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Be sure to set serious, realistic spring semester expectations

CAITLYN MEISNER
Copy Editor



The spring semester is always the semester spawned from Satan, I swear. I always have more intense classes, I'm on the hunt for summer internships and I just feel more busy in general.

Although I've taken 18 credit hours every semester I've been in college — don't ask me how, I'm not sure how my brain hasn't melted — the spring classes find a way to make 18 credit hours feel like 26.

Since this is my third and final spring semester — yay! — I decided to pull myself up by my bootstraps and get seriously organized to prepare for the next four months.

It's also difficult this time of year to get motivated and organized coming off of the high of winter break and looking ahead to summer. The weather lately has made it feel like summer to my Massachusetts mind.

I already consider myself to be a pretty organized person, but college has required a different breed of organization. I constantly have a to-do list open on my phone and computer, with my plans written out hour-by-hour to stay on track of everything I need to do.

Admittedly, it's difficult to stay this organized. I try my hardest, but there are some days or weeks where I feel like a chicken running around campus with its head cut off. I find it easy to let the organization go by the wayside to make sure I get all my readings done before classes the next day, but I've decided to prioritize organization this semester.

It's best to set realistic expectations for yourself each semester because if you don't, it may feel like a semester wasted. I've felt like that sometimes, and it's especially difficult when college goes by in

“Whether that's trying to finish a show you've been wanting to finish for months, going to the gym more often or spending more time with friends, setting an expectation is the best thing you can do.”

CAITLYN MEISNER | COPY EDITOR

the blink of an eye.

For example, I want to apply to one internship a week to prepare for the summer. That may not seem like a lot, but it's a short-term goal. If I find more time in my schedule, then I can adjust and apply to two or three a week.

Last spring, I would go on binges and apply to 20 internships a day and could never keep track, or I would ditch my homework for the night and focus solely on applications. Not responsible.

I think it's important for all of us to set realistic expectations for ourselves this semester while it's still early enough. Whether that's trying to finish a show you've been wanting to finish for months, going to the gym more often or spending more time with friends, setting an expectation is the best thing you can do. This is because you likely won't be disappointed with yourself when it's June and you realize that you only went to the gym three times when in December you made it a resolution to go every single day.

Be realistic with yourself. Whatever your relationship with organization may be, I encourage all of us to set a goal like this for the semester so we can hopefully be more successful than previous semesters.



Illustration by Gracie Speer | Cartoonist

No winter freeze in sight, spend some time in sunlight

SARAH WANG
Staff Writer



Chirping birds, budding twigs and blossoming daisies: scenes of spring have invaded every corner of campus with a warmer spring in Waco, starting a semester that should technically begin in winter.

Even for a southern state that is warm year-round like Texas, such a phenomenon is atypical — at least it wasn't seen in the last two winters, when the spring semesters would arrive in mid of cold winter air and icy temperatures.

With that being said, this spring may be a perfect timing for outdoor activities.

Last January in Texas was all about bare branches, dry, withered grasses and cold breath; however, this January is predicted to be warmer than usual according to the Climate Prediction Center.

Most of the trees and plants remain lively, and there is a beautiful scene from my balcony. The grass seems greener and the warmer air is making the outside atmosphere so enjoyable.

I could think about nothing better than going outside in such weather. Going outside this spring offers such a valuable experience for you to enjoy a relaxed pace of life with a brand new perspective, unlike previous and more chilly winters.

The warmer temperature is great for outdoor activities this spring.

Even when the sun gives us tons of sunshine on typical days this time of year, the usual cold weather and frozen winds could still be giant hindrances for people. Many have the enthusiasm and appreciation for nature but may step back when the cold kicks in.

Yet this January is different. You have the ideal environment to begin hiking with a warmer temperature and fresh scenes.

Even though this is often the season when bacteria and viruses become rampant, going outdoors for fresh air would still be better than staying inside your dorm or apartment.

While exercising strengthens your body and activates your mind, exposing yourself into the sunlight helps your body to absorb vitamin D, which is fundamental for your health and can be a preventive measure against disease.

Jump in and enjoy the season.

Name, age, hometown, fun fact: Icebreaker benefits outweigh cons

AVERY BALLMANN
Staff Writer



I am tired of hearing the moans and groans of syllabus week. It's the calm before the storm, and we need all the resources we can get. This includes getting to know our classmates. Some people may despise icebreaker questions, but I actually enjoy them because it helps me meet the people I'm going to be with all semester.

Even the simplest questions, such as where a student is from and their major, can help me relate to my classmates in some way. Whether it's because I know someone in their same major, or I've visited where they're from. Even if I don't relate in any way, it's a segue for me to learn more about something I don't know.

There is value in forming connections because when you're in the middle of the semester struggling on an assignment or missing a day of class, you're going to wish you remembered your desk neighbor's name.

Another aspect I enjoy about icebreakers is it's the only time set aside for pure curiosity and knowledge about one another in class. Past syllabus week, the class focuses on its curriculum, and it's hard to develop friendships in the middle of a lecture. To this day, I still remember the friends I made in my classes and even though we don't hang out, I still enjoy our catch-ups when we see each other in person.

My favorite icebreaker is naming our favorite restaurants in Waco. It's interesting

for me to hear what people will say since I'm from here, so I love to give advice or praise them if they have knowledge of the local joints.

Another question I enjoy is to hear why students take this certain class. It helps narrow down who is here and why. For my Spanish class the common answer is usually because it's required and none of us really want to be there. I have formed many study buddies from this inquiry, and I have taken my three semesters of Spanish with the same people.

Icebreakers help create a bond that we lack after going to college. In high school, I knew most everyone in my grade and frequented the same classes with them. Now, being in college, our class size is in the thousands. It can be hard to form connections when you feel like a number.

I cherish my class friends now more than I ever did because they really do help in a pinch. When you run into a confusing and difficult professor, you and your new class friend can create an email or talk to them in person. The main benefit is that you don't feel alone.

I know the actual nature of icebreakers can be a little awkward. Everyone is rehearsing what to say in their head and you want to sound cool but not too cool.



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

BREAK THE ICE Making connections in the classroom can help in the long run, despite the potential awkwardness at first.

My advice is to, of course, be yourself but also pick an answer that stands out. Throw an extra fact or story in there because it will make the experience less scary. Also, drag this moment out. Like I said, you won't get an opportunity to have undivided attention with your class like this again.

If you missed your opportunity during syllabus week, don't worry. It's still early.

Get to class a bit before and ask the name of who you're sitting next to. You can even go as far as asking for socials or a phone number so you can have a resource when you need it.

If you can remember anything your neighbor said during the icebreaker, use that to start the conversation, such as, 'You're a political science major, right?'

I promise if you make connections and keep breaking the ice with your classmates your class will be much more enjoyable and your life will be easier.

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Baylor international admissions expected to rise as COVID-19 guidelines loosen

RAYLEE FOSTER
Staff Writer

The Baylor admissions office continues to encourage the Baylor community to embrace the university's growing diverse culture for this year's admission cycle.

Senior director of international admissions, Anis Qourzal, said Baylor hit a new high for admitting international students before the pandemic. He said they are anticipating improvement as countries around the world are change their COVID-19 policies regarding international travel.

"Climbing out of the pandemic, it's been so exciting to recruit all over the world, and my team and I are in about 17 different countries," Qourzal said.

San Pedro Sula, Honduras, freshman Irma Peña said she observes diversity as she walks around campus, and the school is not only inclusive to her culture, but to many other cultures as well. She said she feels welcomed by the school and their efforts to help her adjust to the new environment.

"I feel like Baylor has a diverse campus. There's people from many different countries and cultures," Peña said.

Qourzal and Mary Herridge, assistant vice president of enrollment management, said creating a diverse culture is a part of what they strive for during the admissions process.

Both said they have adjusted their efforts to reach students with different cultures and backgrounds in recent years in a few ways.

The admissions team is now fully recruiting people in person, and working toward not only international inclusivity, but also building a more diverse group within the U.S.

"We would love to enroll a really diverse student body that reflects what Texas looks like, that reflects the U.S. and the world," Herridge said.

Reaching out to people across the U.S. and world is done with the intention to create a culture within the Baylor community that is welcoming to everyone.

"We seek to embody Christ's teachings of love and inclusivity across boundaries of racial, ethnic, gender, socio-economic, religious and other expressions of human difference. Because, at Baylor, 'Love thy neighbor' are not just words...they are a way of life," Baylor's website states.

Maputo, Mozambique, freshman Chantelle Maculuvé said she felt welcomed into the Baylor community. She said Baylor has worked hard to show her and other international students what resources are available to ensure their success.

"One thing I like is that they really make everything for us to be informed and help us with everything," Maculuvé said. "The international department is really helpful and I really appreciate that."

Both Peña and Maculuvé said they were aware of the university's efforts to be culturally inclusive, but said there was more the school could do.

"I feel very welcomed, but as a Hispanic, I feel like there's way less activities done for



Assoah Ndomo | Photographer
WORKING ON IT Engineering students do homework in the Rogers Engineering and Computer Science Building computer lab on Monday, Jan. 23.

Hispanics. I believe that is not Baylor but the Hispanic organizations," Peña said.

Maculuvé also said there's room for growth in the Cashion Academic Center where the Center for Global Engagement is located.

"I don't feel like I'm at home yet because [Baylor] doesn't have my flag," Maculuvé said.

Baylor offers a variety of scholarships designed for the inclusion of ethnic and racial groups. One of these, the Trailblazer scholarship, has been growing in recent years.

"I've really seen growth in the students applying for that scholarship and, just the caliber of students applying is really incredible,"

Herridge said. "I think in the coming years there's a lot of excitement about that cohort of students and what they'll bring to campus."

With the growing diversity in the applicant pool, Qourzal said he encourages students to get involved as diversity grows on campus as well.

"We eagerly go out into the world to bring amazing students that we think are a great fit for Baylor," Qourzal said. "We know they will enrich our community, so our encouragement to current students and students that are coming in that same class is to take advantage of just this diversity and new wealth of culture that they may have never been exposed to."

ROBOTS from Page A1

Boice also said they have been working with campus partners for years to excel the delivery and pickup of Grubhub services.

"Offering this type of delivery further improves the Grubhub dining experience as we continue to provide innovative solutions for our campus partners," Boice said.

Starship came up with the innovative technology to make it "delivery-as-a-service solution," making it more suitable for campus.

Camarillo, Calif., senior Julia Ruiz said she often stays late on campus for long study nights.

"I was at Moody and saw they

were soft launching the robots in the fall, and I wanted to try it out," Ruiz said. "I hope in the future it will be able to do off-campus deliveries."

She also said having the option to have a robot handle a delivery that late was convenient for students doing work on campus.

Oceanside, Calif., freshman Aidan Montanez said he likes how the robots fully operate without user assistance.

"They continue making students' lives easier and due to their size, they don't seem to bother anyone or cause any traffic despite moving slow and steady," Montanez said.

SAFETY FIRST from Page A1

transmits the student's exact GPS location to responding officers.

The app also allows students to anonymously text Baylor Police should they notice anything suspicious, provides a directory of phone lines for health and safety services on campus, a content directory for other Department of Public Safety resources and the ability to call 911.

Rodman also said BUPD and the Department of Public Safety, they also receives help from law enforcement partners beyond campus.

"We have a tremendous relationship with our partners in this area," Rodman said. "We're talking the Waco Police Department, the Sheriff's office, our state partners, our federal partners. Because of that, we know that the Waco Police are patrolling in that area. If they are aware of something, they notify us, and we notify them."

Mark Childers, associate vice president for public safety, said the Department of Public Safety is committed to protecting and serving the Baylor community.

"This isn't a retirement job for us. This is a 24/7, strong forward lean," Childers said. "We're switched on all the time. There's never a time where we're not assessing or re-assessing current security platforms or programs."

Childers also said students should trust their intuition, and the Department of Public Safety is committed to cultivating a strong level of trust between the community and law enforcement.

"The Department of Public Safety can do a lot, but we need the partnership of the community to help us. If you see something, say something," Childers said. "If something doesn't look right or feel right, call. I'd rather you be wrong and call."



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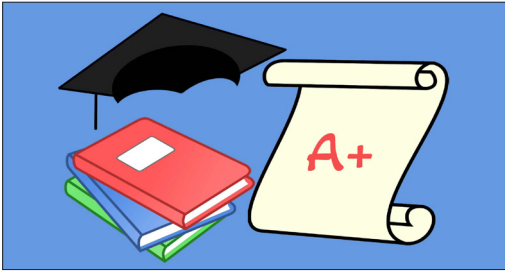
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SING SELLS

Students queue up as All-University Sing tickets go live
pg. A5



SCHOOL HACKS

Looking for some tips for a successful semester?
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“We felt like it was very important that we create a space that feels like it belongs with the rest of Baylor’s campus because we want the students that use the store to feel like they belong.”
The Store renovations bring improved facilities to deal with food insecurity. pg. A5

BaylorLariat.com

Be Kind Coffee grinds out new location

AVERY BALLMANN
Staff Writer

Alex Sanchez and Will Suarez never expected to own their own coffee company. Sanchez was Suarez’s only customer when he was selling coffee at Waco Wonderland, an annual Christmas festival. At that time, Sanchez was laid off from his job and Suarez needed a patron in the midst of a dreadful work day.

Flash forward to now, they both co-own Be Kind Coffee and are opening up an additional location on 1534 Washington Ave. in the first week of February. While neither entrepreneurs envisioned owning a coffee shop as their “when I grow up” trope, they have successfully created a brand that has spread kindness throughout the Waco community.

Be Kind Coffee began in 2021 and has locations on Lake Air Drive and in Union Hall. But, what makes the new location different is that it is their first brick-and-mortar location. This shop will seat approximately 30 customers with multiple seating arrangements and a drive-thru.

“I think we underestimated how much our customers would have value in indoor seating space,” Sanchez said. “That has been our biggest ask since day one.”

One shop is a small stand that is surrounded by other vendors and the other location shares its space with a meat market — not the most

aesthetic place to study. Sanchez often asks customers their opinions on the business because he said the brands you remember are the ones that make the person feel valued.

“I think that’s important to get customer input and make them feel like their voice matters, because it does,” Sanchez said. “At the end of the day, we don’t survive if customers don’t come and buy drinks.”

Not only do customers stop in for drinks but they also come for the atmosphere. New Braunfels junior and barista Hailey Merkel also notices the positive environment she serves in.

“I like the downtown area and the fact that I’ll be able to go in and just sit down and hang out and it’ll be our own private space,” Merkel said. “I think there’s a lot of potential for the things that we could do getting this new location.”

Merkel has worked with Be Kind for a year and a half. She said she has learned a lot while watching the business grow — when Sanchez and Suarez started, they had two employees. Now, they have 20.

Suarez was born and raised in Waco and found a way to give back as a contributor to the community. He specializes in marketing and graphic design but also paints murals around town, owns businesses and teaches art to children.

“Being the business owner, I didn’t see it at first, but I know how much we’re impacting just by being around,” Suarez said.



ALWAYS ON THE GRIND Be Kind Coffee offers a wide variety of menu items at 1534 Washington Ave., their first brick-and-mortar location. Olivia Havre | Photographer

At the new location, Suarez has taken his love for painting and incorporated it into the design. The large windows facing Washington Avenue shine light on the pastel yellow, red and blue hues of the walls.

Past the barista counter is a large kitchen capable of making all of the mini pancakes and other vegan food Be Kind has to offer. What rests on top of the tables is the woodwork of Suarez’s father. Last year his father suffered from two heart attacks, but recovered and is now able to contribute to the new business venture.

“For him to even be here is kind of a big deal for me,” Suarez said. “For him to be able to kind of give us stuff, he’s not charging us,

he’s just doing it, because that’s what parents do, it’s cool. It’s heartwarming for me to have a little piece of him in here.”

After Suarez spoke about his father, the two owners looked around their newly painted shop, which two months prior was a smelly, abandoned kombucha brewery and both held a soft smile.

“I want to create a place that people want to come to, because I know everyone has a choice,” Sanchez said. “They don’t have to come to us, they don’t have to go buy coffee in general, but we really appreciate when you do.”

To stay updated on the opening, follow @bekindcoffeecrew on Instagram.

East Market and Goods celebrates Lunar New Year

AVERY BALLMANN
Staff Writer

In the early hours of Lunar New Year Sunday morning, the parking lot of East Market and Goods — a local Asian specialty market — was full of vendors and the hollow sound of a single beating drum. The sky blue Loong (the Chinese dragon) and the smell of Bahn mi, meat skewers and sticky rice wafted through the crowd. This is the market’s third annual celebration of this holiday and its energy emulated what the year of the rabbit signifies: prosperity, hope and calm.

Co-owner of East Market, Joni Navarra told Fox 44 she wanted to make this year’s celebration bigger than those past. The lineup for the Lunar New Year celebration included traditional Polynesian dances from Siva Ori, lumpia and ramen eating contests, a performance by the Waco Ukulele Orchestra, a Baylor Vietnamese Student Association fashion show and a performance by Fil-am Waco Folk Dancers.

East Market is the only Asian specialty food store in Waco. At the event there was a conglomerate of Asian businesses such as Le’s Kitchen, Cha Community, Clay Pot and others. There were other businesses in attendance such as Bridge City, a coffee roastery.

Evan Iluzada, co-owner of Bridge City and member of the Asian Leadership Network, is a first generation Filipino-American. He recently learned about Lunar New Year through his friends and said he is excited to be at this celebration to find out his connection within this community.

“I want to both embrace who I am and then to elevate Asians in this community and be able to bring value to what they do and to their businesses,” Iluzada said. “So I really want to be a participant and to figure out ways to promote the people that are out here as well.”

San Antonio sophomore Jessa Whalen, cultural chair of the Filipino Student Association, also recently learned how respected Lunar New



PLAYING WITH FIRE Siva Ori Polynesian group sets the stage aflame Sunday with Siva Afi, a cultural dance involving fire. Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

Year is in the Philippines. FSA was invited to the event by Navarra because East Market sponsors the club by providing student discounts and hosting their events.

“We just love supporting them,” Whalen said. “So we find that this is a great opportunity for us to be here, not only to represent our organization, but also to also take part in something that they have created within the Waco community.”

At their booth, they were selling ube cookies, a vibrant purple and powdered sugar dessert and soda served in a bag, commonly known as “street-style.” One of their members won first place in the lumpia eating contest.

The Lunar New Year celebration brought together many different aspects of Asian culture, not just Chinese. The dances from Siva Ori Polynesian Dance left the stage on fire — literally. The group performed Siva Afi, a traditional dance from Samoa that incorporates flames while dancing. Other Pacific island dances were showcased by beautiful outfits and headpieces made from leaves and colorful fabrics.

“I’m grateful for this community and to learn more about fellow Asians,” Iluzada said. “I have a lot to learn myself.”

Iluzada and Navarra shared aspirations of prosperity in Waco this year, both in the

“I want to both embrace who I am and then to elevate Asians in this community and be able to bring value to what they do and to their businesses.”
EVAN ILUZADA | CO-OWNER, BRIDGE CITY

community and monetarily, FSA received a \$2 bill, which is common in the holiday because the traditional red envelopes are vessels for monetary gifts. Whalen also received something more valuable than money — connection.

“I think the thing I enjoy the most is actually finding out that there are more Filipinos within Waco,” Whalen said. “Being able to actually connect with some of the Filipino community and other individuals of the Asian American population, it’s kind of like ‘whoa,’ I didn’t know there was so much representation within Waco itself.”

When Navarra was asked about what she was most looking forward to at the event, her immediate answer was the smiles of the people.

“There’s always going to be a seat at the table,” Navarra said. “We’re very welcoming about it, in opening the diversity and just celebrating with everybody else, regardless of who they are.”

Survive this semester with writing center, study schedules

OLIVIA TURNER
Staff Writer

After a long and well-deserved winter break, the Baylor campus is once again filled with the hustle and bustle of its beloved Bears. Friends have reunited with friends, books have been bought and classes have commenced. But for some, chaos has reigned.

For many Bears, getting back into the flow of attending classes, poring over notes and typing out papers is not for the faint of heart. Thankfully, there are plenty of helpful resources a student can access if they feel overwhelmed by their sudden copious responsibilities, and they’re all right here on campus.

In the basement of the Sid Richardson Building works Trish Baum, program manager for Academic Resources. Baum assists students in all the ways she said she lacked when she was a college student.

“I hated my college experience,” said Baum, in comparison to her much more forgiving high school study schedule. “It was always a heart attack on the next page.”

Because Baum is able to relate to Baylor students’ similar stories, likened to drowning in duties and deadlines, she said she was able to come up with a way to keep Bears’ heads above water. She calls it ‘Semester on a Page.’

“It is a wonderful tool not meant to rule your life

strictly,” Baum said. “It’s a guide. It just shows you where you can switch things around if you need to, if you don’t, how to finish your homework early so you can have a little me-time in the evenings.”

In addition to ‘Semester on a Page,’ Baum also has monthly and weekly schedules she customizes to fit the needs of any student she helps. They function by reserving specific windows of time for specific subjects of study, which Baum said helps prevent procrastination.

While the schedule promotes plenty of time for work and study, Baum said they also provide windows of time for students to go to the gym, spend time with friends and indulge in their hobbies.

Read more:



All-University Sing release over 13,000 tickets for public

RAYLEE FOSTER
Staff Writer

The Bill Daniel Student Center ticket office released tickets for students on Monday and tickets for the general public will be releasing Tuesday with prices ranging between \$29 to \$40. This year's All-University Sing performances will take place Feb. 16-18 and 23-25.

Joshua Gilliam, associate director of Student Activities and SUB ticket office employee, said ticket sales will be processed online through its website.

"Students will need to log into their student account on this site," Gilliam said via email. "It is different than their athletic ticket account, so they will need to register their account after they click on 'Student Account Login' if they haven't done that in the past."

Students were able to get their ticket at 4 p.m Monday. Tickets will be on sale for the general public at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

With Sing tickets often selling out quickly, Gilliam said people should keep multiple things in mind while preparing to purchase tickets for the event.

"Recently, many of the shows have been sold out within 30-45 minutes," Gilliam said. "Over 13,000 tickets will be sold for the show this year. There are 2,200 seats available for each of the six performances."

As the dates for the event approaches, New Providence, N.J., freshman Owen Forbes said he has been anxiously anticipating the traditional show.

"I check my email all the time and haven't seen anything about how to get tickets for Sing," Forbes said.

San Clemente, Calif., freshman Brynnan Muñoz said she has friends that will be performing in this year's Sing.

"I'm really excited because I'll get to cheer for my friends," Muñoz said. "I don't know what their performance will be like, and I can't wait to cheer them on."

Georgetown freshman Kamri Ishak said she's heard of the tradition before and is curious to see if it will meet her expectations.

"I look forward to Sing because I haven't gone to the event before," Ishak said. "I want to see if it lives up to the hype."

Last year, the Kappa Omega Tau fraternity won the 2022 Sing performance, after the university had paused the show back in 2021 due to the pandemic.

People within the Baylor community can find additional information about Sing's ticket sale in their website. Steps and guidelines to obtain tickets for both students and the public can be found on their website as well.

“Many of the shows have been sold out within 30-45 minutes.”

JOSHUA GILLIAM
| TICKET OFFICE
EMPLOYEE



Grace Everett | Photographer

CELEBRATE Lauren da Silva, The Store's program director, and Madeline Whitmore, graduate assistant for The Store, cut the ribbon at the grand reopening of The Store on Friday at the east wing basement of the Sid Richardson Building.

The Store renovations bring improved facilities for combating food insecurity

SARAH WANG
Staff Writer

After remodeling over winter break, The Store — Baylor's on-campus food pantry — made its debut Friday in the east wing basement of the Sid Richardson Building.

The grand reopening event began with a speech given by Lauren da Silva, The Store's program director, thanking those who have been supportive of The Store and reiterated their goal to address food insecurities on Baylor's campus.

The Store is a basic needs program that works collaboratively on campus and with the local community to help food insecurity among students.

According to da Silva, the need to remodel the space originates from their team's perception that the old store's appearance was not enough to reflect the same standards of excellence in the facilities people see over campus and did not fit in with the rest of campus.

"We felt like it was very important that we create a space that feels like it belongs with the rest of Baylor's campus



Grace Everett | Photographer

FOOD The Store provides a variety of foods, from fruits and vegetables to microwaveable meals.

because we want the students that use the store to feel like they belong," da Silva said. "I think it was one of the ways that we can show them that we see them and that we acknowledge their difficulties and that we care deeply about them."

Madeline Whitmore, graduate assistant for The Store, said the remodeling includes new fridges, freezers, repainted walls and new

flooring. She said the new fridges would hopefully increase capacity and space for more produce and items that can't be placed on the shelves, such as fruits, vegetables, meat and milk.

"We're really hoping that we're going to be able to widen and increase our capacity [to] hopefully meet more needs," Whitmore said.

For the spring semester, da Silva said they aim to provide fresh products to students more consistently and provide food from a variety of different cultures.

"A lot of international students make use of The Store," da Silva said. "We want to be sure to provide options to them that feel familiar so that they can make food for themselves that feels comfortable and like home."

Da Silva also said their concern is that students who are dealing with food insecurity at Baylor are too ashamed to come forward or are not aware The Store exists.

"Food insecurity is here," da Silva said. "We are not immune to it. That's nothing to be ashamed of, and we are here to help."

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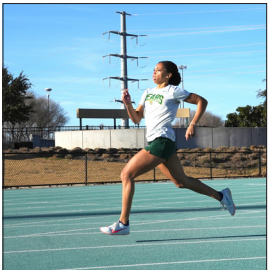
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TRACK PREVIEW

Check out how track and field is taking big strides to succeed this spring
pg. A7



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Former Baylor student, local sports writer reminisce on Griner's student athlete days

MICHAEL HAAG
Sports Editor

It's been well over a month since former Baylor women's basketball star Brittney Griner was freed from Russian imprisonment and able to come home. As those 47 days have gone by in a flurry, it stacks on to the near decade (3,586 days) that has gone by since Griner last played a game with the then-Lady Bears.

A freshman at Baylor in that 2012-13 season would be between 27 and 29 years old now. It's impossible for those currently on campus to have experienced what it was like to be a classmate or bystander to the 6-8 basketball machine that was Griner.

Joe Goodman, co-host of The Bear Den podcast and contributor for OurDailyBears, got to be around Griner firsthand as a student and watched her collegiate career unfold in Waco. Goodman, a Baylor graduate of December 2011, said the eight-time WNBA All-Star forward was "one of the most outgoing and extroverted people I think I've ever run into."

Goodman said Griner had a genuine presence and was a lot like any other student, outside of the fact that she was probably a foot taller than most.

"You always got this vibe that all of the stuff that was surrounding her was never too big," Goodman said. "She was always going to be first and foremost a college student, just like any of the rest of us that were there. To

have fun, have a good time, get a good education and it just so happened that she was one of the greatest basketball players on the planet as well."

Brice Cherry, sports editor at the Waco Tribune-Herald, covered the Baylor women's basketball beat during Griner's time. He said he remembers some growing pains during her early years but said she was always pleasant around the media.

"I remember her — this is probably late in her time at Baylor — coming up to [Baylor Bear Insider] Jerry Hill and me and, of course she just towers over everyone, but certainly towers over us," Cherry said. "And she just sort of put her hands on our heads and was like, 'How are my two favorite sports writers?' I mean that was how she was. You couldn't help but like her."

Whether she was walking around campus or dominating the Ferrell Center, Griner was pretty easy to spot out in a crowd. Cherry said she was popular with the students and that the three-time Big 12 Player of the Year (2011, 2012, 2013) always made plenty of time for people who wanted pictures or autographs.

That's just who she was. The on-court ability of Griner has never been called into question by the Baylor community, as she led the Lady Bears' 2011-12 team to a 40-0 record and the national championship.

"It was almost unfair to watch her play against people," Goodman said. But there are always two sides

to a coin, and while Griner had an incredible four-year run with Baylor, she took the time to add on to her 18 career dunks by slamming down on former head coach Kim Mulkey. Griner — who said she has always been open about being gay — went to ESPN and claimed Mulkey had restricted anyone on the team from talking about their sexuality because it could be a recruiting disadvantage.

It caused a big rift between Griner and Mulkey, and even between Griner and Baylor as an institution. The two-time Associated Press Player of the Year (2012, 2013) has yet to return to campus and has not been honored in any way since her departure.

Goodman said with Griner back home now and Nicki Collen at the helm for the Bears, it would be "the right time to bring [Griner] back into the fold."

"She was a Baylor great. She's a part of our Baylor family. She represented Baylor at the highest levels and did so with grace. She did so with fun and the best smile that you'd ever see," Goodman said. "To see her number retired or just to even see her back on the sideline recognized, that would make me feel like the Baylor family's a little bit more whole. It would be a great step forward."

He added that the public would show out in bunches if an event were to be finalized involving Griner coming back to town. Goodman said he and his generation would make



SHE SHOOTS, SHE SCORES Former Baylor women's basketball star Brittney Griner (42) shoots a free throw during a game in 2010.

sure it's a "sellout."

Cherry said Baylor should try to get Griner back in Waco before the end of this season, especially after all that has unfolded overseas. He also understands that there are folks who don't share much sentiment toward Griner after all that has transpired.

"It would be the perfect opportunity for Baylor to sort of wrap its arms around her and kind of give her a collective hug," Cherry said. "Express how much she means. Now, are there gonna be people that maybe have a little different opinion? Sure, I mean that's the world we live in."

For Goodman, when he looks

back on his college days, he said he doesn't take it lightly that he had the opportunity to witness greatness when Griner was with the Lady Bears.

"It's something that I cherish," Goodman said. "I didn't get to run in the Baylor Line when we were winning the Big 12 in football. I didn't get to experience a national championship in men's basketball like some of the kids did a couple of years ago, but I always get to cherish, I got to see a Heisman [Robert Griffin III] and probably more than anything else, I got to watch Brittney Griner play basketball."



NOT-SO-SOFT LAUNCH Head coach Glenn Moore (middle) talks with his softball team at practice on Jan. 17 at Gettnerman Stadium.

Softball head coach expects stronger season from 'the team with experience'

GIO GENNERO
Sports Writer

Baylor softball is set to begin its season in early February, and the team is setting its sights higher than before.

Last season's group was young with newcomers, and it finished fourth in the Big 12 with a record of 32-34, which wasn't enough to make the postseason. However, after a motivating offseason, the squad is ready to get to work and reach new heights.

"It's what you work for," head coach Glenn Moore said. "You practice during the summer, you lift and condition during the summer, you practice during the fall, bring in recruits and establish your team. We're excited to be out [in the] beautiful weather, beautiful stadium, and I'm excited about this team."

Despite three Big 12 foes being in the top 15 of preseason rankings, Moore said he's not concerned with polls or the fact that his team struggled in the 2022 season. He said the roughness of last season is part of

what makes this year's group dangerous.

"I don't put a whole lot of emphasis on the preseason rankings, especially when you're a young team like we were," Moore said. "We were young last year, but this year we're young with experience. You handle adversity much better if you've been there and you've walked through that fire before. The team with experience is going to know how to handle it a lot better."

Even though the team did not make the cut for the NCAA tournament last year, the Bears ended the season on a high note by winning the National Invitational Softball Championship. Junior catcher Sydney Collazos said the tournament win was a good way for the team to go into the offseason.

"The good thing about our chemistry last year is that it's rolling over to this year," Collazos said. "We were all committed to that tournament and we brought back some hardware and now we know what we're really capable of. We know that we could have done some damage in the NCAA tournament, and we know we can

especially this year."

Moore said there are plenty of tough challenges on the upcoming schedule and that the team will have to stay consistent in practice to overcome the more experienced programs. Moore added that despite last year and preseason opinions, he thinks this Bears team is going to surprise people and turn a lot of heads.

"We have a schedule that will allow us to feel good about ourselves one day and take it on the chin the next day and have to go back to work," Moore said. "This team's going to be very competitive. They're going to stretch people, I think. I really like the culture we have right now. I like the way they fight, the way they look when nobody's looking, and I think that will pay off when we get under the lights on the field. I expect pretty big things out of them."

Baylor will open its season on Feb. 10 with a doubleheader against Southern Utah University and Weber State University. Both contests are part of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Tournament at Eller Media Stadium in Las Vegas.

Ford unveils celebratory championship belts for 2023 track season

MICHAEL HAAG
Sports Editor

Since 2017, college sports teams across the country have found props to highlight positive plays or performances.

The University of Miami's football team started it with the turnover chain. Oregon State University joined the party and brought out a chainsaw for defensive turnovers. Just last season, the University of Texas' baseball squad started slapping a football helmet on a player after he hit a home run.

College sports are no stranger to things like this, and a similar tradition found its home in Waco as the Baylor track and field program unveiled a celebratory championship belt for the 2023 season.

It resembles those waistbands that can be seen on World Wrestling Entertainment duelists. Picture John Cena raising a WWE championship belt in the air and celebrating — except rather than Cena, it's one of head coach Michael Ford and assistant coach Jeff Chakouian's athletes after an impressive track and field meet.

"It was just something to go out there and recognize our student-athletes at the meet," Ford said. "Me and Coach Chak were talking about maybe getting a pin or something and I said, 'What about getting a championship belt?'"

Ford, now in his second year, added that this idea had been swirling since last season. He said he didn't want to try and implement something like that in his first year at the helm because he "was running around like I had a water hose in my face all day."

When the media met with Ford and two members of the track and field team on Thursday, junior sprinter Kavia Francis showed up rocking a school-themed belt that displayed a bear logo on the center of it. Ford



Olivia Havre | Photographer

STEP IT UP Freshman sprinter Allie Scott runs a sprint during practice on Jan. 19 at the Clyde Hart Track & Field Stadium.

Baylor track and field aims to take big strides through new season

GIO GENNERO
Sports Writer

The second year of the Michael Ford era is underway. “I take a breath every day and thank God for the group that we have, and just ask God to give me a lot of wisdom and make sure that we push them,” Baylor track and field head coach Michael Ford said. “Because if we have aspirations of being top 15 in the nation team-wise at the end of the year, indoor and outdoor, then we have to push them a little bit more to get them out of those comfort zones.”

After a strong 2022 season, Baylor track and field looks to build on its success and make a run at some national titles. In the opening weekend at the Corky Classic in Lubbock, the Bears recorded nine national qualifying marks. In the second meet of the season, the MLK Invitational, Baylor finished the single-day gather with multiple gold medals and a new program record.

“The biggest thing that we talked about going into it was just giving good effort and just competing,” Ford said. “As coaches, we see them working out every day and we feel good about certain people, how they look in practice, and then when the lights come on people shy away from it, but we stepped up really well.”

As added motivation and reward for all of the Bears going out to perform at any given meet, the coaching staff has

implemented a new “Performers of the Meet” that comes with a championship style belt.

Junior sprinter Kavia Francis was one of the first to receive this belt after opening up the season with a personal best (23.50) in the 200-meter dash, her time being good enough for fifth in the nation. Francis’ expectations go beyond just her this season, as she said she expects big things from the team as a whole this year and that a top 15 spot is waiting for the team.

“This is a topic that we’ve been talking about...” Francis said. “The team that we have right now is so much better than before. And I’ve been here for three years now. So right now we have a great team, and I think that we can do exceptionally great things this year.”

In his first throw as a Bear, freshman Gary Moore immediately broke the program’s weight throw record with a 63-4 to set the tone for his arrival. The two-time high school state champion said he wants more than just individual success for the season.

“We talked earlier in the season, doing better than we did last year,” Moore said. “I’m kind of new here, so I don’t know the traditions and stuff like that. But I know in high school I had a lot of team success so, I kind of want to bring that here and just contribute as much as I can to us placing well.”

The team continues the fresh season on Jan. 27 with a two-day meet in Fayetteville, Ark., for the Razorback Invitational.

BELTS from Page 6

said at every meet, the coaching staff will get together and pick the most deserving male and female athlete to be given the separate belts.

Francis set a personal record in the 200-meter run (23.36 seconds) at the Corky Classic on Jan. 14, which Ford said was “one of the fastest times in the country so far.” He said she also ran a great leg on the 4x4 00-meter relay team, which helped her become the first female Bear to earn the belt.

“It was a great moment because this is a new tradition here,” Francis said. “I really didn’t expect to get it, but it was a great feeling.”

After receiving the honor from the coaches, Francis said she made sure to “flex” on her teammates and let them know who was the first to receive it.

On the men’s side, Ford issued a belt that sports a green and gold “BU” logo on it to freshman thrower Gary Moore Jr. after he broke a school record on his first throw. Moore didn’t show up to the media availability with the belt, but the newcomer sure did appreciate Ford giving it to him.

“I literally had no idea they even did that,” Moore said. “I was just sitting there. I thought [Coach Ford] was just going to keep on talking. He said they had something special. I was like, ‘Hold up, what do they have planned right now?’ First meet as a freshman, you’re really nervous. To get that, to show your teammates what you got, I was just excited and happy with how I performed.”

Just because an athlete wins the belt doesn’t mean it’s theirs for good. Ford said “it’s definitely possible” for Francis and Moore to defend their title by running faster or throwing farther, but it’s by no means a guarantee.

Ford just wanted something to light a fire under his team. He said he’ll keep tallies on who has the belt and how many times they’ve acquired it, but the important part is that it adds that healthy intrasquad competition.

“I thought it motivated the team, because they were like, ‘Oh man, Coach Ford actually got us something nice,’” Ford said.

Whether it’s that turnover chain, the football helmet or Baylor’s belt, the idea behind these gimmicks is pretty straightforward: further incentivize a group of athletes to reach greater heights.

When asked if she would set another personal record again and hold on to her belt for another week, Francis grinned and said, “Let’s see.”

“Maybe I’ll hand it off to one of my teammates who deserves it,” Francis said. “But if not, I’ll keep it.”



Olivia Havre | Photographer

SIC ‘EM Kavia Francis “flexes” her Championship belt.

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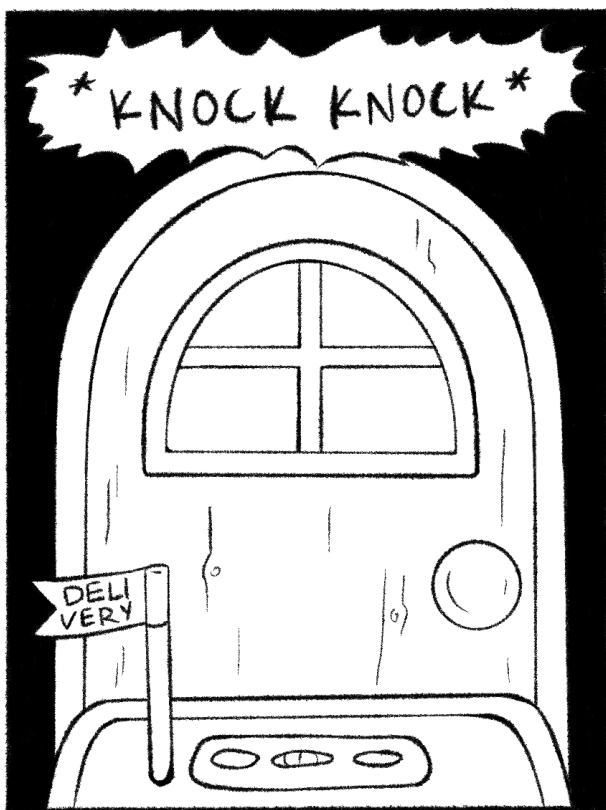
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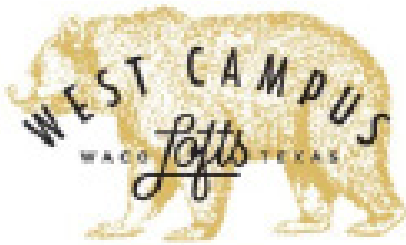
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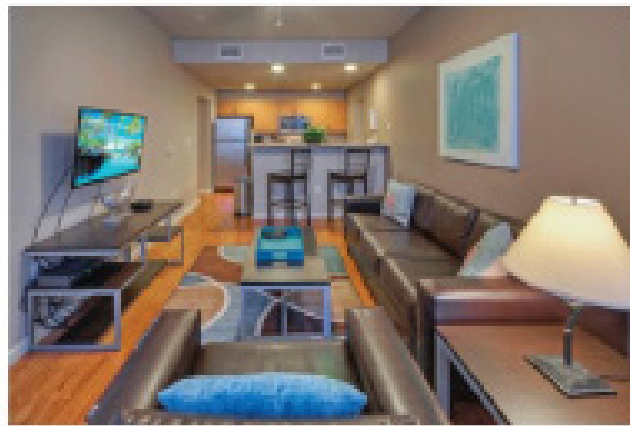
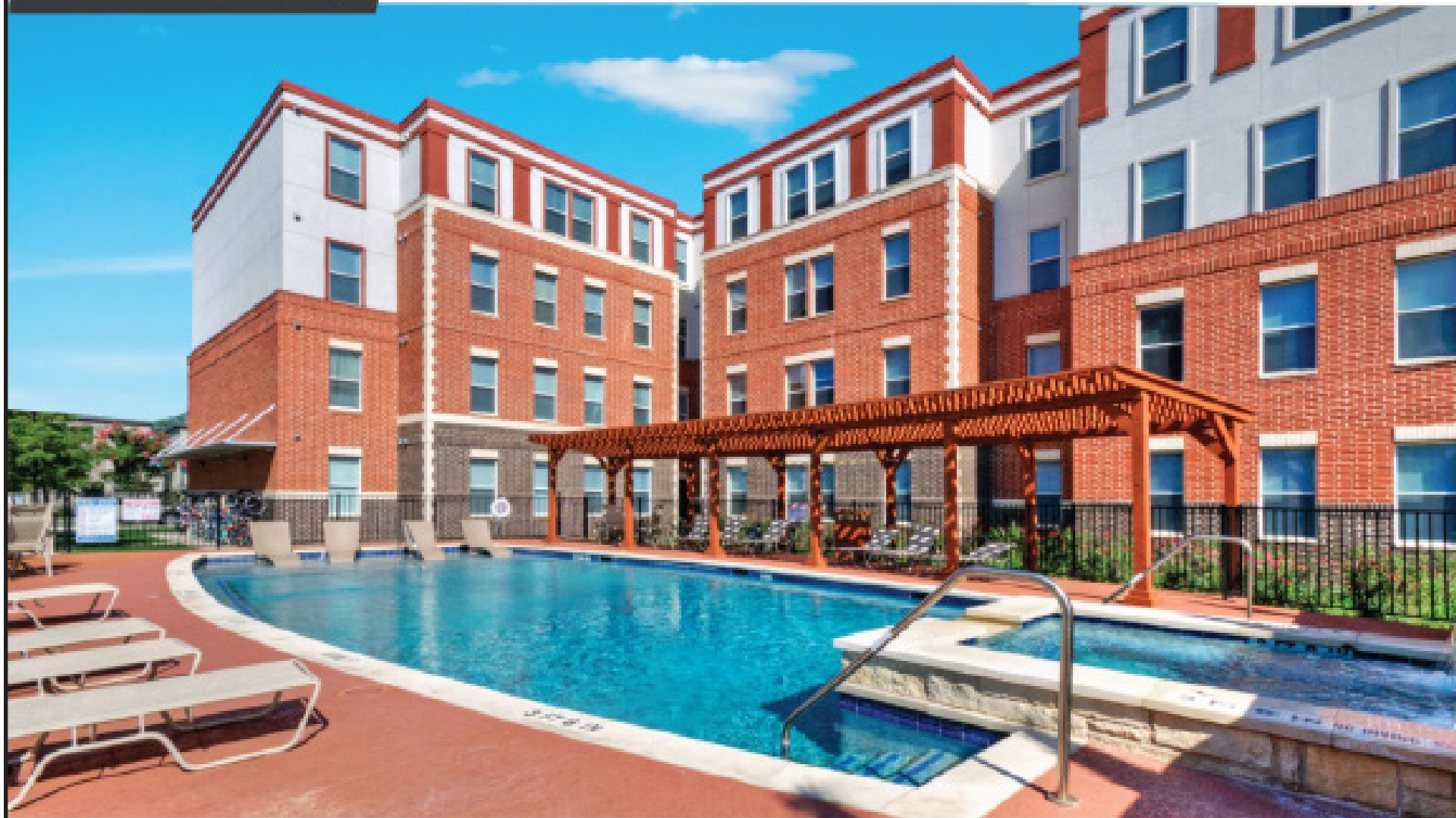
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