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Aranda changing identity, moving money to bolster defense



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Waco lifestyle artist Jolee French takes art by the reins

Penland health inspection score drops

KALENA REYNOLDS
Arts & Life Editor

On Feb. 3, Penland Dining Hall received an 80 on a health inspection, an 18-point decline from Penland's previous low of 98.

A health inspection, conducted twice to four times per year depending on the risk level of the establishment, grades an establishment's compliance with food safety laws. Texas uses a numerical grading system for its inspections, starting at 100 and deducting points for each violation found. If the inspector finds enough violations to lower the score to a 69 or below, the establishment fails.

Rumors circulated on a Baylor Facebook parents and families group that Penland failed its inspection because employees failed to wash their hands after using the restroom, and yogurt was kept at an incorrect temperature. Jennifer Crawford, vice president of operations for Baylor Eats, said these rumors are false, though Penland recently scored lower than ever on its health inspection.

Penland received minor point deductions for improper handwashing and improper temperature regulation of foods. Crawford disproved rumors of employees failing to wash their hands after using the restroom.

"The specific violation in regards to hand washing was a hand sink at the grill station that did not have sufficient cold water flow," Crawford said. "It was felt by the inspector that the water was too hot to completely and thoroughly wash hands when handling food."

Crawford elaborated, saying that the rumor that yogurt or dairy products are not kept at a safe temperature is also false.

"There were some products on the line that were found to be out of temp, specifically the salsa at La Mesa, and it was at the beginning of lunch shift," Crawford said. "Our salsas are made from scratch, and they should be chilled before going on the line, and so it temped much higher than it should be. So they just didn't follow the proper cooling procedures, but it had not been out for a significant amount of time."

Crawford said that the cold water at the hand-washing sink was re-inspected and received a 100.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

FOOD SCORE On Feb. 3, Penland Dining Hall received a score of 80 on a health inspection, with point deductions for improper handwashing and improper temperature regulation of foods.

At the time of the inspection, all issues had been resolved, Crawford said.

"Because of the severity of some of those ... the cold water to the hand washing sink being one of those, it did require re-inspection," Crawford said. "At that time, we received a perfect score ... but even as a result, we've reinforced training and communication with our staff to ensure the safety of our students."

Crawford said that to provide students with the best possible experience, they have added more training for their associates, including information on glove changes and handwashing.

According to Crawford, Penland has a cloud-based cooling system, so anytime a cooler goes out of temp, they get alerts before there is a risk of spoiled food.

"Even while it's on the line, they have a temperature process," Crawford said. "So we've been just being a little more vigilant, following up on that, ensuring that our associates are correctly trained in recording temperatures."

As Penland continues to improve safety measures, Crawford encouraged students to voice

PENLAND >> A8



Photo courtesy of Anna Webb

NIGHTS UNDER THE STARS Students gather to celebrate baptisms at the end of FM72.

FM72 to return, seeking 'heart of God at the heart of campus'

HANNAH WEBB
Opinion Editor

From sunrise to well past midnight next week, the center of campus will be anything but quiet.

Beginning Sunday, Baylor students will gather on Fountain Mall for FM72, a 72-hour event marked by continuous prayer, worship and outreach. Running through Wednesday, the annual tradition invites students to step away from their routines and participate in what organizers describe as a sustained spiritual focus on revival and renewal.

Each evening at 8 p.m., the event will feature corporate worship, prayer and teaching from Scripture. A prayer tent will remain active throughout the day and night. Outreach opportunities will occur at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, and baptisms will celebrate the conclusion of FM72 Wednesday night.

Anna Webb, director of operations for FM72, said the event is centered on creating space

for students to engage their faith.

"Our kind of mission statement, purpose statement, is to seek the heart of God at the heart of campus," Webb said. "Since 2019, the goal has just been to facilitate a space and create a space for students to encounter God."

Drew Humphrey, a college pastor who has been involved with FM72 since its early years, said the event has grown significantly while maintaining its core purpose.

"When this first started in 2018, 2019, it was a group of about eight college ministers trying to convince students that this was a good idea," Humphrey said. "Now ... it's dozens and dozens of students who are leading."

FM72 traces its origins to a smaller gathering. In fall 2018, campus leaders organized a 24-hour prayer service. By spring 2019, that effort expanded as campus ministers partnered with local churches during a broader "revival week," moving the event to Fountain Mall to increase visibility and accessibility.

Webb said planning for the event begins months in advance.

"We start planning in August," she said. "We meet monthly and then kind of ramp up, especially in the spring semester."

A key emphasis of FM72 remains its continuous prayer model, with campus groups signing up to cover each hour.

"We really want to make sure that there are times of concentrated prayer — not just internal reflection, but corporate intercession for our campus and city," Webb said.

For Humphrey, the event is also about cultivating unity and deepening students' understanding of prayer.

"We always want to see this be something that is reminding people to be united," he said. "Everything is extremely divisive all the time ... and when you come to an event like FM72, the tagline is, 'I'd rather have Jesus.'"

He added that the event

FM72 >> A8

Exxon Subway closes, new restaurant to come



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

NEW FAST FOOD? The Subway restaurant located inside the Exxon station off I-35 closed on Feb. 1, making way for a new restaurant to open its doors.

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Staff Writer

The Subway across the street from Penland Residence Hall closed, adding to the list of restaurant closures and turnover on Baylor's side of I-35.

Shobi Ahmed, the manager of the Exxon station where the Subway was housed, said the restaurant closed Feb. 1 after the lease was not renewed. The reason for Subway's closure, he said, was slowing business caused by changing landscapes around campus dining. While the company Ahmed works for has managed the property for only about a year, Ahmed said he was told the Subway was busier in the past when students could use their IDs to pay for food.

"Baylor students used to bring their [ID] cards [to pay for food]," Ahmed said.

When the program ended, Ahmed said it "really hurt Subway."

The program, called Bear Bucks, has not existed since 2013, but it allowed students to use older dining dollars to eat at restaurants around campus.

"There were some locations around town where students could use their ID," said Jennifer Crawford, vice president of operations for Baylor Eats.

Crawford also said that Bear Bucks functioned more like "school dollars that weren't necessarily dining dollars," meaning students could eat off-campus at places not owned by the university.

Crawford said logistical challenges ended the program long ago, and that "the program ended long before

Chartwells was on campus" in 2024.

Students have advocated for the return of off-campus dining money in past years, but no plans have been made to bring the program back.

In addition to the removal of Bear Bucks, Ahmed said that improved on-campus dining options probably slowed business as well.

"They have more variety inside," Ahmed said. "That hurts a lot."

While Ahmed said that crowds had been diminishing over the years, marketing Professor Dr. James Roberts said the business was consistent throughout his years frequenting the restaurant, but it was dominated by a few regular customers.

"The crowd hasn't [changed] much over the years," Roberts said. "There were the 'regulars' that I saw each time I would eat there. I was one of the regulars eating there about twice per week."

Ahmed said that despite the Subway's closure, the Exxon gas station and Tiger-Mart convenience store have no plans to close.

Subway's closure is not the first restaurant on Baylor's side of the highway to close. In 2019, an IHOP closed on the same land on which the Hurd Welcome Center sits. More recently, The Mix Cafe near Baylor's business school was replaced with a Mexican restaurant. But according to Ahmed, the space will be replaced with another sandwich restaurant.

"Within two to three months, something will come," Ahmed said. "They kept everything in place as it is."

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EDITORIAL

Privacy is not a privilege

In the age of social media and Meta glasses, the meaning of privacy is gone

We used to know when something was private. There was a line, maybe blurry at times, but still ever present. You didn't film strangers without asking. You didn't turn someone's worst moment into entertainment. And you definitely didn't walk around recording everything like the world owed you content.

Now that line has basically evaporated.

With things like Ray-Ban Meta Glasses, recording isn't even a decision anymore; it's just part of existing. People can film you without you realizing it. Add influencer culture to that, and suddenly everything is fair game. A trip to the grocery store, a bad or random interaction, a study session — any of it can end up online for someone's content.

And we've accepted it.

Scroll for five minutes, and you'll see it: people recording homeless individuals and posting it like it's inspirational or "raising awareness." But let's be honest — most of the time, it's not about helping; it's for views. There is something deeply wrong about turning someone's lowest moment into content for strangers to consume.

That's not kindness. That's exploitation with a filter and fun captions.

Even worse, kids are constantly being filmed and posted online — sometimes by strangers, sometimes by their own parents chasing



James Ellis | Cartoonist

engagement. A child has no real ability to consent to being shared with thousands or millions of people. Yet their lives are documented, their faces recognizable by any common man, their embarrassing or vulnerable moments permanently out there. They don't get a say, nor do they get a redo.

About 9 in 10 Americans are worried that social media sites know personal

information about children, according to a 2023 Pew Research study. But we haven't stopped filming children or liking these videos.

Does that imbalance not worry you?

We've gotten so used to cameras being everywhere that we no longer question them. Someone pulls out a phone and starts recording, and instead of asking, "why," we just assume it's fine.

Privacy has quietly shifted from being a basic expectation to something you're lucky to have.

But privacy matters more than we're acting as if it does.

It's not about "having something to hide." It's about having space to exist without being watched, judged or posted. It's about being able to mess up, look bad or just be human without worrying

that it'll follow you forever. When every moment can be recorded, you start to act like you're always onstage, even when you shouldn't have to be.

And not everyone is on equal footing here. The people being recorded are often the most vulnerable — the homeless, service workers, random strangers who didn't sign up for an audience. Meanwhile, the person

filming gets the benefit: likes, followers, reach and attention. One person's privacy becomes another person's profit. And often, things are edited out of context to further raise entertainment value.

That imbalance should bother us more than it does.

So what do we do about it?

For starters, we need to stop pretending this is harmless. Not everything needs to be filmed, and not every moment needs to be shared. Just because you can record something doesn't mean you should. That used to be common sense. We need to bring it back.

Platforms also need to take more responsibility for what they promote. If invasive, exploitative videos keep going viral, people will keep making them. The algorithm isn't neutral; it rewards behavior. Right now, it's rewarding the erosion of privacy.

This starts with individuals. It's a mindset shift. Before hitting record or liking a reel, ask a simple question: Would I be OK if this were me?

If the answer is no, that should be enough.

We don't need to reject technology or social media completely, but we do need to relearn where the line is and start acting as if it exists again. If everything becomes content, we all lose control of our own lives at some point.

Participation grades reward extraversion, not learning

RHEA CHOUDHARY
Staff Writer

There is a certain type of student who immediately excels, taking initiative the moment a professor says, "Let's open this up for discussion." They quickly raise their hand, confidently speak and know how to fill any silence.



Then there are the rest of us in the class, the ones still processing and forming thoughts, or simply being the ones who don't feel the need to say something to prove to the professors we are engaged.

However, in many classrooms, those differences don't just craft the class conversation but determine your grade.

Participation grades are often a way for professors to encourage engagement, especially within smaller, discussion-based classes. In theory, they serve as rewards for students who effectively contribute to the learning environment. In reality, they often end up being a reward for something entirely different: one's extraversion.

This is not just a personal observation, but is one supported by research. A 2015 study by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment found that students engage in multiple ways, through listening, reflecting and

writing, not just speaking. However, classroom assessment practices still often tend to prioritize visible, verbal participation over these less obvious forms of engagement.

When participation has such a specific definition, learning that happens internally becomes invisible. Invisible learning doesn't receive a reward.

Introverted students, or simply more reflective learners, are not less engaged in the content. They are engaged differently. According to the American Psychological Association, introversion is associated with inward processing and careful thinking rather than disengagement. In classrooms where speed and frequency of responses are emphasized, those strengths can become disadvantages.

Participation grades don't usually account for thinking time. Instead, they reward whoever speaks first or whoever happens to speak the most, not necessarily who is contributing the most thoughtfully or effectively. That pressure can push students to talk just to be seen participating, rather than actually adding something of real value.

Beyond personality, this structure creates inequities. Reporting from The Chronicle of Higher Education shows anxious students may avoid participating verbally. When speaking becomes the primary measure of participation, students can be graded on their comfort level rather than their comprehension.

The result is an environment where grades reflect a student's comfort levels and extraversion, not comprehension.

Now I am not saying this means that participation should not matter. Discussion is valuable; it encourages students to consider new ideas, exposes them to unique perspectives and makes learning more dynamic.

“Participation grades don't usually account for thinking time. Instead, they reward whoever speaks first or whoever happens to speak the most, not necessarily who is contributing the most thoughtfully or effectively.”

However, if the professor's goal is for a student to be genuinely engaged in their content, we need to rethink what "participation"

should actually look like. Currently, participating in a class has a too narrow definition that comes from merely speaking just to speak.

Engagement does not have to mean raising your hand first or speaking the most in a discussion. It can come from actively listening, adding in your own thoughts on someone else's idea or writing a thoughtful reflection after a professor's lecture. Some of the most valuable participation occurs quietly, and that is often unrecognized.

Now there are already a few classrooms following this method. Some professors allow students to submit written responses rather than speaking every day. Others require small-group discussions, in the hope that students may feel more comfortable contributing to the topic. These changes in approaches don't take away participation. In turn, they expand it.

The goal is not to pause discussion or to stop students who do enjoy speaking in class. It is to stop treating one way of engaging as the only valid one and the one that reflects a student's standing in their class.

When participation grades reward extraversion, they prove that how you learn matters less than how you perform, which should not be the case.

College classrooms should challenge students to think, not just to speak. And until participation grades show that, they are not really measuring engagement at all. Instead, they are measuring personality.

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Photo courtesy of Miriam Daniel

POLICY Austin senior Miriam Daniel traveled to the White House in Washington, D.C., with Dr. Rick Donlon, CEO of Christian Community Health Fellowship, to learn from leaders in charge of healthcare nonprofits about changes and factors to consider in their position.



Photo courtesy of Miriam Daniel

ON THE HILL Baylor senior Miriam Daniel traveled to the White House in Washington, D.C., to learn from leaders in charge of healthcare nonprofits about changes and factors to consider in their position.

Baylor senior stepping onto D.C. beltway

RHEA CHOUDHARY
Staff Writer

Moving from discussions in Baylor Science Building classrooms to conversations in federal agency meetings, Austin senior Miriam Daniel has seen firsthand how healthcare policy takes effect.

As a medical humanities major and DeBaKey Scholar, Daniel traveled to Washington over winter break with Christian Community Health Fellowship CEO Dr. Rick Donlon — and now she prepares to return this summer.

Receiving support from Baylor's medical humanities department, she sat in meetings with leaders from the White House Faith Office, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Health Resources and Services Administration and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Being included in these high-profile meetings allowed Daniel to gain insight into how faith-based healthcare organizations navigate government systems while serving vulnerable populations.

"I was able to witness conversations surrounding the intersection of health and policy as

we discussed Federally Qualified Health Centers who feel called to love their neighbors by providing care to everyone who needs it," Daniel said.

The trip came together on short notice, as Daniel reconnected with Donlon after giving a guest lecture at Baylor, focusing on the challenges for Federally Qualified Health Centers — clinics that receive government funding to provide care regardless of a patient's capability to afford it.

In meetings, leaders discussed new regulations, funding access and the balance between policy requirements versus faith-driven missions in providing care to marginalized communities.

Daniel explained that the experience gave her a stronger understanding of how healthcare nonprofits operate within government frameworks.

"What I learned was how nonprofits that are funded by the government operate, especially when it comes to healthcare and insurance," Daniel said. "If you take anyone that walks in your doors and serve them, the government will help fund it. It is kind of the reverse of what a lot of private hospitals do."

Daniel's academic path depicts that larger interest. Originally a

pre-medical, health science studies major freshman year, Daniel switched to medical humanities on a pre-law track after finding her passion for healthcare systems and advocacy rather than clinical practice. Through coursework in U.S. healthcare systems, disability studies and healthcare disparities, Daniel described how Baylor's coursework and opportunities prepared her well to engage in complex policy conversations at a national level.

"I feel like I would have been a little bit lost in conversations that were super detailed about various parts of the healthcare system had I not had a medical humanities foundation," Daniel said.

As head of a network of hundreds of clinics serving low-income communities, Donlon regularly meets with federal officials to advocate for both patients and providers. He said the meetings usually involve advocating directly to state and federal leaders on behalf of clinics and the communities they serve, making trips to Washington significant in continuing the work they do.

Donlon explained that the work these clinics do is especially critical in a healthcare system where many individuals still face challenges in

accessing consistent care due to financial and systemic barriers.

"Healthcare is really expensive to deliver, and our system is less than ideal, where a lot of people are unable to get reliable healthcare," Donlon said.

Bringing a student into these more important spaces where change actually occurs was intentional for Donlon.

"This was an opportunity for Miriam to begin to see some of the way that those policy issues get formed and how you communicate with government leaders," Donlon said.

Founded in the late 1970s, the Christian Community Health Fellowship connects clinics across the country that provide care to underserved populations, providing care to small free clinics to large, multi-site operations. Many of these clinics rely on federal funding streams tied to FQHC designation, making policy discussions in Washington critical to their sustainability.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Federally Qualified Health Centers serve more than 30 million patients nationwide, with most patients from low-income or uninsured populations, highlighting

the significance of federal decisions on funding and regulation.

This experience also shaped Daniel's long-term career goals in health policy and advocacy, specifically serving underserved communities, including individuals with disabilities and members of the deaf community.

"I learned how to advocate for people who don't normally have a seat in the room," Daniel said. "That is something I can take into every space I go into moving forward."

As she prepares to return to Washington this summer through Baylor's Summer Fellowship for Religion & Social Life program, Daniel said the trip sent her back with more than just a preview of how policy systems operate on a daily basis. It provided her with knowledge of how what she has learned in her medical humanities classes has directly formed into real-world impact.

"I think everything kind of tied together," Daniel said. "Being in those meetings gave me a way to connect what I'm studying to the people I want to serve."

The experience helped Daniel see where she wants to go and showed her how she plans to get there.



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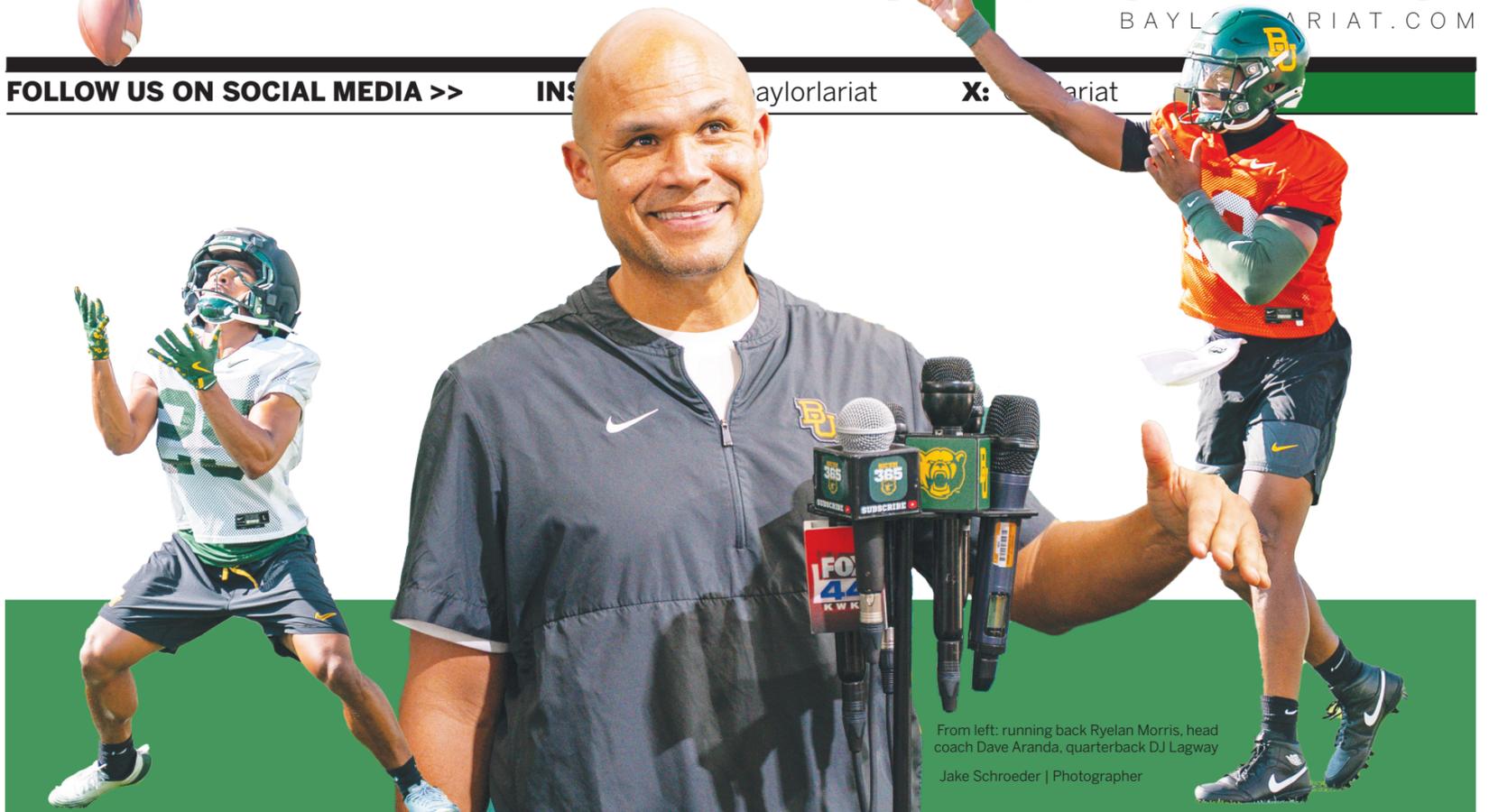
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From left: running back Ryelan Morris, head coach Dave Aranda, quarterback DJ Lagway
Jake Schroeder | Photographer

Bears back in town for spring football

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

The long wait of winter is over. The flowers are blooming, the sun is shining and Baylor football has made its way back to the banks of the Brazos. The Bears went back to the practice field in full football mode Tuesday afternoon, marking the first sight of spring ball in Central Texas.

With the arrival of spring practice comes a collection of both familiar and fresh faces, as head coach Dave Aranda enters the seventh year of his tenure in Waco.

"I thought today was a real productive first day," Aranda said. "It kind of flew by ... but today was a good first step."

This upcoming season could mark a pivotal point in Aranda's career, with many eyes searching for signs of development during spring ball. The Sugar Bowl-winning coach finished 2025 with a disappointing 5-7 record that led many Baylor fans to call for his removal.

Now firmly on the hot seat, Aranda is looking to attack the practice field hard this spring to get the new faces ready to hit the gridiron for the green and gold.

The experienced head coach is searching to find ways to light a fire underneath his program in Waco. This spring, with the arrival of a whole new load of transfers and freshmen, the attention appears to lie first on the team's camaraderie.

"We've spent maybe half of the time we normally do on football so far," Aranda said. "I've met with each of the guys individually, and [offensive coordinator Jake Spavital] has



BALLER, SHOT CALLER Quarterbacks DJ Lagway (left) and Nate Bennett laugh together during their first practice as teammates.
Jake Schroeder | Photographer

done the same. We've spent more time on people and that's made a difference ... having those connections."

Aranda, a former national championship-winning defensive coordinator at LSU, spent the past season calling defensive plays for the Bears. New defensive coordinator Joe Klanderman will take over that duty this spring.

The hire allows for Aranda to focus primarily

on his head coaching role and serve the team as he sees fit through a "birds-eye view."

"It was fun doing that today," Aranda said. "I liked bouncing between the individual periods, and I liked having a birds-eye view for the team periods, coaching up whatever caught my eye there."

The green and gold will be donned by a number of new transfers this season, including

junior quarterback DJ Lagway. The former five-star recruit was the highest-rated transfer the Bears received over the offseason and will be expected to bear the yoke of the offense this season.

"He seems like he loves it here," former Baylor quarterback Sawyer Robertson said of Lagway at the Bears' pro day. "I can't wait to see what he does ... I'm going to help in any way I can for him, but just a great individual."

Accompanying the fresh faces on the field are a trio of notable returners in the running back room: redshirt junior Dawson Pendergrass and sophomores Caden Knighten and Michael Turner. The returners will face the tall task this fall of filling the hole left by record-setting halfback Bryson Washington, now at Auburn.

The running backs have high expectations, as both Pendergrass and Knighten come into the spring at 100% following serious injuries sustained in the fall.

Pendergrass suffered a foot injury two weeks before the home opener last fall and missed the entire season. Knighten had an impressive freshman campaign that was ended in the last game of the year, with the Oklahoma native being carted off the field on a stretcher.

"It's definitely a little different being one of the older guys in the room," Pendergrass said. "I'm not used to that ... but I'm feeling great. We have a great medical team, and they have me confident that I'm at 100%."

The Bears will continue to host spring practice up until Baylor's Fan Fest on April 25, followed by an open practice at McLane Stadium.

New year, new identity

Bears shift money, personnel to bolster new-look defense

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Writer

Head coach Dave Aranda joined Baylor as a defensive mind. He was coming off a 2019 national championship with LSU, where he coached 18 eventual NFL players.

Last season ended as a disappointment for the Bears' defense. The unit allowed the second-most points per game in the Big 12 and ranked last in team sacks.

"I didn't want to overload that side of the ball," Aranda said. "We didn't do enough. We should have done a whole lot more on the line of scrimmage."

Aranda hopes to right those wrongs over the offseason with the addition of new defensive coordinator Joe Klanderman and plenty of player turnover.



Jake Schroeder | Photographer

BLOCK PARTY Baylor linemen practice drills during the first day of spring practice.

"Last year, the majority of the money of our team was spent on the receiver room, almost way too much, to be honest," Aranda said. "That money is now spent on defense. And I felt it freeing to be in a position where I could just say, 'Joe, we're going to get you everything you need.'"

Baylor lost multiple leaders from last season's defense, including linebacker Keaton Thomas, the team's leading tackler, and safety DJ Coleman, who finished with 6.5 sacks and three takeaways.

The Bears, in turn, hit the transfer portal and landed key players like defensive lineman Hosea Wheeler and JACK Garrick Ponder. They are also bringing in multiple impact freshmen, including defensive lineman Jae'Lin Battle and safety Jordan Davis.

"We got almost 15 new guys between transfers and freshmen," redshirt senior safety Michael Allen said. "You're not going to come together unless you're intentional about it."

As spring ball begins, the defense is eager to change the narrative and prove that it can be one of the top groups in the Big 12.

"[With] the combination of how last season went and having all those new guys here, there's certainly a heightened sense of urgency because we know that the time is not on our side," Allen said.

Change begins with the culture. The Bears in 2026 could be characterized as inconsistent, particularly through the course of a game. They now aim to address how they will succeed for all 60 minutes and throughout the season.

"It's like, 'OK, what's going to be our calling card? How is Baylor going to win?'" Allen said. "Tough, smart and dependable are the three things that we're focusing on this semester leading into what the team needs to be."

Having to tackle the challenge of adding new faces, Aranda and his coaching staff wanted to dig deeper when they started forming the culture. He wanted any player's "facade" to come down, so the team would not face more obstacles to forming a tightly-knit group.

"We were intentional with the one-on-ones," Aranda said. "We're trying to see who they really are, get you to be comfortable



Jake Schroeder | Photographer

TAKE THAT, DUMMY Redshirt junior offensive lineman Cole Rhett pushes a blocking dummy during Tuesday's drills.

with who you really are, and let's come together that way."

Changing the energy of the team, especially the defense, became a focal point for Aranda. He recognized that once things started to take a wrong turn last year, his team went cold. They lost their energy and that spiraled as games progressed.

"[For] mental toughness, he shows a few clips of last year, for example, the Arizona game," redshirt junior safety Jacob Redding said. "It was one play, and then you just felt the energy go away on the sideline. That's the opposite of what we want to be."

The spring started with building connections between players. Aranda and his staff had players talk to each other about who they are and who they play for. He plans for these connections, along with the grind of practices, to shape the defense and the whole team once the season begins.

"That gave us the ability to push them a little bit harder today because of the relationships that we've really tried to invest in," Aranda said. "This is where they're really forged, when you go through hard stuff and do it together."



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

LEGACY Senior forward Bella Fontleroy makes a layup during Baylor's 82-66 win against Houston at Foster Pavilion Jan. 27.



Jake Schroeder | Photographer

BUGGIN' OUT Senior forward Darianna Littlepage-Buggs takes a jump shot during the Bears' 65-53 loss on March 1 against TCU at Schollmaier Arena in Fort Worth.

WBB's foundation moves forward

Fontleroy, Littlepage-Buggs eye next chapter following 4 years in green and gold

MARISSA ESSENBERG
Sports Writer

Their legacies are etched in Baylor women's basketball history.

Four years. One school. More than 2,500 combined points in the green and gold, leaving records broken, honors earned and a program made better because Bella Fontleroy and Darianna Littlepage-Buggs chose Baylor.

Separated by 286 miles growing up, the two made their way to Waco four years ago and became pillars of a program in transition, leaving their mark from Ferrell Center to Foster Pavilion and through the community they poured their hearts into, all while securing their rightful place in the hearts of Baylor fans. Now as their chapter in Waco comes to a close, so begins the question: what's next?

While Baylor says goodbye to one of the most accomplished senior duos in recent program history, Fontleroy and Littlepage-Buggs, two players who helped shape Baylor women's basketball under head coach Nicki Colleen, now stand at the doorstep of the next chapter: the possibility of playing professionally.

"Every [WNBA] team needs a Darianna Littlepage-Buggs," Colleen said following their final collegiate game. "She doesn't have a bad day, and she is going to get better every day. She's impossible to keep off the boards, and I wish they could see how well she shoots the 3 now, but it's really her heart. She's all about team. I think Buggs is going to end up being more than people think, and the intangibles she brings are something every team needs."

The 2018 WNBA Coach of the Year also offered high praise for Fontleroy.

"While her numbers don't say it this year, I think Bella has an elite basketball IQ and can be a 3-and-D player in that league and guard multiple positions," Colleen said. "She has the physical tools, the body, and when Bella wants to rebound, nobody does it better. She's the strongest player on our team, has the second-highest vertical, and she's built for the league body-wise. I think she's a no-brainer when she's making threes."

A four-year starter and captain, Littlepage-Buggs built her career on the kind of consistency Colleen pointed to — the kind that wins

games, even though it doesn't always make headlines. A relentless presence on the glass and a force in the paint, she turned effort into production, finishing her career ranked third among Baylor's all-time leading rebounders.

From the moment she put on a Baylor uniform, Littlepage-Buggs was a double-double machine, averaging 10 rebounds per game as a junior and senior.

Fontleroy never missed a game since suiting up for the Bears. She built her impact in the moments that don't show up in the box score.

A defensive anchor and one of the most versatile players in the conference and country, she took on whatever the moment demanded — guarding up and down the lineup, battling on the glass and stepping into scoring roles when her name was called. Fontleroy's value was in the glue work, the kind that kept Baylor connected on both ends of the floor even when the stat sheet didn't tell the full story.

"Defense is something I've worked at a lot in my four years," Fontleroy said. "The reason I played my freshman year was because I

was a stronger guard who could defend some of the bigger players in our league, and to see not only the personal growth I've had in my abilities but also to lead our team in that way, it's special to me."

In a league where roster spots are limited and roles are earned, both players bring traits that translate — Littlepage-Buggs with her undeniable motor, physicality and persistent rebounding presence, and Fontleroy with her multifaceted game, defensive tenacity and ability to impact winning without needing the ball.

And it's not just about what they've done. It's about how they've done it.

Together, Fontleroy and Littlepage-Buggs represented the foundation of a class that stayed, developed and helped define the early years of the Nicki Colleen era. In a time of NIL and constant change in college basketball, the two chose continuity, growing into leaders who set the tone on and off the floor.

"For Bella and Buggs to do what they did when they were freshmen and then keep doing it for three more years after that is incredible, and I'm so glad I get to play

with them in their last year," freshman guard Marcayla Johnson said.

Whether it's hearing their names called on draft night or earning their way onto a roster, Fontleroy and Littlepage-Buggs have already built the foundation for what comes next. And while their Baylor careers may be over, their fingerprints are all over the program they helped redefine.

Because for two players who gave everything to Baylor, the next chapter isn't about becoming something new, it's about proving to the rest of the basketball world what Baylor has known all along.

"Buggs and Bella, they're just really special to me," Colleen said. "They were the first kids who said yes before I ever had a win as a college coach. They believed we could do something special and that I could make Baylor special for them. It wasn't an easy act to follow, so I'm forever grateful for them."

Lilly Women's College All-Star Game, the duo will suit up one last time in their collegiate careers on April 4 in Phoenix during NCAA Final Four festivities, nine days before the WNBA Draft on April 13.

SPORTS TAKE:
4 things to watch as
spring practice kicks off



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

SPRING SPORTS Dave Aranda's seventh campaign as Baylor's head coach began Tuesday at spring practice at Fudge Football Development Center.

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Jolee French, artist with heart of Texas

JULIAN HIGUERA
Reporter

Waco lifestyle artist Jolee French knew from a young age that her passion for creativity and the Western lifestyle would always be central to her life. As a member of Cowgirl Artists of America, she has utilized watercolor, oils and ink to continue that passion as an adult.

French attended Lamar University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in business management. At the same time, French experimented with watercolor in her free time and designed tattoos for friends.

After graduating, French got an office job, but she shortly realized cubicle life wasn't for her and decided to keep pursuing art. French knew she wanted to share Western life on a canvas with the people who had never experienced a Texas sun or a cowgirl roping cattle.

"COVID hits, no one has anything better to do than to sit inside their house, and so that was when I started building a portfolio and really started leaning into Western art specifically," French said.

While her focus sparked on Western contemporary art, like the landscape a cowgirl

sees, her inspiration all started at her great-uncle Buzzy's house.

Buzzy taught French how to ride horses in elementary school. According to French, this is where her passion for the West began. She even has a portrait to commemorate the pivotal moment of her childhood.

"That was the first time that I did a ... true portrait of someone's face when I was trying to achieve a specific likeness," French said.

Having lived in Waco since 2019, French has started a farm of her own with about 13 acres for her horses, donkeys and even chickens. As she has dived deeper into the cowgirl life, the farm has become an outlet for her and her art.

While she balances her farm, she also works on commission, emphasizing affordability for her clients.

"I have a wide variety of sizes because I do try to give everyone a chance to be able to commission something that is professional and custom and not just something cheap off the internet," French said. "I want to make my art accessible while also still paying myself for the time it requires. My pet sketches that I offer, which are usually 5-by-7 and done in ink, are \$95."



Photo courtesy of Jolee French

WESTERN RENEGADE Waco artist Jolee French decided to pursue art beyond a hobby after the pandemic hit, choosing to share her gift to showcase Western life on the canvas.

The process for creating these works usually involves either a photo taken directly or one provided by an outside source.

Over the years, French has built a wide network and has met many other talents, from storm chasers to photographers in the rodeo scene.

Liza Wadsworth is a friend of French and a photographer who goes by the Instagram handle @Cowponyproductions. She sends many of her photos to French from equestrian competitions, where Wadsworth competes herself.

Wadsworth has also been a huge inspiration for many of French's works.

"I was very flattered and honored because her artwork is amazing," Wadsworth said. "It's just really cool to see how sometimes I think pictures are art, but for an artist to see that and think that it really should be a work of art is just so cool."

French can be sought out on her Instagram @Joleefrench.art or website for commissions.

"I have a wide variety of sizes because I do try to give everyone a chance to be able to commission something that is professional and custom.

JOLEE FRENCH
WACO ARTIST



Photo courtesy of Jolee French

WESTERN WATERCOLOR French's focus on Western contemporary art is evident throughout her portfolio, which is filled with the many landscapes of life in the West.

Baylor student creates all-natural luxury body care line

ALEXANDRA BREWER
Arts & Life Writer

Dallas sophomore Madelyn Prewitt, founder of Pear Ridge Botanicals, started her all-natural luxury body care line in high school after struggling with sensitive skin. What began as a personal frustration quickly turned into something much bigger: a brand rooted in both intention and experience.

In a world of skincare aisles filled with false promises, Prewitt wasn't looking for luxury — she was just looking for relief.

"I started this business about three years ago while I was still in high school, and it was actually out of my own journey with sensitive skin," Prewitt said.

For Prewitt, the problem wasn't a lack of options — it was the disconnect between them.

"I started to realize that a lot of the products I would use were so natural that they were no longer enjoyable," Prewitt said. "They didn't smell good, they didn't feel good. On the flip side, I realized that a lot of the products that claim to be pure and were more high-dollar luxury products had a lot of toxic ingredients and fragrances in them that still irritated my skin."

What followed was months of research, testing and trial and error.

"My mission is to bridge that traditional gap between natural products and luxury products by creating products that are both natural and still enjoyable to use," Prewitt said.

That balance has become the foundation of Pear Ridge Botanicals. From goat's milk bar soap to body oils and washes, each product is designed to feel elevated while still remaining gentle on the skin.

But behind the products is a process that didn't happen overnight.

Prewitt first introduced her brand through local farmers' markets, using them

as a testing ground for everything from packaging to branding.

"It was definitely a learning experience and a great way to get out there and test the way I wanted to market myself," Prewitt said.

Since then, her business has expanded beyond those early markets. Pear Ridge Botanicals now operates online, has wholesale partnerships and continues to grow its presence both on and off campus.

For those working with her, that growth comes as no surprise.

"I think she has a lot of buy-in to her own brand," Sacramento, Calif. junior Neela Piper said. "For her, it started very personal ... Through that, she made all her own formulas and put so much time and research into her brand, and she's been able to bless others with all the time that she's put into it for herself."

Piper is currently creating social media visuals and planning a photo shoot for the company. She added that, beyond the product itself, Prewitt's presence is a key element for the brand.

"Every time I get to talk to her, she's very positive, calm-spirited and very professional when she's talking to anyone," Piper said.

While her professional work is expanding, those closest to her see the effort behind the scenes. Plano sophomore and Prewitt's roommate, Natalie Weissinger, has watched the brand blossom.

"She came up with the recipes herself, which is really cool," Weissinger said.

Weissinger described Prewitt as deeply



Photo courtesy of Madelyn Prewitt

NATURAL AND NURTURING Madelyn Prewitt's Signature Gift Set, available on her website.

intentional, even in the smallest details.

"She spent probably 30 minutes to an hour drawing this design, wanting to get a perfect circle," Weissinger said. "She's just super intentional and cares about her business to the max."

That level of care extends into the products themselves.

"It's really good, it's super hydrating for your skin," Weissinger said.

Despite the demands of running a business, Prewitt has found a rhythm

in balancing it with college life.

"It's definitely a challenge ... But it's become my hobby, in a way," Prewitt said. "During my free time, I'm just working on my business, but I enjoy it because I love it."

The process hasn't been without challenges. Much of her journey has been built through experience rather than instruction.

"It's definitely been a learning curve and learning along the way,"

Prewitt said. "Maybe something with technology, or there being an issue with the formula, or just figuring out how to even start doing wholesale."

Through it all, her goal has remained the same: to create something that goes beyond skincare.

"My goal is just to make their lives a little bit better, even in the smallest way possible," Prewitt said. "Just truly to make them feel happier about themselves."



Arts & Life

When life takes your lemons

Student band Mad Lemonless releases debut album '80s & Roommates'

KALENA REYNOLDS
Arts & Life Editor

Once upon a time, four artistic, eclectic and energetic roommates decided to translate their accumulated list of inside jokes and philosophies into a sonic scrapbook.

Beaumont seniors Major Hargraves and Luke Garza and San Antonio seniors Brooks Fessler and Jackson Posey make up the group Mad Lemonless. Now, straight from the belly of U Pointe on Speight, the group has just released a debut nine-song album titled "80s & Roommates."

They worked on the album for over a year before its release on March 13.

While each roommate is highly creative, they all individually brought different musical influences to their process; from Tame Impala, Kendrick Lamar and folk.

The opening track, "Shocking Message," sets the tone for the project. Clearly, it serves as both a think piece and a representation of the group's philosophy. The song features the audio from pastor Paul Washer's "Shocking Message" speech — a notable sermon on the hypocrisy of American Christians.



Photo courtesy of Jackson Posey

ROOMMATES AND BANDMATES Mad Lemonless members (from left to right) Beaumont senior Major Hargraves, San Antonio senior Brooks Fessler, Beaumont senior Luke Garza and San Antonio senior Jackson Posey released their debut album, "80s and Roommates," on March 13.

“**'80s & Roommates'** showcases the true beauty of playful creativity; it's light and effortless, proving the wonderful result of a 'flow state.'

KALENA REYNOLDS
ARTS & LIFE

The track transitions seamlessly into the next piece on the album, "Abraham LinkedIn," a high-energy rap song intertwining lyrics about metamodernity and Abraham Lincoln's resume.

Next is "Two Weeks," a slow, shimmering, guitar-heavy track similar to Phoebe Bridgers, Medium Build or Elliott Smith. The song oozes nostalgia and reflection with lyrics like "the more thought, the better. Unless there's rejection. I guess that's the test, we can't stay for perfection."

Following "Two Weeks" is "Two Weeks (Interlude)," a cinematic, string-heavy version of the previous song.

If "Two Weeks" is fresh coffee on a Saturday morning, "Two Weeks (Interlude)" is a Sunday evening sunrise from a window seat. The record is nothing short of beautifully tragic and draws comparisons to Jeff Buckley's "Lover, You Should've Come Over."

"Lemons and Honey," the fifth song the album, is the brag track. At this point in the

project, the group has delved into at least four different genres, and the number continues to grow as rap is added with this song.

"Boursin Cheese" comes after "Lemons and Honey," and let me just say — I'd like to hate this song. No, I'd love to hate this song. But alas, I don't. The lyrics make me cringe a bit due to the visceral description of oozing cheese, but the fun synth-pop instrumental is a nice addition to the album.

The soulful, oscillating essence of this track is mesmerizing and comparable to that of Mac Miller and Mac DeMarco.

I will say, I'm checking all the expiration dates on my cheeses after giving this one a listen.

The next track is "Freezer Food," a fun, catchy, upbeat track that provides a nice energy boost in the second half of the album.

To be honest, I don't know how you beat lyrics like "if my bananas get moldy, I know that my roommates will be there to forgive me." Because deep down, life is all about forgiving

your roommates for their moldy bananas.

After "Freezer Food" is "Lizzy's Song," which may hold the trophy for one of my favorite piano sounds I've heard in a song. The warm, slightly muted tone of the piano is truly a masterpiece.

In addition to the Ben Folds-like piano sound, there is an absolutely immaculate chorus melody. "Lizzy's Song" is what takes this album from a hobby project to a masterpiece.

"Shoutoutro" is the last track on the album and begins with a variety of intriguing seventh chords, eventually transitioning into resonating synth. After bawling my eyes out to "Lizzy's Song," "Shoutoutro" dried my tears and reminded me of the importance of whimsy.

"80s & Roommates" showcases the true beauty of playful creativity; it's light and effortless, proving the wonderful result of a "flow state." While the album hits on a multitude of genres, the lyrics and melodies are where the record really shines.

Baylor Theatre runs with satirical comedy

CAMILLE KELLY
Reporter

The Department of Theatre Arts is preparing for their upcoming, fast-paced comedy, "See How They Run." This British farce is set in the 1940s and is filled with silly stunts, climactic fight scenes and comical cases of mistaken identity.

Shows will have evening performances at 7:30 p.m. April 15-18 and a matinee at 2 p.m. on April 19 in the Jones Theatre at the Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center.

Tampa, Fla., junior Chloe Baker plays Penelope Toop, an American actress who has married the British vicar in the show. According to Baker, the comedy throughout the play is heavily reliant on physicality and the action in each scene.

"I already thought that the script was hilarious when I first read it, but now putting it on its feet has made it just 10 times funnier," Baker said. "I think that's very characteristic of farces, especially British farces, is just the physicality of it."

Baylor theater has not included a farce in its production lineup in a long time.

A farce is defined as "a light dramatic composition marked by broadly satirical comedy and improbable plot," according to Merriam-Webster.

Prosper junior Noah Smith, who plays the vicar, Lionel Toop, said this show is truly unique compared to some of the performances Baylor has put on in previous years.

"The physical gags that we're doing are a lot of silly fight choreography and mistaken identities," Smith said. "It's really silly and awesome that we get to do something super lighthearted."

Another aspect of the show that makes it high energy is the amount of comedic fight scenes. Newnan, Ga., senior Maggie Robbins, who plays Miss Skillon, said she gets knocked out a few times, shoved in a closet and performs a number of other skits throughout the show.

"We started staging some of the fight scenes, and at one point, I get punched," Robbins said. "That was definitely a hard thing, but hilarious at the same time to try and figure out the exact positioning. We had to do it probably tons of times to make sure that the punch looked realistic from every sort of vantage point of the audience."

The play was first written during World War II and was put on stage while London itself was getting blitzed. According to Smith, a common misconception is that people only watch comedy when life is good. However, Smith said this



Photo courtesy of Baylor Theatre

COMEDY Baylor Theatre will perform "See How They Run" from April 15-19.

production is a good example of how comedy is often used as an escape from the world.

Smith said he hopes that in the same way, students who come to see the production can escape the stress of their own lives.

"The best thing we can do sometimes is to add a little levity to people's lives; give them about 90 minutes to just laugh and enjoy themselves," Smith said. "I hope most people come to the show and leave with a smile on their face ... So I hope students can take a break when they're seeing it and get some enjoyment out of their day."

According to Robbins, maintaining the momentum in a show that demands so much of the cast's energy is not an easy feat. However, relying on her other castmates and their support for one another has gotten them through, Robbins said.

"It is a collaborative thing, as we all sort of lean on each other, and especially with the show that's so fast paced and has a lot of different moving parts," Robbins said. "It's a team effort for all of us to come together and get to complete it."

Tickets to the shows can be found online, and students can receive CAE credit for attending a performance.

"I will make this a personal guarantee that you will be laughing by the end of the show, just because it is so funny," Baker said. "I don't think I've ever seen something or been a part of something that is as hilarious as this, and touches on so many different aspects of comedy. I think that everyone should see it, because it is an evening of laughter, and everyone can use that in their lives."

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FM72 from A1

PENLAND from A1



Photo courtesy of Anna Webb

CONNECTING TOGETHER FM72 fills Fountain Mall long after classes conclude for corporate prayer and worship.

encourages students to rethink the role of prayer in their daily lives.

“We really want college students to understand the importance of prayer, the power of prayer,” Humphrey said. “Not just like saying a prayer before a meal ... but the sense that prayer is central.”

Cedar Park sophomore Gray Galant said the central location is part of what makes the event meaningful.

“I think it’s so incredible how it’s so accessible to all these students, literally right on Fountain Mall,” Galant said.

That accessibility allows students to integrate the event into otherwise busy schedules.

“I think you get so busy here at Baylor, and so instead of doing XYZ, I’m going to sit in the prayer tent,” she said.

She characterized the event as both immersive and communal.

“I think it’s 72 hours of the Holy Spirit,” she said. “It’s a really close way of seeing what heaven looks like.”

The Woodlands junior Grant Bottorff, who will be on the

worship team, said FM72 stands out as one of the most significant weeks of his year.

“FM72 is honestly probably one of my favorite weeks of the entire school year,” Bottorff said. “I’m excited to watch the prayer tent evolve over the week.”

Bottorff also said the event fosters unity while also prompting reflection about faith on campus.

“I think it’s so important,” he said. “It unifies Baylor in such a good way under the Lord.”

At the same time, he said FM72 challenges assumptions about a Christian university environment.

“I feel like we get super complacent with the fact that we think, since Baylor’s a Christian university, that it’s perfect and everyone’s saved, which that’s not the case,” he said.

For Bottorff, the event represents renewal.

“It’s a week of freedom, a week of revival over the campus,” he said.

Webb said the impact of FM72 varies from student to student.

meet them exactly where they’re at individually.”

Humphrey encouraged students to take advantage of the limited time the event offers.

“You only get 16 nights of FM72 in your entire college experience,” he said. “If I could go back and just get 16 nights like that, I’d do anything.”

As FM72 approaches, organizers anticipate a steady flow of students moving through Fountain Mall — some staying for hours through the early morning, others stopping briefly between classes. Whether through quiet prayer, corporate worship or outreach, the event is designed to create space for sustained spiritual engagement in the middle of campus life.

“I think ultimately it’s all for God’s name and his glory,” Webb said. “It’s not about the people who planned it ... but it’s all about the person of Jesus.”

“You only get 16 nights of FM72 in your entire college experience. If I could go back and just get 16 nights like that, I’d do anything.”

DREW HUMPHREY
COLLEGE PASTOR

“Our prayer is that every student would take a next step in their journey with faith,” she said. “There’s not one single response ... but that God would

“I don’t know if I feel fully safe eating [at Penland]. I’m definitely a big germaphobe, so my food being clean is top priority.”

ARIANA HINOJOSA
COLLEGE STATION
FRESHMAN

Houston freshman Darby Lane said the recent inspection score is concerning.

“As a freshman, we have to eat at a dining hall, so we are kinda putting all our trust into them and what they are serving us,” Lane said.

Lane explained she has taken a more cautious approach to dining in the dining halls.

“[I’m] taking a second to think about, ‘Am I going to be OK if I eat this or is it going to be good?’” Lane said.

College Station freshman Ariana Hinojosa said she recently heard many people were getting sick from Penland.

“I don’t know if I feel fully safe eating [at Penland],” Hinojosa said. “I’m definitely a big germaphobe, so my food being clean is top priority. There can definitely be preventative measures set up.”

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