insightful research and personal anecdotes, the book confronts the notion that immigrants harm the communities they join.

Hinojosa, who teaches Latino history, Mexican-American history and courses on U.S. foreign policy, immigration, race and culture, said food is central to Latino culture and identity in the U.S.

“For the most part, you’re gonna have working-class populations that have started their own businesses and are not part of big chain restaurants,” Hinojosa said. “That’s really the essence of Latino culture and identity in this country. It’s very entrepreneurial and centered around food and community and sharing with one another.”

Hinojosa and Guevarra aim to challenge negative stereotypes, especially now as political tensions rise. Hinojosa said while immigrants are under attack and being picked up off the streets, it’s an important story to tell.

“It came out of a real need to talk about how immigrants contribute to this country, how immigrants make America great,” Hinojosa said.

“Immigrants are the lifeblood of our labor industries — people that work in the fields, people that work in the factories, people that have taco trucks.”

In a 2025 KJZZ live radio interview, Guevarra said he merges the concept of cultural blending and life itself through food. Guevarra said this stems from his upbringing in a Mexican-Filipino household where culinary fusion was common practice.

“Immigrants are the lifeblood of our labor industries — people that work in the fields, people that work in the factories, people that have taco trucks.”

DR. FELIPE HINOJOSA
HISTORY PROFESSOR

“We always had a pot of rice, and we also had tortillas,” Guevarra said. “So let’s say, for example, we had some pork adobo and we didn’t have any rice, we ran out of rice. I would just grab a tortilla, scoop up the meat, and boom, you got a taco. It was just part of our cultures and the blending and how it mixes, and it shows up in one of the most amazing foods ever, and that’s a taco.”

Guevarra said in the same

interview that food’s power lies in both memory and history.

“When you see all these different stories, you’re looking at white supremacy and racism, colonialism, enslavement and genocide,” Guevarra said. “It’s not just a kumbaya moment, but it evolves over time. And that’s what people experience in a dish that has all this behind it.”

While the book focuses on different cultures and communities, Hinojosa said his perspective on historical immigration patterns in the United States lies in the history he teaches. Past policies have targeted immigrants, such as in the Chinese Exclusion Act of the 19th century, the restrictive immigration laws of the 1920s, the Mexican repatriation campaigns during the Great Depression and Operation Wetback in the 1950s.

“That ‘immigrants take jobs’ narrative is a script in American history that keeps replaying,” Hinojosa said. “We have to continuously push back and fight against it.”

Hinojosa said there are examples of cultural creativity and resilience all around us in immigrant communities. Hinojosa cited one story of Chef’s Smoky, a taco truck in Atlanta. A Mexican immigrant opened the truck to feed people without access to food.

“He drew from African American food culture and traditions and also from Mexican traditions,” Hinojosa said. “That’s a new way the American South is changing with the large influx of Latino immigrants since the late 1990s.”

Hinojosa said he rejects the traditional “melting pot” metaphor, instead viewing America’s diversity as a form of cultural mixing.

“We think about how each of us brings our gifts, our culture, our perspectives, our worldviews to help build each other up and learn from each other,” Hinojosa said. “That doesn’t mean we have to forget who we are, our



Photo courtesy of Felipe Hinojosa

READ ALL ABOUT IT Dr. Felipe Hinojosa poses with his book “Culinary Mestizaje: Racial Mixing and Foodways Across the United States.”

ancestry, our culture. It means we bring everything we are as human beings to America.”

Hinojosa said his ultimate goal is to encourage students to think critically about American identity. According to Hinojosa, new generations are changing what it means to have the American spirit.

“Food is at the forefront of all of that because we’re eating pupusas from El Salvador, we’re eating tacos from Mexico,” Hinojosa said. “I just hope students begin to understand the gifts we all bring and appreciate those gifts, and engage in conversation about what it means to be an American in 2025.”



Photos courtesy of Spotify

2010s songs that never got the fame they deserve

KALENA REYNOLDS
Opinion Editor

Ahhh, the 2010s — the decade of the ALS Ice Bucket challenge, “Frozen” and the golden era of pop. Whether you’re a die-hard pop fan or just an occasional listener, the 2010s were marked by some of the most unique and diverse music of our time, with many records going completely unrecognized.

While this list is in no particular order, it highlights a diverse range of unbeatable 2010s music that never achieved large-scale commercial success. As you scan the list, give each one a listen.

“THIS IS HOW WE DO” BY KATY PERRY

Katy Perry has had her fair share of chart-topping singles; however, “This Is How We Do” is “Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)”’s much cooler older sibling, which unfortunately never performed the way the label hoped it would.

The song is nonchalant and fun, with an unforgettable chorus perfect for a workout or a Y2K-themed party. Placed in the middle of Perry's 2013 "Prism" album. The song opens with prominent, resonating synths that evoke the sound of 2010s pop. Although this song was released as a single, it did not gain the recognition it deserved when compared to other singles, such as "Roar" and "Dark Horse."

“GHOST TOWN” BY ADAM LAMBERT

Adam Lambert's vocals can't be beat, and his stage presence is unmatched. His second single, "Whataya Want From Me," soared on the charts. If a genie came down and granted me three wishes, the first would be for Adam Lambert to gain the recognition he so rightfully deserves. Lambert was far ahead of his time, and it shows in the lack of recognition for many of his other records, more specifically "Ghost Town."

Released in 2015, this house hit never reached the level of success it could have had it released 10 years later. At the time, Lambert was viewed as too “camp,” and queer pop stars were still difficult for the mainstream media to digest. Regardless, “Ghost Town” remains a riveting example of Lambert’s underrated versatility and futuristic pop sound.

“CAN’T REMEMBER TO FORGET YOU” BY SHAKIRA & RIHANNA

Growing up, Shakira and Rihanna were crucial to my transition from middle school to the teenage years. They brought a sense of musical education to my otherwise green, youthful taste in music, and “Can’t Remember to Forget You” was at the top of the list.

While this track was arguably the most successful on the charts out of this list of songs, it has unfortunately not stood the test of time like other hits, “Hips Don’t Lie” and “SOS” have.

“SUPERLOVE” BY CHARLI XCX

Before we were guessing the color of her underwear, we were blasting her hit song “Boom Clap,” which was featured on the “The Fault In Our Stars” soundtrack. Preceding her crowning as the queen of hyperpop, Charli XCX released a multitude of catchy, fun, summer-pop type songs that never caught the spotlight in the way they should have — one of them being “SuperLove.”

Within the first 30 seconds, “SuperLove” takes you back to the era of Adidas Superstars and Kylie Lip Kits. It’s carefree in the way 2013 was, and one of the most significant musical projects that went unnoticed was Charli XCX’s early discography. To sum it up, she has always had a unique ear for catchy melodies that encapsulate youthful joy.

“212” BY AZEALIA BANKS

Known for its unique lyrics and eclectic instrumentation, this 2012 hit failed to achieve commercial success but caught the attention of notable musicians, including Kanye West and Beyoncé. The internet quickly sank its claws into this hit; however, radio and major music charts seemed to deny the record the opportunity to achieve success.

Despite the lack of commercial visibility, Rolling Stone included it in their list of 500 Greatest Songs of All Time, validating the beat's significance and highlighting the sonic genius of "212."

MONSTER OR MISUNDERSTOOD?



Photo courtesy of IMDb

SCARY SAD Jacob Elordi is breaking hearts worldwide as the Creature in Guillermo del Toro's Netflix film "Frankenstein." Read more about The Lariat's take on this tragedy-torn, ego-ridden retelling at baylorlariat.com.

Tri Delta to benefit St. Jude with pancake event Friday



Photo courtesy of Savannah Friant

STACKED UP Tri Delta members Sulphur Springs junior Katlyn Noe (left), San Antonio sophomore Gracie Stevenson (middle) and Waco sophomore Sammie Muery (right) pose with a plate of strawberry pancakes to promote Delta House of Pancakes happening on Friday.

LEXIE RODENBAUGH
Arts & Life Writer

Delta Delta Delta's annual philanthropy event, Delta House of Pancakes (DHOP), will return 4-7 p.m. Friday on Fountain Mall.

The event benefits St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and combines pancakes with cornhole to entertain the attendees, according to Ringgold, Ga., senior and Tri Delt president, Savannah Friant.

"It's basically benefitting the research side of St. Jude, and we will be selling unlimited pancakes for \$5 on Fountain Mall," Friant said. "You have all the toppings, there'll be cornhole, all the fun things to raise money for St. Jude."

Friant said the philanthropy is near and dear to Tri Delta's heart and that they are passionate about making a difference in children's lives.

"St. Jude is honestly the heartbeat of our chapter," Friant said. "I would say it is so important for us to be able to come together for a cause, and it's really incredible to see that we are benefiting the lives of so many children."

Friant said many members have personally watched the effects that cancer can have, and have seen what St. Jude can do to help those patients.

"We know people near and dear to our hearts that have been affected by cancer and have been treated at St. Jude, and so it's important for us to give back in that way," she said.

Friant had her own personal experience with St. Jude this past summer, and that made the cause even more important to her.

"I had the privilege to ... see where all of our fundraising is going, and it's incredible to see that we are actually making tangible changes," Friant said.

While the event supports a good cause, the members of Tri Delt still aim to make it a fun event for Baylor students. El Dorado Hills, Calif., sophomore Mason Ciampi said he's looking forward to attending the event.

"I'm super excited for DHOP this Friday," Ciampi said. "We get to eat unlimited pancakes while hanging out with a great community. Not to mention supporting an amazing philanthropy supporting childhood cancer research. Everyone I know is planning on going. It's going to be so hype."

Students can support Tri Delta's philanthropy by attending DHOP on Friday and purchasing a \$5 ticket, or by donating through the sorority's personal donation page.



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NEW TECH from A1

there,” Carbonara said.

This expansion relates to the CIE 1931 Chromaticity Diagram, the foundational map of human color vision. While most RGB displays occupy a small triangular region of that map, 6P pushes outward toward the curved spectral boundary that represents all the natural colors human eyes can perceive.

To test whether 6P’s widened color reproduction affected viewers, the team conducted several studies with Baylor students. These experiments used identical raw motion picture images rendered in both standard RGB and 6P’s enhanced multi-primary configuration.

The results were significant. Students consistently preferred the 6P version, often without being able to articulate why. Carbonara said the response aligns with biology rather than a conscious preference.

“This melanopsin is really what is triggering the awe and stimulation that we feel when we see the Caribbean or the tranquil waters of the Mediterranean,” Carbonara said.

Korpi said the effect persisted in blind comparisons, highlighting the intricacies of visual preference.

“People will prefer the one that has the cyan, even though there’s no visible difference in the color of the picture ... they look the same, but I always go to this one,” Korpi said.

When the team presented their early research to Hollywood cinematographers, visual effects engineers and studio technologists, they invited detailed criticism.

“We asked them, ‘Tell us what’s wrong with this. Tell us why this won’t work,’” Korpi said. “They had no notes.”

Korpi said the response was “unusually strong,” with several experts even asking to keep the handout.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer
INNOVATORS Dr. Corey Carbonara (left) and Dr. Michael Korpi (right) are responsible for developing the 6P Color technology.

Part of the appeal, Korpi said, is 6P is not tied to specific shades of red, green or blue. Instead, it defines color using numeric coordinates, making the system much more flexible and expansive.

“We’re not going to pick which red, green, blue ... we’re just going to call the color by its coordinates,” Korpi said.

Research assistant Elle Jansick said this coordinate-based method mirrors how human vision captures light in the real world, enabling the system to produce more accurate, natural color.

“You organically capture 6P color,” Jansick said. “They’ve made it as close as possible to replicate that.”

Jansick noted the team’s work emphasizes biologically accurate color reproduction, aligning primaries with known visual pathways — including rods, cones and other photoreceptive systems that influence emotional and perceptual responses. This design allows 6P displays to feel more lifelike than conventional RGB screens.

For filmmakers, the 6P gamut allows colorists and cinematographers to wield color as an expressive tool. Carbonara said this supports more nuanced storytelling, mood-setting and emotional texture while offering creators a range of possibilities.

“It’s another way of being able to tell stories utilizing

color and utilizing the physiological response to color,” Carbonara said.

Beyond film, Korpi said the future of digital displays will revolve around color science and perceptual accuracy, not resolution. The era of the “resolution race” — like 4K and 8K — is fading, he said.

“It isn’t about the ‘K-wars’ anymore; now color is the true new frontier,” Korpi said.

More than 100 patents have emerged from their work, and while many potential commercial partnerships remain under confidentiality agreements, Korpi said industry interest spans across the display sector.

“I can’t think of one major company you would think of that isn’t aware of this,” Korpi said.

As 6P Color prepares to be a major presence at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, Carbonara said he sees the project as a technological milestone and an attempt to bring the feeling of natural color to everyday screens.

“There’s so much beauty that God has made in nature, and to be able to bring that experience to a motion imaging environment that is displayed on a display technologically — this is the next major focus for where imaging and displays are going,” Carbonara said.

MR. UGLY from A1

“Ugly Buddy had a very big weekend,” the Nov. 20, 1950, print read. “He started things off by scoring two touchdowns in Baylor’s upset victory over the Aggies. Saturday night, Parker escorted his fiancée, Norma Faye Walden about the town.”

Parker later took advantage of his nice car and clothes, finishing his weekend with a luxurious visit to church. The letterman in football and baseball added one more feather in his cap with the momentous weekend.

Mr. Ugly competitions were prominent throughout the state, not just on Baylor grounds. Many years prior, Texas schools rallied to find the ugliest college man in Texas after a TCU student said he was sure it was him.

After many Texas colleges offered a candidate

for the competition, the TCU student’s claim stood. He was, in fact, the ugliest college man in Texas.

“Joe Frederick. Texas Christian University senior claims to be ‘The Ugliest College Man in Texas,’” The Lariat edition read.

Years ago, this competition was a home run. Now time has passed since the ugliest man competition was on Baylor’s campus. The brakes were pulled on the voting, and the contest fell off the pages of The Lariat in the ‘70s.

Today, Baylor students recognize the challenges in reviving such an ambitious competition. Manama, Bahrain, sophomore Saud Shareef said the competition might be fun, but probably wouldn’t be the best event.

“The people participating in it would love it,” Shareef

said. “But there will be people outside of it who would not like it.”

Likewise, Tulsa, Okla., sophomore Turner McGuire said the return of the contest would spark mixed reviews.

“I can see people having different reactions to it” McGuire said. “It would be popular mostly because everyone would be surprised at the fact that there is a competition for such a thing. I don’t think it would get positive feedback. The competition would feel derogatory and would probably come across as degrading.”

On campus today, McGuire sees the risk of bringing it back. Though it seems fun, it can harm students who don’t understand it, he said.

“If it did come back, I hope I wouldn’t be participating in it,” he said.

BAYLOR MARRIAGE PACT from A1

“I think that this kind of thing could be a problem if you were relying on this to connect with people,” Reyna said. “I think it should be more a way of expanding a pre-existing social circle, as opposed to creating it in itself.”

People who struggle to form organic relationships may look to sites such as the Marriage Pact as a beacon of connection amidst a pervasively temporary culture.

“I think a lot of people have trouble truly

connecting with people and meeting people on a deeper level, especially because hook-up culture and a general sense of apathy are a very prominent part of our culture today,” Reyna said.

Since she is graduating this year, Goree said she is looking to “pass the torch” to someone else to organize the Baylor Marriage Pact.

“If someone is really passionate about it, they could come up and take the reins,” Goree said.

EXCITING CLASSES from A1

“For the purposes of this class I’m taking ... the idea of the original declaration of the statement of being a statement of identity,” Walden said. “All kinds of things can be declarations, I think. I’m kind of using that idea to look at ways that folks have written their identity into what it means

to be an American.”

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