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The Distance: A newsletter from the Carletonian | May 9

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Welcome to the seventh installment of *The Distance*, brought to you by the *Carletonian*, Carleton's first, only, and positively best student-run newspaper. This week, we've got stats about the **Class of 2022 major declarations** (spoiler: the breakdown is a little different than usual!), and we're talking to members of the **incoming class of 2024** about what's in the balance as they make decisions about the coming Fall. Then, we have a few Viewpoints—one about progressivism, and a couple about **what Carleton feels like online**.

Got thoughts? Write a Viewpoint! Send ideas, drafts, manifestos, et cetera to (kwaits@carleton.edu & gilbertsonk@carleton.edu).

Happy reading,
Sam and Katy, Editors-in-Chief

Meet our team

Each week, we'll introduce you to a new handful of *Carletonian* all-stars. But we're starting to run out of people to introduce, so if you want to get involved... drop us a line! :)



**Aldo
Polanco '23**

Staff Writer

Hey friends! I'm Aldo (he/him/his), and I'm a first-year prospective computer science major. I was born and raised in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. As a relatively new addition to The *Carletonian* team, I enjoy writing about whatever is bothering me that week for the Viewpoint section. Apart from the paper, I enjoy playing video games and watching every single reality tv show ever made, especially Survivor.

[check out his work >>](#)

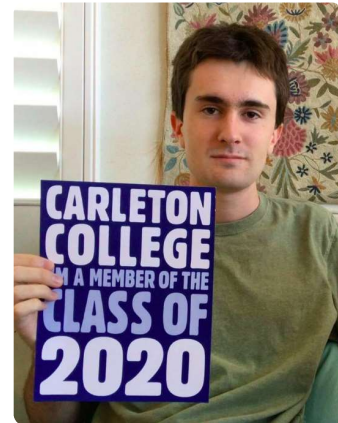


**Ellie
Zimmerman '21**

Staff Writer

Hi! I'm Ellie (she/her), a junior religion major from the DC area. I've been writing for the *Carletonian* for two terms now and loved every minute of it! On campus I can usually be found on the track with my team or goofing around in the KRLX studio. Off campus I can usually be found looking wistfully out the window with a Mary Oliver book in my lap.

[check out her work >>](#)



**Nathaniel
MacArthur-
Warner '20**

Web Editor

Hey, I'm Nathaniel! I've been managing the website for the *Carletonian* for around a year now. It's been a fun and rewarding way to use software engineering to support campus journalism. I didn't imagine how important the website would eventually become. Since coming home, I've spent a lot of time with my family, and going on long runs. Other than that, I try to stay connected with friends, such as I can.

[check out his work \(it's](#)

This past week

First, here's the latest in News:

Class of 2024 grapples with an unpredictable college start

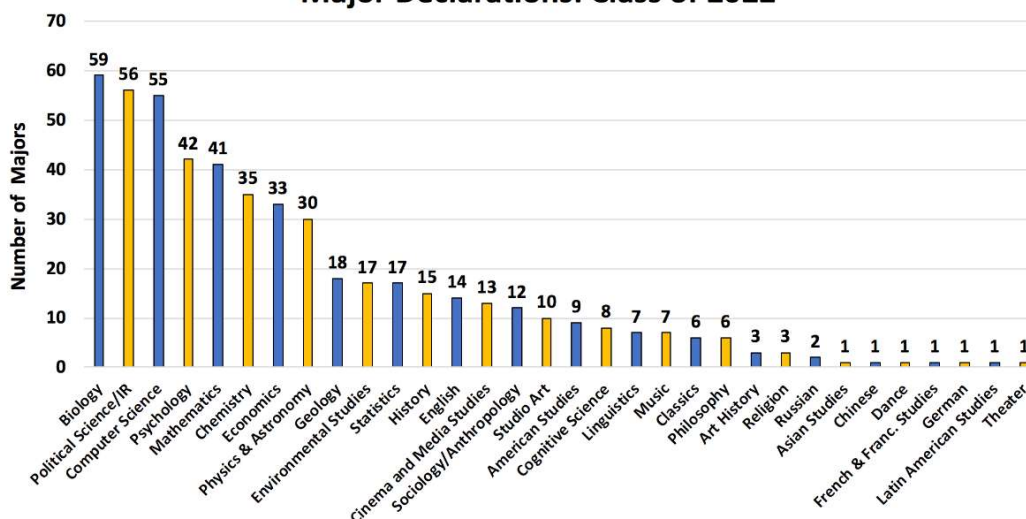
Ellie Zimmerman

Carleton's Class of 2024 made their **final college-choice decisions** on Friday, May 1 not knowing whether their first year will be anything like they expected. Their senior years have been stripped of the rituals and freedoms that they looked forward to as a grand finale to their high school experience. They are starting their college careers in a haze of uncertainty, leaving some to **reconsider whether to start at Carleton this fall at all.**

That choice is especially dire for international students like Tan Zhou '24, who grew up in China before coming to the U.S. to spend her last year of high school in California. Even with the rest of her classes moved online, she has stayed in California, citing concerns that if she goes home, she will **not be able to come back** should Carleton's campus open in the fall.

[Read the full article >>](#)

Major Declarations: Class of 2022



Class of 2022 declare majors from afar

Amelia Broman

Last month, 486 members of the Class of 2022 declared their majors. The annual rite of passage had a different tone this year, with no Major Declaration Celebration being held in Sayles or the Great Hall. Instead, Alumni Relations designed a virtual celebration, held on Carleton's Instagram page on Friday, May 8. According to a Facebook post about the event, students were encouraged to post an Instagram story with a photo of themselves, adding a custom “**I declared at Carleton**” frame and a “pin” sticker corresponding to their major.

Members of the Class of 2022 represent 32 different majors. **Biology** was the most popular choice, with 59 students declaring that major. **Political Science/IR, Computer Science, Psychology and Mathematics** rounded out the top five. Those five majors, along with Economics, have consistently rotated through the top five spots in past years, according to data for the Class of 2017 onwards.

[Read the full article >>](#)

Here's what's on students' minds:

Viewpoint

Confirming my humanity: Carleton's campus benefits

Katy Gilbertson

For the past month or so, every time I've tried to log into the back end of our *Carletonian* website, WordPress has asked me to complete an “I'm not a robot” task. But it's not just

any “I’m not a robot” task. It’s the arduous kind. Grueling. The question reads: “Select all pictures which contain an airplane.” Or a boat, or a car, or an umbrella, or whatever. Then I have to scroll through two pages, each of nine images, to identify the correct ones.

Such a task reveals just how difficult visual perception is. These pictures are blurry, pixelated. And they make weird use of perspective. Sometimes it’ll be just the very outer edge of the wing of an airplane. How am I supposed to know that that’s a plane? They really are trying to confuse these robots.

The task also leads one, if one is a dutiful liberal-arts student, to question the conceptual boundaries of these things. For instance, is an airplane wing really an airplane itself? Does a semi truck count as a car? Is a motorcycle just a glorified bicycle?

[Read the full article >>](#)

Internal moderation in movement politics fails to achieve goals

Jacob Isaacs

For almost four years now, I have been a member of Northfield’s chapter of ISAIAH, a progressive faith-based community organizing group that seeks to build power across Minnesota. Many in the community are likely familiar with the name ISAIAH, it being one of the most prominent political organizations in the state and perhaps the largest in Rice County. In general, the causes ISAIAH supports are high-profile issues central to left-wing legislative and social agendas in all the state. Offering driver’s licences for all, expanding Minnesota health care, providing paid family leave to all residents, and using 100 percent renewable energy by 2040 are current goals expounded, the kind of talking points likely to get progressives invested in ISAIAH’s politics.

[Read the full article >>](#)

"What I did not expect several years ago, dismayingly, was for one of the largest perennial threats to community organizing with groups like ISAIAH to come from individuals within the very same organizations."

College isn’t about learning, and other reasons why online classes are not the best

Aldo Polanco

“The term is pass fail, I should totally take that 5-days-a-week 1a lab science”

Oh boy, do I regret thinking this. Five weeks into my physics class, I am ready to say that I should not have taken it.

See, I, following the vision of the liberal arts ideal, thought I would finally branch out. Finally something that isn't math, computer science or political science. So I settled on physics. Different, but not too different, while also fulfilling my graduation requirements. If I didn't do as well, it's okay, it's a S/Cr/NC term. So I registered for it, choosing to ignore my friend when he said “You do realize you still have to do the work, regardless of the fact that it's pass/fail”.

[Read the full article >>](#)

And last, a flowery Arb Notes!



Arb Notes: Ephemeral wildflowers

Ryan Gilbert for the [Cole Student Naturalists](#)

While many of us are away from Carleton for this Spring term, one highlight of any Spring in the arboretum is spotting Spring ephemerals while walking in the woods. True to their name, **Spring ephemeral wildflowers** bloom for a short period of time in the Spring and then fade away. In early Spring, before deciduous trees have completely regrown their leaves, these ephemerals have the chance to capture light which might not otherwise make its way through the forest canopy.

[Read the full article >>](#)

That's all for now! Have a great weekend.

- Sam & Katy

"I definitely don't aspire to writing that's 'timeless,' whatever that means."

- Author Sally Rooney

"If you're on Twitter, what you're saying is, 'I'm important enough for you to care what I think.'"

- Donald Glover

Being ghosted by Dave since 1877

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Class of 2024 grapples with an unpredictable college start

BY [ELLIE ZIMMERMAN](#) ON MAY 9, 2020

Carleton's Class of 2024 made their final college-choice decisions on Friday, May 1 not knowing whether their first year will be anything like they expected. Their senior years have been stripped of the rituals and freedoms that they looked forward to as a grand finale to their high school experience. They are starting their college careers in a haze of uncertainty, leaving some to reconsider whether to start at Carleton this fall at all.

That choice is especially dire for international students like Tan Zhou '24, who grew up in China before coming to the U.S. to spend her last year of high school in California. Even with the rest of her classes moved online, she has stayed in California, citing concerns that if she goes home, she will not be able to come back should Carleton's campus open in the fall.

Zhou said she isn't sure of the appeal of starting college online. "If it's online, I will probably choose to take a gap year because I feel like the experience is different. I just want to have a normal freshman year," she said.

The Admissions office has been relaying the college's announcements to admitted students, but Carleton's decisions have not been conclusive enough for students like Zhou, who are on the fence, to choose to defer enrollment.

Senior Assistant Dean of Admissions Holly Buttrey said that as of now, the Class of 2024 is no bigger or smaller than would be expected under normal circumstances. She noted that she does not expect an especially high number of admitted students to defer, because for high school seniors whose lives have been disrupted so much already, "making a decision—saying, 'I am committed to this school'—has to feel kind of nice when you have so few firm decisions that you can make."

For Zhou and her classmates, the question remains as to how to use a gap year if very few places are hiring and travel is heavily restricted. Chris O'Mara '24 said that while there has been

considerable buzz among his fellow seniors over whether to delay their first year of college, he plans to attend classes regardless of whether they are online or in person.

“If Carleton is online in the fall it would be because the pandemic is bad enough that a lot of other things that I would want to do with a gap year would not really be available to me,” O’Mara said. His current thinking is that online school, as much of a compromised experience as that would be, is better than doing nothing.

O’Mara added that he feels less ready to make the transition to college than before the coronavirus pandemic upended his plans. With high school rites of passage like prom and graduation cancelled, he said he feels like he is missing the closure that comes with finishing high school as he had always envisioned it. Despite his classmates’ and school’s best efforts to organize online meetups, there are some things that are unique to this time of life that he just won’t get back.

“Before, I was excited to have this capstone on my high school experience and then move forward and meet new people. But now I’m less excited. Not that I think it’s going to be actually worse, but I’m more nostalgic and longing to have high school back rather than move onto college,” O’Mara said. Given the choice, he would rather spend more time with friends from his Washington, D.C. high school than move on to a new life chapter so suddenly.

“Yeah, it’s a disaster,” Zhou said of the abrupt end to her senior year and the complications it added to her first year in the United States. She said she has been trying to keep up with some of her hobbies online, like tutoring kids and web design, but it’s not exactly what she had in mind when she signed up for a year abroad.

Both O’Mara and Zhou expressed that all they really wanted was a “normal college experience.” If that means taking a year off before starting at Carleton, taking their first term online, or coming to a campus with strict social distancing requirements, it seems to them that “normal” isn’t really on the table.

Published in [News](#)



Ellie Zimmerman

Features & Arts Editor



Class of 2022 declare majors from afar

BY [AMELIA BROMAN](#) ON MAY 9, 2020

Last month, 486 members of the Class of 2022 declared their majors. The annual rite of passage had a different tone this year, with no Major Declaration Celebration being held in Sayles or the Great Hall.

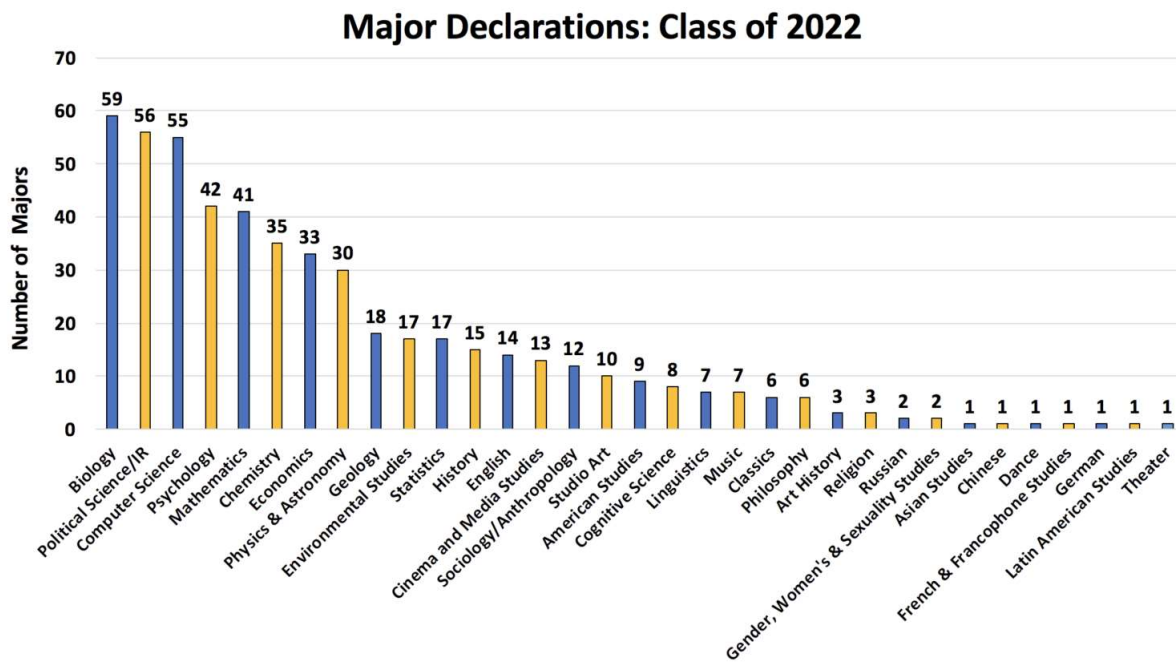
Instead, Alumni Relations designed a virtual celebration, held on Carleton's Instagram page on Friday, May 8. According to a Facebook post about the event, students were encouraged to post an Instagram story with a photo of themselves, adding a custom "I declared at Carleton" frame and a "pin" sticker corresponding to their major.

In the weeks after major declaration, alumni also made videos for sophomores to congratulate them from afar, with the initiative publicized on the Alumni Digital Community website.

The declaration period began during the last week of March and lasted until April 12, the second Tuesday of Spring term. Some off-phase members of the Class of 2022 declared their majors earlier this year or last year, during their sixth term.

Members of the Class of 2022 represent 33 different majors—31 of Carleton's 33 major offerings, plus two special majors (in Dance and Chinese, typically offered only as minors). Biology was the most popular choice, with 59 students declaring that major. Political Science/International Relations, Computer Science, Psychology and Mathematics rounded out the top five.

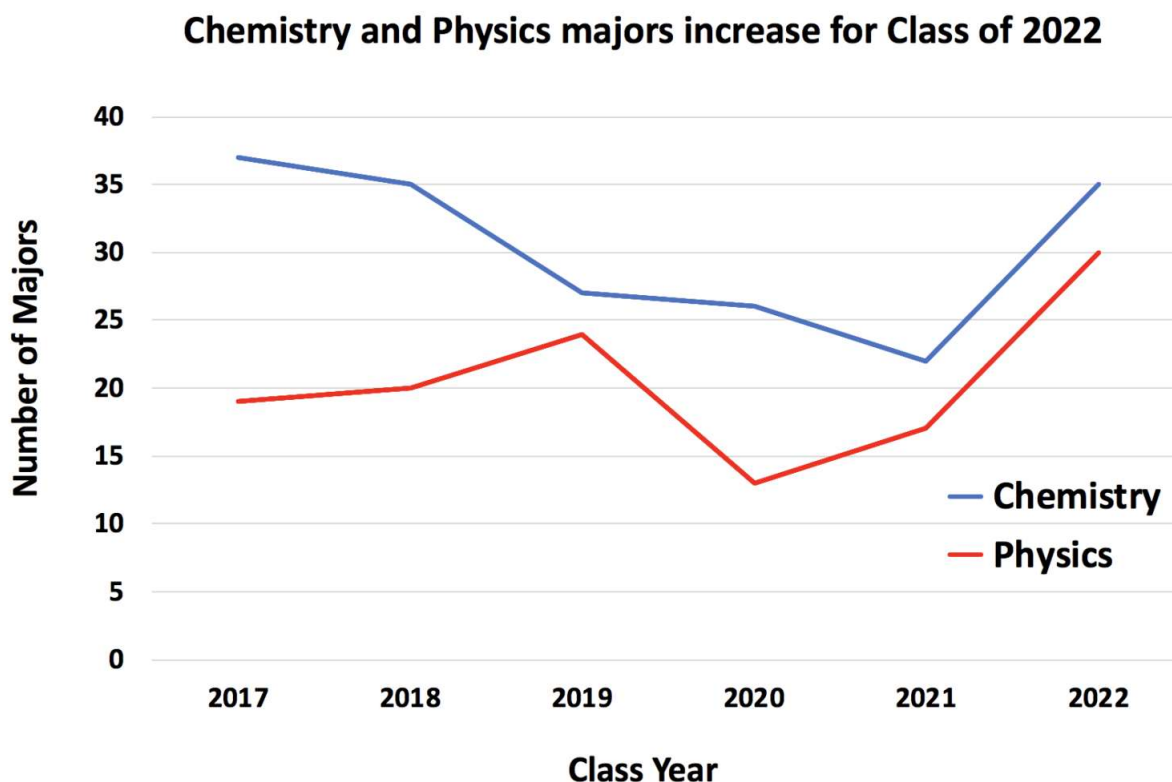
Those five majors, along with Economics, have consistently rotated through the top five spots in past years, according to data for the Class of 2017 onwards.



Several departments saw noticeable decreases in majors this year. The Religion department, for example, currently lists only three majors in the sophomore class. The department has typically averaged almost 11 majors per year for the Classes of 2017 through 2021.

English also saw a decrease, with 14 declarations from the Class of 2022, compared to an average of about 25 majors per year for the Classes of 2017 through 2021. History saw similar numbers, with 15 declarations this year compared to an average of 24 for the five previous years.

Meanwhile, the Physics department saw an increase in declarations this year. It is reporting 30 majors in the Class of 2022—a sizable jump compared to its average of about 19 majors per class for the past five years.



Professor Marty Baylor, chair of the Physics department, said she could not pinpoint a specific reason for the increase. However, she hopes that the department’s efforts “to build a diverse and inclusive environment” are paying off.

Baylor also cited the “new building bump” as potentially playing a role. The Physics department moved this year into Evelyn Anderson Hall, Carleton’s new integrated science facility, which opened in Fall 2019. Baylor noted that St. Olaf College’s physics department saw a significant increase in majors after the school opened a new science building in 2008.

The Chemistry department—which is also housed in Anderson—posted strong numbers this year as well with 35 majors, making it the sixth most popular major for the sophomore class. However, the Geology department, the final department located in Anderson, did not mark an increase.

Professor Daniela Kohen, chair of the Chemistry department, said that this year’s declarations fall within the department’s usual range, so she does not think the increase is due to any specific factor.

Some departments could gain additional majors from the Class of 2022 as students add a second major. While some sophomores have already declared a double major, it is also common for students to add a second major later on.

Sophomores choosing a major this spring had a lot on their minds, from navigating online classes to considering how the economic effects of COVID-19 might shape the economy they will graduate into. Maya Rogers '22 spoke to the *Carletonian* about how COVID-19 pandemic shaped her thinking during her major decision.

Rogers declared Psychology, a choice that she settled on early in her sophomore year. She has been interested in a career in public health for several years, but now suspects that more students will pursue that field in the wake of COVID-19.

“Because of that, I really need to be on top of figuring out what I want to do, specifically for after graduation,” Rogers said. For her, that will mean choosing her courses more carefully and applying for more extracurricular opportunities.

Rogers felt confident in choosing Psychology because it can lead to careers in a wide variety of fields, from non-profit work to marketing, she said. “With all the uncertainty going on in the world, it’s nice to know there’s more than one path,” said Rogers.

The prospect of ongoing instability due to COVID-19 has also solidified Roger’s decision to pursue graduate school after Carleton.

“By the time I graduate, the economy definitely will not be recovered,” she said. “So going to graduate school makes the most sense, in that I don’t have to get out in the world in the same way.”

CORRECTION: An earlier version of this article misreported that Class of 2022 represented 30 of Carleton’s 33 majors, which, due to a campus directory error, did not account for the two sophomores who declared Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies. In a May 9 edit, we updated the article and graph to include WGST majors, bringing the total to 31.

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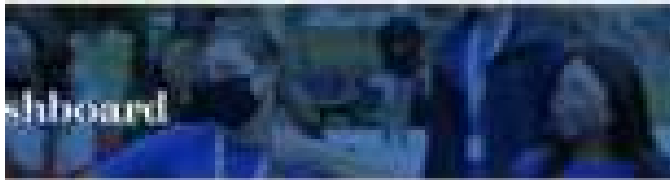


Amelia Broman

Editor-in-chief.

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Level 3: High

Confirmed College-campus based COVID-19 cases, action levels, and reports are classified into three levels.

14-Day Infection

Rate of lab-confirmed cases of faculty and staff who are on campus over the 14-day period (through data).

Campus COVID-19 action level increased to “Level 3: High”

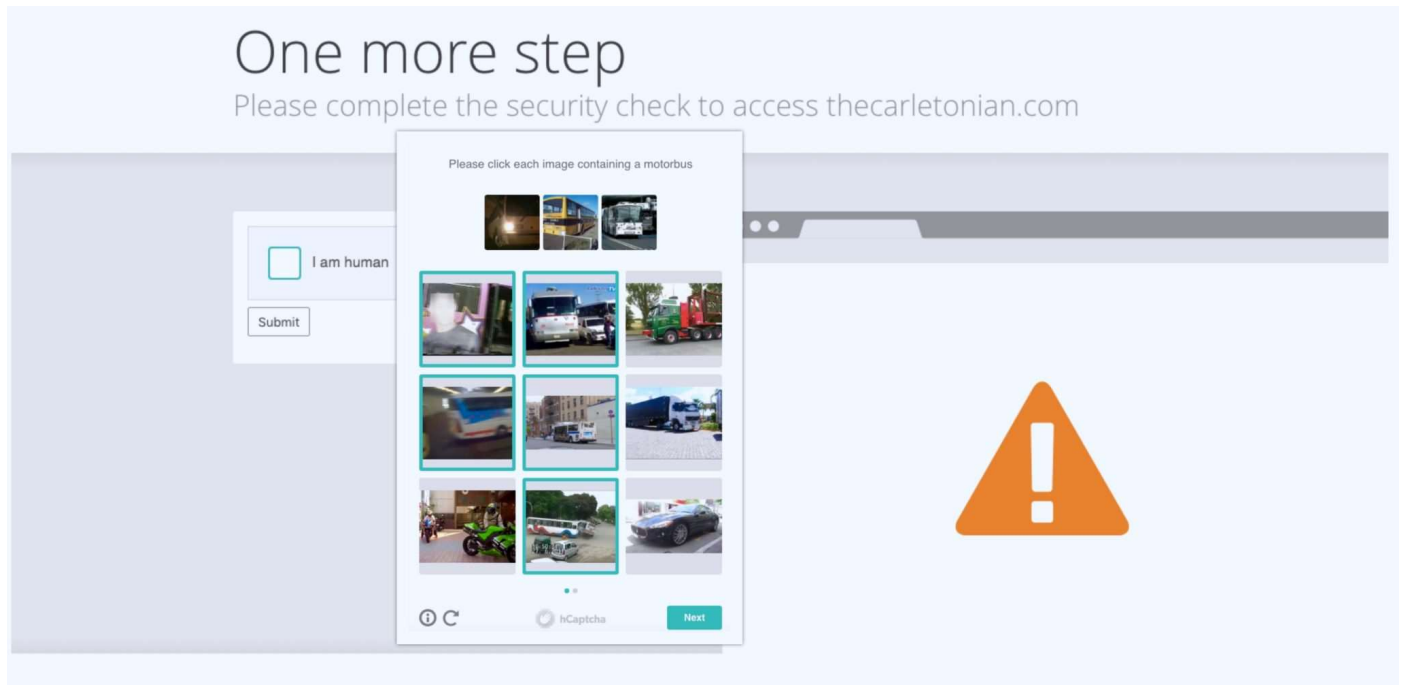


After Biden's win, political divides persist on campus

Carleton presidential search committee members announced



Sunrise Carleton marches for climate justice



Confirming my humanity: Carleton's campus benefits

BY [KATY GILBERTSON](#) ON MAY 9, 2020

For the past month or so, every time I've tried to log into the back end of our *Carletonian* website, WordPress has asked me to complete an "I'm not a robot" task. But it's not just any "I'm not a robot" task. It's the arduous kind. Grueling. The question reads: "Select all pictures which contain an airplane." Or a boat, or a car, or an umbrella, or whatever. Then I have to scroll through two pages, each of nine images, to identify the correct ones.

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The task also leads one, if one is a dutiful liberal-arts student, to question the conceptual boundaries of these things. For instance, is an airplane wing really an airplane itself? Does a semi truck count as a car? Is a motorcycle just a glorified bicycle? These are the sorts of questions

that come to mind as I'm subjected to this torture, which occurs not once a month, not once a day, but approximately every 10 minutes as I try to upload articles onto our website. And sometimes I fail at the task! I get too many wrong (because I'm going too fast, not because I don't know what umbrellas are, I promise), and then the site makes me examine a whole new set of eighteen images. I'm getting worked up just thinking about it!

So I spoke to our web editor. He explained that it was a "cloudflare procedure" that prevents hackers from getting into the site. Because you're curious, I'll tell you that the *Carletonian* website is subject to some 200 hack attempts a day. Yikes. Definitely makes the whole defense-against-robots thing seem more reasonable. (And I admit, we're flattered!)

He also explained that this protective measure is set to populate when a user is outside of Carleton's radius. That explained why this had been, maddeningly, happening to only me, while our managing editor, still living in her room on campus, had been accessing the site humanity-check-free.

What's funny about that is that I live in Northfield. Or, just outside of Northfield, past the highway (don't tell). In the scheme of things, I'm really quite close to campus. And I don't think any of our hack attempts had been from Northfield-based robots. But alas, it's a fine rule, because until this point, I'd only ever logged into the admin site while nestled squarely within Carleton's lush green (or muddy, snow-ish white) campus.

All in all, there are a lot of silent, subtle benefits of being on campus. There's the absence of this cloudflare procedure. There's Duo. There's the trusty Wi-Fi, which those of us on campus this Fall were sorely reminded to be grateful for when, for several hours on the last day of finals, the whole campus' Internet went down. It was hilariously terrible timing, and the whole thing felt apocalyptic (perhaps foreshadowing?). I remember being in the Libe—one of the only sources of Internet, via ethernet cords—and pacing around like a vulture, finally spotting an open computer, only to be intercepted by some guy who'd been beelining at a slightly quicker pace.

When I spent a term abroad, I remember frequently encountering the "*Off-campus Access to Library Resources*" login page, a gentle reminder that though I was still a Carleton student, I wasn't quite part of the whole thing. Or I was, but it was going to require a tiny bit more effort—an iota, a symbolic few clicks—to participate in it. I think I've even seen that page in Blue Monday. Blue Monday is practically a Carleton site itself—especially at certain times in the afternoon, or on the weekends—but Carleton is so *Carleton* that even being in downtown Northfield is often talked about as an "escape."

As to other under-the-radar perks of campus life, there's the sheer convenience of everything. Even the longest trek—from the townhouses to Farm, maybe—takes maybe 15 minutes on foot. There's the bookstore right in Sayles, for when you run out of toothpaste or want to buy an expensive impulse snack. In the “real world,” errands take some planning; at Carleton, it's so convenient you hardly notice how convenient it all is. Not to mention all the free stuff—free condoms, free common-time lunches, free coffee from any number of department lounges. (Of course, these things aren't exactly “free” given the \$70k tuition, but they're undeniably *convenient*.)

There are the custodial services in our dorms and our gathering spaces. Talk to most any Northfield-option student and they'll mention what an adjustment it is to keep up with household chores. It's easy, living in the dorms, to notice the bothersome things, like the decorative thermostats, or the thin walls—but it's equally easy to ignore the pleasant things, like having consistently clean carpets and sinks.

And then, beyond these taken-for-granted details of campus life, there are also myriad ways in which normal, standard ways of Carleton life are actually wonderful, and wonderfully campus-specific. Over the course of this remote Spring, as I come to grips with the fact that I'm never going to have another term on campus, I've been doing plenty of reflecting about these sorts of things.

On campus, I often feel a baseline sense of possibility. There are always new people to meet, familiar people to get to know better, people to change your mind about, people to get excited about. Here at home, my social landscape is not quite so compelling (no offense to my loving family).

And while there are interesting people in my online classes, I can't sit next to them on Zoom, and I can't make post-class conversation as we gather our things. Sending a Slack message to someone you barely know doesn't exactly have the suave, casual feel of hitting them with a classic “1As, amirite?” as you enter the room.

There are also resources—offices and facilities that help make ideas possible. One of my favorite recent Carleton moments happened this past term, when I complained about how my ResLife shelf was ever-so-slightly too big to fit on top of my dresser, and my friend who worked in Boliou said I should just come by sometime and he'd help me build a shelf. And then I did that! And walked across the Bald Spot at eleven p.m. carrying a new shelf, perfectly designed to fit my dresser!

Then there's the fun, dynamic nature of campus life. There were the Saturdays when I woke up with big plans to get ahead on readings but then ran into friends on the Bald Spot and instead spent three hours with the same page open in front of me, my highlighter drying up as I kept tricking myself into thinking I was about to get back into reading. There were the Sundays when I stayed at Dacie's well past brunch, and worked on the porch to the soundtrack of the Gales practicing inside.

In my quarantined life at home, I've not only been missing the great stuff—Spring Concert and fiery class discussion and late nights at Sayles—but also the weird stuff. I think the awkwardness of Carleton, bemoaned while we're on campus together, is actually another one of these hidden joys. I don't know, maybe I'm being too romantic about it all, but I'm a senior, so forgive me.

I like the hilarious game of calculating exactly when I should glance up and say hi when I'm crossing paths with an acquaintance. And the weighty decision about whether to go for a wave, a head nod, or a stop-to-chat. Fortunately, Zoom provides plenty of opportunity for awkwardness, but there's something less organic about it. We're all just experiencing our own discrete awkwardnesses, in our separate locations. There's less of a buzz. I want to *share* the awkwardness with you.

When I worked at the Carleton bookstore my first year, I always had the most fun on busy days, when I'd interact with a bunch of Carls, awkward and otherwise. They'd often apologize and act flustered when they messed something up with the then-novel chip reader. It was no problem at all for me! But I liked how concerned they all were. (There was also one time when a guy came up to the counter, wearing earbuds and saying no words to me at all, in order to *purchase another pair of earbuds*.)

And of course there are the endless opportunities to run into exes, or ex-loud-neighbors, or people you had an unsavory group-project experience with. There are the inevitable weird conversations, or more likely, those brief-eye-contact-followed-by-never-looking-their-direction-again dynamics. On Zoom, you never have to worry about eye contact, because there is none. Which might have its advantages, but I think it's mostly boring.

And of course, campus provides the many more-pleasant opportunities I already mentioned. The random run-ins, the joyful catchings-up, the late nights in dorm lounges, the extended office-hour chats.

The online world offers some ways for us to mimic these elements of Carleton life. Profs can hold Zoom office hours. We can set up group FaceTimes with friends. We can even send virtual Friday Flowers via email. I can still spend weeknights up late with my co-editors, putting all the last pieces together for publication and asking each other for the hundredth time whether or not we capitalize the names of seasons. Only now it's over the phone, not in the office we've lovingly decorated, and it's for the creation of our newsletter, which is beautiful in its own right but doesn't quite match the feeling of fresh Friday-morning newsprint.

So yes—as Stevie P said in his heartwarming Twitter video—we may be online, but we're still Carleton. I agree. But we're Carleton Lite, or something like that. A little less passionate, a little less spontaneous, a little less weird. Carleton for Robots, maybe.

Published in [Viewpoint](#)

covid



Katy Gilbertson

Editor-in-chief emerita.

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Internal moderation in movement politics fails to achieve goals

BY [JACOB ISAACS](#) ON MAY 9, 2020

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Many in the community are likely familiar with the name ISAIAH, it being one of the most prominent political organizations in the state and perhaps the largest in Rice County. In general, the causes ISAIAH supports are high-profile issues central to left-wing legislative and social agendas in all the state.

Offering driver's licences for all, expanding Minnesota health care, providing paid family leave to all residents, and using 100 percent renewable energy by 2040 are current goals expounded, the kind of talking points likely to get progressives invested in ISAIAH's politics.

These issues, of course, expand far beyond ISAIAH: many of these policies constitute substantial parts of left-wing platforms nationwide and worldwide. It may come as some little surprise, then, that even these generally conventional progressive ideas face challenges from outside the organization, in the constant opposition of both large-scale institutions and resistant individuals to such improvements of welfare.

What I did not expect several years ago, dismayingly, was for one of the largest perennial threats to community organizing with groups like ISAIAH to come from individuals within the very same organizations.

I say none of this to scapegoat ISAIAH, an organization of which I am proud to be a part. Rather, I hope to target the mechanisms of reactionary infighting that can often challenge agendas within these groups.

I am not a Stalinist; I would not "purge" any of these members, in a literal or idiomatic sense, but addressing and compensating for their presence requires at least as much effort, unprecedented for me, as does the broader, external fight for justice.

In meetings of a working group to address Northfield's lack of affordable housing, we raised the possibility of increasing the number of allowed rentals in the city. Individuals then suggested that pursuing this issue would alienate [wealthy] homeowners from other, related progressive causes. To which I say: if we can't touch certain issues, how can we achieve justice?

Perhaps policy requires compromise in the end, but to compromise demands before negotiating them at all is to deliver a dead letter. In a world where injustice festers on the roots of ambivalence, meeting ourselves halfway at least quarters what we will accomplish once we begin policy work. You don't start haggling low just to get a better shot at closing a deal.

This issue extends far beyond movement progressives to, unsurprisingly, the very people appointed to ameliorate social ills in our communities. At a meeting of city notaries convened specifically to address affordable housing, a city official (who has since retired) expressed dismay that increasing rentals could "change the character of Northfield" to become something "like Minneapolis."

Fears of gentrification are of course valid, but not so applicable in an affluent college town that is roughly ninety percent white.

Time and again people, city employees and volunteer organizers alike, have voiced tepid fears like this, that the very work they have set out to do, for whatever reason, contradicts a set of alien principles.

This spring, in preparation for fall 2020, a team of core Northfield ISAIAH members, of whom I am a part, met to discuss the State Senate election this November. A critical race in retaking the state legislature for the DFL, our district offers a choice between the left-wing, working class Davin Sokup on the one hand, and veteran and moderate (read: conservative) Jon Olson.

Perhaps some may say I am defaming Olson by calling him a conservative, a word he would likely not use to define himself. Yet time and again his platform stresses common ground, compromising with Republicans to find some medium of policy that works for everyone.

The problem with this perspective is, given the above context, I hope, clear. In a year as critical as any ever, with the already-present threats of nationalism, state-sanctioned violence, and climate change surrounding us, Olson, by his own admission, draws on his military experience, the perspectives of an irredeemable law enforcement sector, and market "solutions" to climate change.

He seeks, in other words, to use structures we already know do not work to reform, rather than replace, their most failed parts.

It is perhaps for these reasons that Olson has proved so popular among ostensibly progressive Northfield residents. In ISAIH's preliminary, unofficial vote to endorse one of the two candidates, Olson came out with over 60 percent of the total.

This, despite lacking satisfactory answers to many questions, including those about climate justice, immigration justice, and LGBTQ+ rights. Many of those affected by these questions in our community, one should note, were not present at the ISAIH meeting.

Indeed, among those who take initiative in local politics, the most involved tend to be the most privileged rather than the most implicated. The people at these meetings, like the people at city affordable housing task force meetings I have attended, are nearly entirely white, most of them wealthy—I'm sorry, they would say "upper middle class"—homeowners, to whom politics is a hobby rather than a necessity.

Without adequate representation of the communities these "progressives" intend to support—or think they intend to—their bullheaded milquetoast politics accomplish little. The point of organizing is not to elect someone amenable to change, but to hold those in power accountable, to shake the system's foundation loose.

If we ignore structural reform, as many of these internal dissenting (or perhaps assenting) voices allege we should, our years of work will fail to support our whole community as, I believe, is the goal of this political process.

The grave concerns I and others have raised, not only about Olson but the entire wave of reactionary thinking he represents—have gone largely unheeded in the ears of this majority. If Olson is more "electable" or whatever impossible litmus term people use, if policies of conservative moderation rather than radical emendation hold sway, then we will achieve less even than we expect to compromise for.

Like Joe Biden, Olson's ascendancy reflects a certain comfort with the world as it is, a privilege to accept that things do not need to get better, not for good, but only return to a state of supposed normalcy, a broken, rigged system functioning as lopsidedly as it always has. This is not justice, but the perpetuation of injustice.

If the goal of organizing is to hold this justice in the majority, we need not compromise, or need not expect to. Let us pick our battles rather than concede them before they even begin.

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College isn't about learning, and other reasons why online classes are not the best

BY [ALDO POLANCO](#) ON MAY 9, 2020

“The term is pass fail, I should totally take that 5-days-a-week 1A lab science”

Oh boy, do I regret thinking this. Five weeks into my physics class, I am ready to say that I should not have taken it.

See, I, following the vision of the liberal arts ideal, thought I would finally branch out. Finally something that isn't math, computer science or political science. So I settled on physics. Different, but not too different, while also fulfilling my graduation requirements. If I didn't do as well, it's okay, it's a S/Cr/NC term. So I registered for it, choosing to ignore my friend when he said “You do realize you still have to do the work, regardless of the fact that it's pass/fail?”

After five four-hour do-it-yourself type labs, and numerous hours on Panopto watching lectures, I've realized: I am not enjoying any part of it. While my professor is one of the most approachable, reasonable and even entertaining instructors I've had, the material is just not going through the same learning process as in-person classes.

I am very sure that I was not unique in my line of thinking that when I chose my classes this term. I am also very sure that I am not the only one struggling in said classes. If this is the case, then I feel obliged to tell you: *This term is not representative of your intelligence or work ethic. It is more likely the case that you are struggling because the class is online.*

On the flip side, it doesn't count if you are “exploring” a new field this term. My terrible experience so far in my physics class is not representative of what a true physics class at Carleton is like. As such, I can't be a hypocrite, and say that I'm not performing at my best, when the class and professor are likely not doing so either. This is especially bad for those in intro-level classes. I have a bad foundation and bad experience so far in physics. This does not lend itself for the opposite to happen should I choose to continue taking classes in the department.

Online classes are not college. They're purely academic proceedings. When they're paired with none of the significantly more important aspects of being a student, motivation dies. No motivation leads to poor work ethic, and the ease of access of cheating resources sure does not help. Clubs, friendships, relationships and community-living are not *a part* of college, they *are* college.

I will not even bother discussing learning environments, and how online classes do not permit for diverse learning methods to take place. This is already an obvious fact. It's also an obvious fact that most are not enjoying them. Still, we have no one to blame for them, and that just makes it that much harder.

Truth is, college is barely about getting an education. The four plus year journey everyone in a higher learning institution is undergoing is more akin to that of a personal growth process. A degree does not signify intelligence or wisdom. Not having one does not signal lack of education. That personal growth process takes different shapes for different people, for some, it does not mean college (whether the job market is reflective of this is another question). So when we take online classes, it feels like this personal growth is stifled, or at the very least paused.

At least for me, I know that after graduation, I'll value what I learned way less than what I went through. I probably won't remember what I learned online this term, but I'll remember the effort I had to put into it.

But what do I know, I'm just a first-year.

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Arb Notes: Ephemeral wildflowers

BY [RYAN GILBERT](#) ON MAY 9, 2020

While many of us are away from Carleton for this Spring term, one highlight of any Spring in the arboretum is spotting Spring ephemerals while walking in the woods. True to their name, spring ephemeral wildflowers bloom for a short period of time in the Spring and then fade away. In early Spring, before deciduous trees have completely regrown their leaves, these ephemerals have the chance to capture light which might not otherwise make its way through the forest canopy.

One favorite ephemeral which can be found in the arboretum is Jack in the Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*). Each of these plants sport a single pleasant green and purple brown flower which is shaped much like a Calla lily. While their flowers may only be in bloom for a few weeks the plants themselves have been known to live for over twenty five years.

Jack in the pulpit has a particularly interesting ethnobotanical history. The plant contains calcium oxalate crystals throughout its tissues. Due to these crystals, eating this plant can cause severe irritation and swelling of the mouth. According to folklore, the Meskwaki people were rumored to have used the ground leaves to poison their enemies' meat. Dried plant tissues were also used by native peoples to treat a wide variety of conditions ranging from rheumatism to snakebites.

All of the foliage and flowers of all of the ephemerals in the arb will fade away as the summer begins, only to return next Spring. There's something refreshing about knowing that even during these trying times, the cycles of nature continue unabated.

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Ryan Gilbert