

**THE CONCORDIA**

**• COURIER •**

INVESTIGATE. INFORM. IGNITE. INVOLVE.

Volume 18, Issue 12

Concordia University Irvine

Friday, April 26, 2024

**Earth Week activities emphasize sustainability and "ocean literacy"**



PICTURED ABOVE: The Marine Lab volunteers with touch pool  
Photo courtesy of: Madison Zuniga



PICTURED ABOVE: Concordia Cares coordinators Leah Sugita and Harrison Schmidt table for Earth Week  
Photo courtesy of: Madison Zuniga

JENNA HOFFMAN  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On April 22, Concordia and the world celebrated Earth Day and showed their appreciation for the beauty around us. Throughout the week students and faculty at Concordia coordinated different activities to educate and inspire students to take better care of the Earth and celebrate what it has to offer.

Monday, the Marine Lab hosted a touch tank so students could interact with different marine life. On Tuesday, Concordia Cares had a clothing upcycling event in Sigma. They also hosted a trivia night on Wednesday where students had the opportunity to win prizes and test their knowledge. To end the festivities, there was a sunset hike up French Hill with Jamba Juice smoothies provided.

Concordia Cares coordinator, Elizabeth Sedgwick, said, "It has been so fun to come up with and plan different events that we hope students will connect

with and serve as good reminders to be sustainable in whatever way is possible for you." When planning the events, Sedgwick said, "Our events focus on spending time with nature...where we just want students to be aware of their environment."

Other planned events focused on the importance of sustainability and upcycling.

Associate Professor of Biology and Marine Lab Director Sean Bignami said, "Our education outreach goal is to increase 'ocean literacy' because the more people know about the ocean, the more they can understand and value the conservation of our marine ecosystems in general." Bignami said that in the touch tank, there were "a number of local invertebrate species, including sea stars, sea cucumbers, sea urchins and marine snails."

Sedgwick said, "It is important to acknowledge Earth Week because we only get one Earth. It is easy in day-to-day life to forget or take that for granted and

it is important to take time to appreciate the gift of our planet and make sure that it will continue to last for future generations."

Another Concordia Cares Coordinator, Leah Sugita, said she hoped students learned "about little everyday changes that they can easily do to continue to make our Earth a better place and learn something they didn't know before." As Earth Week comes to a close, Sugita wanted everyone to remember "the beautiful creation God created and that we are stewards of. I hope that students are reminded of our Earth's awe-inspiring creation and get to go out and experience nature, especially with all the stresses of finals coming up."

It can be easy to forget the little things that can be done to be kinder to the Earth, but hopefully with the tips and activities provided by Concordia Cares everyone can implement these actions and work towards being more sustainable and focus on protecting our environment.

**A letter to students from Dr. Michael Thomas**

Dear Students,

It's been quite an amazing year! You've poured yourselves into your classes, presented at the President's Academic Showcase, dedicated hours to internships and/or clinicals, participated in The Hunt for the Golden Egg and cheered on the Golden Eagles by filling out the Flight Club. You've hung out in Rho Commons, Sigma General and gotten in several workouts in CU Active.

Annual events have kept you busy and engaged with friends, from Beach Bash to Midnight Madness, from Throw-down to Concordia Christmas. Some of you played many rounds of disk golf, and others went on outdoor adventures with Basecamp. Theatre, art and

music put on stellar shows this year, including the annual Christmas concert at Segerstrom Concert Hall. And we've worshiped together as a community in the CU Center, and at Shout! and Source. An amazing year indeed!

As this spring semester is quickly coming to a close, there are a lot of requirements you need to finish up... put final touches on those essays (some of you should really get started!), close up an internship or research project, and prepare diligently for those dreaded final exams. But make sure you take time to hang out with your friends before you leave campus.

Importantly, we want to celebrate those students who will be graduating next week. CONGRATULATIONS! to

each and every graduate! Make sure you savor these last moments on campus. But please also take the time to say, "Thank you!" to the faculty and staff who have taught and mentored you. We in turn are eager to applaud you as you receive your diploma and your new title: Concordia Alumni.

For the returning students, fall semester will be very different. You'll be entering a construction zone! The CU Center for Worship and the Performing Arts will undergo a massive renovation, with an expansion to 800 seats. Additionally, two buildings that make up the Golden Eagles Athletic Complex will start emerging from the ground by October!

The faculty and staff are extremely proud of all of



PICTURED ABOVE: Dr. Michael A. Thomas is the fifth president of Concordia.  
Photo courtesy of: Concordia Marketing

you! Our prayer for each of you is that you will take a few minutes to reflect on the blessings in your life. Thanks be to God that He led each of you to this very special community at Concordia. We are a better place because you are here!

May the Lord bless and keep you and yours!

For His Students,

Dr. Michael Thomas

# ABS gathers for annual beach night

BRECKYNN WILLIS  
STAFF WRITER

ABS (Athlete Bible Study) gathered for their annual end-of-the-year beach night at Corona

Del Mar last Fri., April 19. Athletes came together for a beach clean-up, food, music, games, bonfire, worship and fellowship.

Athlete Bible Study began in 2020 and has remained a core part of the athletics community. The group is an extension of Abbey West's discipleship team on campus. The group meets weekly on campus and ends each year with a fun event to create and maintain fellowship and a space for athletes to explore their faith.

The beach night serves many purposes. Jonathan Dose, a swimmer and a leader of ABS, was intentional with his planning of the event. "In order to serve the community, and allow our attendees to be good stewards of God's grace, we wanted to clean up His creation in community with each other," said Dose.

Creating space to discuss faith is unique to the Concordia experience. With such a large population of student-athletes on campus, this group has been able to offer a new community for believers and those interested in exploring their faith. "The goal of ABS beach night was to celebrate this community that we have as we close out the end of this academic year," said Olivia Highstreet, an ABS leader and athlete on the beach volleyball team.

Highstreet has been an attendee and a key component of ABS leadership for the past three years. "ABS has been influential in keeping me consistent in pursuing my faith by providing a space to be with other athletes and building not only our relationship with God but with each other every week," said Highstreet.

People were seen enjoying themselves and each other's presence throughout the night. "I think the beach night was incredible," said swimmer, Hannah Chabin. "It was super fun playing different sports and praising the Lord around the fire together." Chabin has been attending ABS for the entire academic year.

"I wanted to be a part of a community of believers on campus," said Chabin.

Athletes can struggle to find a group of people that relate to both their athletic and spiritual interests. This group has made it possible for athletes to develop relationships with like-minded individuals. "I went to the beach at night because there is a sense of community and family that I get from the ABS group," said Garrison Veron, a junior swimmer.

ABS is coming to an end with the academic year but will be back at the start of next school year. If you are an athlete and interested in joining a welcoming and loving community on campus, contact co-leaders Jonathan Dose or Olivia Highstreet at [jonathan.dose@eagles.cui.edu](mailto:dose@eagles.cui.edu) or [olivia.highstreet@eagles.cui.edu](mailto:olivia.highstreet@eagles.cui.edu).



PICTURED ABOVE: Students enjoy a nighttime firepit at ABS worship night  
Photo courtesy of: Breckynn Willis

# ASCUI

Hello Golden Eagles,

The ASCUI team from the 2023-2024 school year is coming to you for one last time. We hope your last weeks of school are going fabulously. Keep pushing through any final projects, papers or exams, as just one week is left! It's wild how fast a school year can go by.

ASCUI has loved every moment of this school year. When reflecting on this year, we are filled with fond memories of various ways the student body has come together in the community here at Concordia. We are also reminded of many ways ASCUI and Senate has helped push for changes around campus to improve the student life experience. Let's reflect on the year with the rest of the team.

Sam Schult, our student body president, explained that one of his favorite memories from this year was Family Feud. He said, "It was a super awesome way to bring the Concordia community together and is something I will not forget from this year!" This was Sam's favorite event of this year, as it was fun to see everyone compete against each other and build memories together.

Max Upchurch, our vice president, emphasized that he loved the events that brought our student body together through ASCUI. His favorite memories were from the ASCUI Party and Family Feud. Max said, "These were both new events that our ASCUI team was able to brainstorm and execute together."

Natalie Annunizato, our communications director, expressed that her favorite part of this year has been the people! She has enjoyed working on the ASCUI team this year. She said, "This team has the best vibes and is always brainstorming ways to improve campus and get students involved with whatever we have going on! We are going to miss our seniors!"

Mason Dalbeck, club commissioner, mentioned that he has loved the community-building events that Concordia has put on to bring together our student body. His favorite was the ASCUI Party, where Party Pete made his debut. Mason said, "I have loved getting to know the student population and having fun with everyone."

Lexi Ermeling, our treasurer, has loved creating a sense of community within the ASCUI team this year. "My favorite thing this year has been working collectively as an ASCUI team to better Concordia's campus and to form a sense of community and friendship!" Laxi said.

And lastly, me! My favorite part of this year has been collaborating with our ASCUI team and Senate to create a lot of change on campus and planning fun events through ASCUI. I loved organizing Concordia Christmas with the team, seeing it all come together, and having the Concordia community enjoy the event!

ASCUI still has one more event for you... I Heart CUI Day! That is happening today! Grab a free I Heart CUI t-shirt outside the chapel, then head down to the student union! On the patio, you can write thank you notes to faculty and staff or your favorite senior. Also, you will have the chance to spin our wheel for some fun Concordia prizes. And make sure to stop in the caf for Concordia's famous Turkey Burgers!

Blessings to everyone's final week of school! Have the best summer ever, Golden Eagles. For those graduating, good luck with whatever is next for you! For those coming back in August, see you soon!!

For one last time,  
Your ASCUI Secretary  
Elise Schult



PICTURED ABOVE: ASCUI wearing I Heart CUI shirts  
Photo courtesy of: Elise Schult

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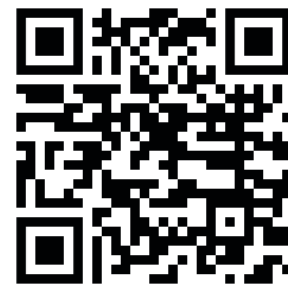
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## Culture Fest brings students together

TABITHA JOHNSON  
STAFF WRITER

Culture Fest was a successful experience for the Concordia community last Wed., April 17. The event is coordinated by Diversity Awareness and only successful through the volunteering of students and culture clubs. This year six groups were represented: Jamaica, Black Student Union, Latino/Hispanic Culture, China, Kyrgyzstan and the U.S.A. Melinda Ibanez, junior and Diversity Coordinator, explained the significance of the Diversity Awareness committee on campus saying, “We do events on Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Women’s Month etc. Our Goal is to create a safe environment where we can feel free to express and educate others on our cultures, not just ethnicity, but everyone.”

Amyah Holiday, sophomore and Diversity Coordinator, said, “Culture Fest is an event Diversity Awareness hosts every year outside the cafeteria, where tables are set up showing different cultures.” Holiday said the event gives the opportunity for “people to express who they are through their background and culture while also allowing others to learn about it.”

During the two and half hour event students and staff mingled, sampling food and candy while engaging in educational conversations. This event was more than just socializing, it was building connections and celebrating the diversity of humanity that makes Concordia a vibrant and inclusive campus.

Grace Cuckow, senior, said “If you walked up to my table at Culture Fest, you would be greeted with ‘Welcome to China!’ My friend Brian Ho (Hong Kong) and Nathan Stuewe (Korean) prepared an assortment of foods, snacks and drinks that were reminiscent of our childhoods.”

The table hosted homemade



PICTURED ABOVE: Students engage with different countries represented at Culture Fest tables  
Photo courtesy of: Tabitha Johnson

curry fish balls, a traditional Hong Kong delicacy, tea, milk ‘juice’ boxes and a Northern Chinese dessert consisting of crystallized candied fruits on a stick. They also offered melon and milk candies, lychee jello cups, rice crackers, Pocky sticks and Chinese versions of American fruit roll ups. Additionally, Cuckow provided short lessons on writing Chinese characters with a paintbrush onto a traditional Chinese writing scroll.

Cuckow said “My experience at Culture Fest is always a wonderful time. Working with my fellow Asian friends to represent or culture and getting to interact with curious peers to teach them about my home culture means a lot to me. I represent China, just one of the many Asian countries of the world, and I want others like me to see themselves being represented on campus.”

Axel Aguilar, senior and president of Nuestra Voz and Step One, said “Having the opportunity to work this table and showcase the amazing, beautiful rich Hispanic countries is something I have always loved to do, especially in a space like our university.” He highlighted the importance of showcasing lesser-known cultures within the university community saying, “We are aiming to show off the different cultures of Concordia that we don’t have the opportunity to see during the school year.” Aguilar added, “Through food, history and language we represent the rich diversity of our student body.”

Ibanes said, “Diversity is more than just the color of our skin; it’s where we come from, our backgrounds, traditions and more.” If you are interested in connecting with a culture club check the CUI website for a full list and contacts. If you have questions or want to start your own culture club, contact [ascui.clubcommissioner@cui.edu](mailto:ascui.clubcommissioner@cui.edu). To get in contact with Diversity Awareness, contact Monique Nunes at [monique.nunes@cui.edu](mailto:monique.nunes@cui.edu).

## Forensics team closes successful season, says farewell to debate director

MADISON ZUNIGA  
CAMPUS EDITOR

Concordia’s Forensics team flourished once again in their 2023-2024 speech and debate season. The students saw great success across various events and tournaments, exhibiting impressive talent and dedication from new and experienced members alike.

Sean Nowlan, director of debate and former debater, emphasized the fresh dynamics of the team, highlighting the hard work, skill and growth of its newest members. “This year [saw] more first time debaters, new partnerships and incoming freshmen than anytime in the past five years. Given our relatively new team, we’ve impressively succeeded in winning more than a dozen first place and gold medal finishes across all our debaters this season, and have the experience and ambition to perform even better next year,” Nowlan said.

“This was my first year ever being involved in the forensics community, and it was really welcoming being able to have such a close team to really unite with,” said Jebb Fox, freshman. “Our director of debate, Sean Nowlan, and our director of speech, Blake Longfellow, both pushed me to become a better performer even though I was so new to this activity. They both knew that this was a learning curve for me, but always made sure that I was being pushed and performing to the best of my ability.”

Nowlan summarized the season’s wins, “The Debate team took first place and third as National Champions of Public Forum Debate at Pi Kappa Delta, and took a hotly contested second and third place in Parliamentary Debate at the same tournament. Daniel Boyle and Ellie Harris were the first place champions.”

“Some of my personal highlights from this year for forensics is becoming Pi Kappa Delta National Champions in Readers Theater along with James Baird, Lucy Swan, and Laura Gibson,” said Fox. “Also attending NFA (National Forensics Association) and becoming Octofinalist in duo interpretation with my partner James Baird.”



PICTURED ABOVE: Concordia’s Forensics team with Director of Debate, Sean Nowlan  
Photo courtesy of: Benjamin Wagner

“The forensics team has worked very hard this semester,” said Laura Gibson, sophomore.

“We excelled as a team and were able to grow closer as a family. This semester allowed us to learn so much which has set us up to prepare for next year to kill it again!”

“These memories and moments I shared with my teammates while traveling across the country this year are the things that I am never going to forget and will always stick with me in or outside of this activity,” said Fox.

Nowlan’s leadership and guidance of the team comes to a bittersweet close with the end of the academic year, as he prepares to attend a fully-funded PhD program at The University of Wisconsin, Madison. He will be studying early modern European and North American history with an emphasis on transatlantic military logistics, continuing the research that began with his first place academic showcase project in 2022.

“Sean is a masterful coach who’s made a big difference for the team,” said Oliver Di Martino, junior. “I’m proud to have debated for him and sorry to see him go.”

“During my time on the team, I’ve seen Sean both as a teammate and a coach—but he’s always remained my friend,” said Benjamin Wagner, senior. “His passion for people is contagious and his ever willingness to give up his time and energy to serve others will take him far in life! I know everyone on the team will miss him, but we are all happy to see him further his education and grow as a person.”

“Coach Sean Nowlan has been a blessing and an incredible asset to the team, bringing invaluable knowledge and coaching expertise,” said Hudson Winchel, freshman. “His departure will be bittersweet; while it will be sad for the debate team, I am excited to see where his PhD will take him and what he will achieve in the future!”

Nowlan said, “My time at Concordia has changed my life forever, setting my faith on the right path, giving me friends for life in debate, the best job I’ve ever had, and being directly responsible for my success in academic study going forward.”

Interested in joining the forensics team? Reach out to professor Konrad Hack at [konrad.hack@cui.edu](mailto:konrad.hack@cui.edu) or Blake Longfellow at [blake.longfellow@cui.edu](mailto:blake.longfellow@cui.edu).

# Students find satisfaction in service, work as College Corps fellows

JENNA HOFFMAN  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



PICTURED ABOVE: Jed Rufner  
Photos courtesy of: Jenna Hoffman

### Jed Rufner, sophomore

Jed Rufner's College Corps experience is focused on climate action as he volunteers at Tanaka Farms. There, he teaches kids about farm etiquette and helps to keep the farm clean. Rufner said, "The whole farm is a very educational environment for people of all ages who are learning about farm life and the various environmental aspects of a farm." He has enjoyed making an impact on the community through the work he does and being able to teach people about the livestock and crops at Tanaka Farms. Throughout the year College Corps students go to three symposiums and meet with students from other schools who are also helping their communities. Rufner has enjoyed "hearing their perspectives about the program" and "seeing how many students are helping to serve their community." He concluded and said, "It's something even bigger than us."



PICTURED ABOVE: Jessi Borton  
Photos courtesy of: Jenna Hoffman

### Jessi Borton, sophomore

Jessi Borton engages in climate action at Tanaka Farms as she helps to take care of the livestock and teach visitors about the produce and animals. Borton says the best part about being involved in College Corps is the community. Jessie said, "Yes, the money is good, but that's not what I was focused on when I joined." "I was really interested in Tanaka Farms and the job itself," Borton added, "I was just lucky that there was scholarship money involved." She spoke about an experience where a little boy came up to her while she was pulling weeds and asked to help. He asked her questions about what she was doing and about the cows nearby. "It was great being a part of his education about the farm and seeing him interested in the work being done," she said.



PICTURED ABOVE: Kayitochi Onyemka  
Photos courtesy of: Kayitochi Onyemka

### Kayitochi Onyemka, junior

Kayitochi Onyemka has taken a leadership role in her second year with College Corps, serving as the student director at Concordia's Heritage Garden. Her project during her time with College Corps has been to develop a sustainable composting system on campus. "Working at the garden has been a lot of trial and error. The first year was a lot of planning, but as we got into the second year, we started laying out the foundation for our compost bins by digging the holes, putting the stakes in, sealing it with cement, doing the fencing, and doing the tarping," said Onyemka. "The brunt of the work has been collecting greens from the cafeteria. Think of all the scraps in the salad bar. We take all of that and we mix it together." Onyemka and her team work hard to maintain the compost bins and the garden, especially facing unpredictable weather over the last few months. "The hope for next year is to have the compost properly mature so we can start distributing it," she explained, "whether that's to Heritage Garden or to other host sites, or to community gardens such as Tanaka Farms."

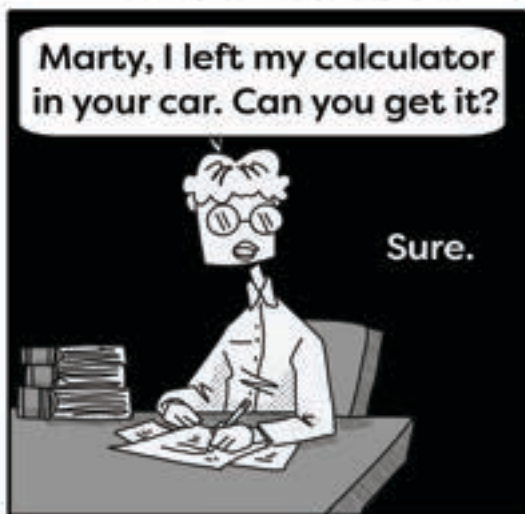


PICTURED ABOVE: McKing Nguyen  
Photos courtesy of: McKing Nguyen

### McKing Nguyen, sophomore

McKing Nguyen serves as a tutor with The Wooden Floor in Santa Ana, a K-12 educational program and dancing studio. "The goal of the Wooden Floor is to get all of these students into college," said Nguyen. He tutors students ranging from fourth grade to a sophomore in high school, which has been an interesting challenge to observe different learning styles. "I get four students every day, and that normally consists of them bringing their homework, whether that be a project, or studying for a test, or even just chatting and building connections." Nguyen was grateful for what his tutoring experience has taught him. "Stepping into this new area with these new kids, they really teach me things that I haven't learned, about Santa Ana, where they're from, or traditions in their family. To me, being in College Corps and being a fellow means to build a community, and to work hard, and to push others to be their best selves."

## A Final Trip



## “Emma” breathes new life into a literary classic

REBEKAH MICHEL  
MUSIC COLUMNIST

Featured as the last production for the Theatre Department's season, “Emma,” written by Jane Austen, hopes to transport audiences to a world of pastel colored delight. Directed by senior Theatre major Emma Johnson, “Emma” follows a young woman who believes herself to be a successful matchmaker. However, the character of Emma begins to question whether or not these romantic relationships are to the benefit of her friends. The result is a witty and cheerful production which features timeless love stories.

Serving as one of the highlights of the Theatre Department, the spring student directed productions allow seniors to pull from all of the skills they have learned and bring their own artistic vision to life.

For many of the actors in this production, becoming familiar with the literary novel “Emma” was crucial to the creative process. “I had never read a Jane Austen novel until I read ‘Emma’ in preparation for the play. I’m glad that I ended up reading the book before auditioning, because it gave me a much deeper understanding of the characters and the plot,” said sophomore Gracie Leininger. Leininger is an English and Theatre major and plays the role of Harriet Smith.

For sophomore Camille Beeson, who plays the role of Emma, the first impression of her own character from the novel was not optimistic. “When I first read ‘Emma,’ I actually quite disliked the character of Emma. She

seemed so self conceited, controlling and manipulative,” said Beeson, “Yet, at the end of the show, Emma is truly humbled and begins to value other people as individuals instead of playthings. It has been a gift to be convicted every night in rehearsals for ‘Emma.’”

As the production prepares for a weekend of performances, the Theatre Department is excited to provide an enjoyable experience for audience members who are familiar with the works of Jane Austen. “This production will be great fun for anybody who knows and loves Jane Austen, as it brings her characters to life in a really playful and lively way,” Leininger explained, “There’s something so universal about the characters in her writing. So when they are brought to life on stage, lifelong fans can really connect to them.”

For audience members who have never had exposure to Jane Austen, this production brings a delightful story that will capture the hearts of all. “You will find yourself cheerful in the cloud pink world of Emma’s mind, astonished at the creativity in costuming and will certainly laugh at the many silly characters and their shortcomings,” said Beeson.

“Emma” will play at the Studio Theatre on April 25 and 26 at 7:30 p.m and April 27 and 28 at 2 p.m. Concordia students can reserve one free ticket by using the code CUISTU at checkout. For more information, or to purchase tickets, please visit [cui.simplertix.com/](http://cui.simplertix.com/).

## Concordia Masterworks brings triumphant end to the Music Department season

REBEKAH MICHEL  
MUSIC COLUMNIST

concert’s semi-chorus.

With final performances and concerts going underway, the Concordia Choir and Donne Di Canto chorus, alongside the Master Chorale and the Masterworks Orchestra, gave an expressive grand finale to the year with their Masterworks Concert of Maurice Durufle’s “Requiem” and Ralph Vaughan William’s “Sancta Civitas (The Holy City).”

Featuring over a hundred musicians, under the conductorship of Dr. Michael Busch and baritone soloist Ben Lowe, Concordia’s Masterworks played to a full audience in the CU Center on April 20 and 21.

As one of the showcased pieces, Durufle’s “Requiem” was inspired by early gregorian chants. Featuring an organ and Latin text, the lyrics centered on themes of death and grief. Despite the rather heavy text of the work, the atmosphere provided by the Concordia Choir and the Masterworks Orchestra was peaceful and one of prayer. Additionally, the Masterworks Concert featured “Sancta Civitas” which pulls its texts from the book of Revelation. As a large musical work, the voices of three separate choirs and soloist Ben Lowe soared through the CU Center.

For students in the Concordia Choir and Donne Di Canto, Masterworks is a significant part of their season as it allows them to sing alongside professionals in the field. “Singing with the Master Chorale is a great experience as they round out the tone of our choir with their mature voices. In addition, the professional orchestra brings the works together and really completes them,” said sophomore Annelise Jackson. Jackson is completing her second year in the Concordia Choir and was a part of the

The Masterworks Concert is not complete without its challenges of learning demanding repertoire. “Learning these two pieces has been challenging for me because I had never heard either one of them before. However the work is easier when we have a conductor like Dr. Busch. He uses our time well, and pushes us to excel in our readings of the pieces,” said senior John Trinklein. Trinklein is a Biblical Languages major and is in his first year with the Concordia Choir.

As a grand concert, Masterworks often demands students to work additional hours in rehearsals and on their own time. “The rehearsal process for Masterworks was intense. It has taken a lot of repetition and more work outside of rehearsals than other pieces have required in the past,” said Jackson.

The Music Department’s Masterworks Concert is unique in that it always highlights liturgical and biblical texts. The meanings of the “Sancta Civitas” were especially relevant to many of the students involved. “Much of the text in ‘Sancta Civitas’ is drawn from Revelation 19, and I have been doing a semester-long project on this text. Getting to sing it has been incredible,” said Trinklein. “While singing, I get to reflect on what the text means for me and for all people.”

As the Music Department continues to provide excellence in their public performances, their annual Masterworks Concert of “Requiem” and “Sancta Civitas (The Holy City)” was a massive undertaking for all of the musicians involved. Yet, the result was well worth it as the Masterworks Concerts continue to enthrall audiences with its sacred texts.

## Students share their visual arts and written word

JENNA HOFFMAN  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On Wed., April 17 Concordia held an important showcase of written and visual art on campus as it hosted a Senior Capstone Exhibition reception and The Aerie publication and open mic night.

The evening began in the John and Linda Friend Art Gallery in Grimm Hall. Family, friends and Concordia students and faculty filed into the gallery to view the semester-long projects completed by Priscilla Meija, Colton Perez, Natalie Younger and Emily Bishop. There was a variety of inspirations and mediums used for their final pieces.

Professor of Studio Art Sarah Fletcher said, “The senior art showcase is a synthesis of what these art majors have learned in their time at Concordia. They draw on past successes and areas with room for growth. They are given the freedom to work on an independent project, with guidance, a small studio space, and peer feedback throughout the semester.”

Meija spoke about the work she painted that portrayed the parable of Jesus and the lost sheep from Luke 15 in the Bible. She revealed her inspiration for the piece and how she felt connected with the message from the parable, as well as her painting process and the parts that were most difficult to complete.

Perez shared his paintings and sculptures with the audience and spoke about his focus on the human form. He had two sculptures on display, one being a hollow head and a miniature Statue of David. He spoke about the process of sculpting the figure and what inspired him to do so. The sculpture took him two semesters to complete as he spent time getting the proportions and details correct.

Next, Bishop spoke about her colorful pair of paintings titled “Conflict” and “Resolution.” Bishop used a lot of biblical imagery within the pieces as they were based on a Bible verse. A couple of references included three birds that represented the Holy Trinity and a rose bush with seven thorns that represented painful difficulties in life. The contrasting colors within both pieces worked very well with each other to tell a story.

Finally, Younger presented her painting of the CU Center. She spoke about the difficulty of choosing a subject for her painting and the moment it dawned upon her to choose the building that is so integral to Concordia’s culture. Younger explained that she wanted to spend time outdoors while working on her senior project and showcase change and transition. She also wanted to include students and professors in her project which you can see in the collage of cards around the large painting. On the cards were quotes by those who participated in a questionnaire about the CU

Center and sketches drawn by Younger.

As a mentor to the students, Fletcher said, “I love seeing students push through failures to discover something worthwhile in their art. I love seeing them bring together their worlds of school, family, and friends through art as they have many important supporters who come to see their art and listen to them speak about it at the reception.”

After the exhibition finished people headed outside for The Aerie party and open mic event. Attendees were able to pick up a brand new issue of The Aerie and spend time flipping through the pages while enjoying refreshments. Once the event started, Aerie contributors went up to the mic to either read their written pieces or speak about the art they created.

Director of the Writing Studio, Professor Kristen Schmidt, and Chair of the Art Department, Professor Rachel Soo, both work with a team of student editors and designers to create a new edition of The Aerie every year.

Soo explained, “Production begins in the fall with the selection of student editors and a graphic designer.” Students from the Graphic Design II class then create publicity posters, flyers and social media posts for a call for submission for The Aerie with one student’s design being chosen.

“Submissions are evaluated by Concordia University

students and faculty selection committees, who read, discuss and vote on the entries. Under the guidance of Prof. Kristen Schmidt and [myself], the layout and design are created by the student graphic designer and literary editors for its publication,” said Soo. “Working collaboratively with Prof. Schmidt, the student editors and the student designers each year is a joyful experience.”

Schmidt believes that it is important for an arts publication like The Aerie to be present at Concordia because “the arts are a means for communicating how we see the world, and sharing creative work with others creates connection and understanding about who we are as humans. The arts challenge us intellectually and make us think and feel.”

Soo added, “It represents a community interested in creating and discussing

creative writing and art. It’s an excellent opportunity to share your creative work with the Concordia community. Everyone is in a different place in their artistic journey.”

A collaborator and presenter for the evening, senior English major Ella Hachee said, “Creative writing and some visual arts don’t lend themselves to a performance style showcase like music or theater, so it is amazing to give writers and artists a chance to share what they’ve been working on in our campus community.”

If you were unable to attend the Senior Capstone Exhibition you can still see the work on display through the end of the year. And if you didn’t get a copy of the new issue of The Aerie, Schmidt said, “An electronic copy, as well as past editions, may be found at [www.cui.edu/aerie](http://www.cui.edu/aerie).”



PICTURED ABOVE: Ella Hachee and Madison Zuniga, Aerie Editors Photo courtesy of Madison Zuniga

## Track & Field compete in PacWest Championship this weekend

EVA PREWITT  
SPORTS EDITOR

After a spring season of breaking records, setting personal bests and hitting national provision marks, the Golden Eagles are soaring into the PacWest Championship weekend in Santa Barbara. Competing at 10 a.m. today and 8 a.m. tomorrow, our all-star athletes will be fighting to come out on top of conference and pushing points to qualify for the NCAA Outdoor National Championship in Kansas this May.

As coach Keegan Bloomfield's sixth season as the head coach of men's and women's track and field and cross country, he will continue leading this team toward success beside his nine assistant coaches who help cover the spread of events.

"I believe our coaching staff is one of our strong suits as a team. They encourage us, feed us and laugh with us before, during and outside of track so the relationship is what keeps this team going and getting ready for track meets," said junior Chris Victoria.

Earlier this season, Victoria helped drive the men's 4x100m relay group within .10 seconds from their previous record set the year before. "There's never a moment where we are not encouraging each other, whether it's on the track or in the weight room," said Victoria. "Specifically, the men's sprint group is filled with talent and straight rawness, the season for us has been filled with aches and pains but this weekend everyone will be one hundred percent and we will show how good our relay squads are."

Last year at PacWest, graduate student Karyn Best finished fourth in the 400m and fifth in the 100m and is looking to finish her last season strong. Best said, "My main focus going into PacWest this weekend will be to execute the race plans I have laid out for myself. Since this is my last season after doing 11 years of track and field, my mindset is to just enjoy this time that I have with my team and soak it all in!"

Freshman Trey Vergenz is part of men's throws and will be competing this weekend in the shot put, hammer and discus. "My goal is to get at least second in every event to contribute to the team," said Vergenz, "I am excited to possibly take a shot at nationals as a freshman." Currently ranked 30 in the nation, if Vergenz climbs his way to the top 20 he will be heading to Kansas in May.

As the track and field team rounds the corner toward the end of their season, they will look forward to their last meet on May 10 and 11 before the NCAA Championship starting May 23.

To support your Golden Eagles this weekend, visit [cuigoldeneagles.com](http://cuigoldeneagles.com) to learn more about the PacWest Championship and see how our athletes are doing. Follow @cuitfxc and @cuigoldeneagles on Instagram to see these stellar athletes pop up on your feed and catch their real-time meet updates.



PICTURED ABOVE: Trey Vergenz launching a disk.  
Photo courtesy of: Crash Kamon

## Sandy birds finish No.2 in the nation

EVA PREWITT  
SPORTS EDITOR

A beautiful, sunny weekend in central Florida set the perfect scene for Concordia beach volleyball to wrap up their winning season and bring home some hardware. The Golden Eagles returned as No.2 in the Division II nation after competing in the AVCA Small College Championship in Tavares, Florida.

With a regular season schedule independent from a conference, the Golden Eagles face exciting matchups to prepare for the national championship. Competing against the nation's top Division I NCAA teams like USC, LMU, Cal and Long Beach, the sandy birds train all season to leave everything on the sand at Florida nationals.

During the humid three day competition, the sandy birds took care of business the first two days, heading into the semi-finals with a spotless 4-0 record and no individual pair losses. In the semi-finals, the Golden Eagles took down Saint Leo 3-1.

Earning a spot in the championships game, the one seed pair clinched the overall win during a nail-biting three set game into extra points by Kali Uhl and Kelissa Lemoine.

Facing Tampa in the championship, the Golden Eagles fell short by a matter of points, with a final dual of 3-2. Concordia has climbed the ranks in the last three years finishing a consecutive fourth, third and now second place.

After the tournament, the one seed of Uhl and Lemoine received the well-deserved honor of being named All-Americans. A graduate student from University of Arizona, Uhl said, "I'm going to miss the

team culture and program here at Concordia, it was the closest team I have ever been on and I will miss being beside these girls everyday."

Senior and team captain, Sara Ostojic said, "Our goal for Florida was to play in freedom and for each other. We are not individuals but rather one unit playing for something bigger than ourselves." Playing a crucial role in the sand over the last four years, Ostojic will be returning for her fifth year while she works toward her graduate degree.

"I think our team found so much success this year because we always put the team first," said Uhl. "Our team demonstrates a servant leadership that buys into our culture of honor and sets us apart from our competition," said Ostojic.

Freshman stud Korah Nordin said, "Keeping our minds set on the big picture has eliminated selfishness, jealousy and tension between each other. This creates a supportive environment where we play for each other, not ourselves."

Finishing the season with a 24-12 record, this team has put in the work on the sand and in creating an unbreakable culture. "Everyone holds each other accountable and works hard, but what really stands out is how much everyone genuinely cares about each other," said Nordin. Saying a fond goodbye to seven graduating seniors, the sandy birds will look toward the fall, welcoming a brigade of freshmen and transfers to the beach family. Follow @cuibeach on instagram to look out for and welcome the new recruits!



PICTURED ABOVE: Beach Volleyball  
Photo courtesy of: Eva Prewitt

# Concordia softball is flying high with the success of two star pitchers

JOSEPH PANETTA  
STAFF WRITER

Concordia softball finished out conference clinching the PacWest conference title for the sixth year in a row. The Golden Eagles wrapped up the regular season this week and will head into the conference championships on Wed., May 1 with the goal of winning it all.

As per usual, the softball team has absolutely dominated the league, finishing with a conference record of 23-3 at press time. While this year has been far from easy, thanks to the 48 regular season games, the players have definitely had a blast up to this point.

“Concordia softball has been good for a long time,” said Katlin Entrup, senior pitcher. “The pressure of playing for a good program is expected as pressure is a privilege. Every time we play a team they play like it’s the World Series. I just have to remember no moment is bigger than it is, at the end of the day it’s just softball. However, I’ve enjoyed the pressure because I like the challenge of continuing to be good.”

“The key to winning [the] conference tournament is to keep doing what we have been doing,” said Entrup. “[We need] all aspects of our game [to] peak at the same time. Pitching, hitting, defense have to fire on all cylinders to win. We absolutely have what it takes, we have the experience, and we have the fire so I am excited to see what this team does with it.”

The softball season is without a doubt long and grueling and players need high amounts of mental toughness to face the same teams multiple times.

“I think we have worked very hard this season to work our way up,” said Jessica Im, freshman outfielder. “The conference tournament will be with the same teams we have already played, so it could be harder to play a team a fifth time after playing them four times. Focus is the main intent of the games we are going to play moving forward.”

This team has been dependent on success from top to bottom, and has thrived thanks to the skill of both the upperclassmen and younger players like Im, who currently has over 20 runs and 40 hits.

“My success here at Concordia has not been immediate. I had to work through a lot of

barriers within my career so far that prompted my small amount of success. With a great coaching staff and my teammates to help me overcome challenges I have faced in the beginning of the year to now has significantly helped me,” said Im.

Im credits head coach Crystal Rosenthal who “believed in me when I felt like not many others would at the time I was significantly struggling.”

While Concordia has been elite in every aspect of the game, another key to their brilliant season for these ladies has been the excellence on the mound. Entrup and fellow senior pitcher Cortney Koelmans both had stellar seasons and are currently on the pitcher of the year watchlist.

“Although Katlin and I play the same position we are always rooting for one another,” said Koelmans. “Katlin is a super talented pitcher and we’re always pushing one another to be better. Not even just Katlin and I, but the rest of the pitching staff is always pushing for one another to be better and if someone doesn’t have what’s working one day we know that someone else will be there to pick us up and get the job done.”

Koelmans and Entrup, along with the rest of the bullpen, have evolved into one of the best pitching groups in the nation.

“There’s nothing I can say about Cort to describe the amount of appreciation I have for her,” said Entrup. “She has been absolutely unstoppable and I am so proud of her ability to step up and be such a strong arm in the circle for our team. She makes me want to be better everyday we have practice and we both have pushed each other to be dominant for the team.”

The team has recently celebrated senior day, having honored ten graduating players in a nail biting 5-4 win over Azusa Pacific.

“I think this has given us some motivation going into playoffs as it reminds us of how far we have come, how quickly it is gone, and to just take advantage of every opportunity we are given,” said Koelmans.

Senior night was a huge occasion for the ladies who are wrapping up their careers with the Golden Eagles and

will add fuel to the fire for their postseason run. “I just think all the seniors really enjoyed and celebrated all of what we have accomplished and our time here in the program,” said Entrup. “After that day, it sparked a little bit of reality that not much time is left, so winning the national championship became even more of a goal for us.”

The seniors have been key in leading this team to where they’ve gotten so far, notably of which is outfielder Kaia Nisby.

“Kaia has stood out to me as a leader,” said Koelmans. “My senior class came in and none of us were very outspoken but I think Kaia did a great job stepping into a leadership role on our team. She is always giving 100 percent and genuinely cares

about the people around her.”

We’re getting to the business end of the season, and it will take a whole lot of leadership, talent and teamwork for this team to go all the way. The Golden Eagles are currently already qualified for the national tournament and will look to take that on after the conference championships.

To stay up to date with the softball team, follow them on instagram @cuisoftball. Don’t forget to wish these Golden Eagles the best of luck as they head to the PacWest championships on Wed., May 1.



PICTURED ABOVE: Concordia softball celebrating as newly crowned PacWest Champions. Photo courtesy of: @cuisoftball on Instagram



PICTURED ABOVE: Concordia softball celebrating as newly crowned PacWest Champions. Photo courtesy of: @cuisoftball on Instagram

# Is Coachella still the music festival to beat?

NICHOLAS ESMERAL  
STAFF WRITER

With the 2024 Coachella Music Festival ending on April 21, students have shared their opinions regarding the event. With headliners like Tyler, the Creator, Lana Del Rey and Doja Cat, this year's festival was full of great performances from artists who are in demand.

In recent years, Coachella appears to have lost some shine with the public. A popular Reddit thread titled "Is it just me or is this the worst reaction Coachella has ever?" cites issues with lineups and ticket costs. Plus, other festivals like Rolling Loud and Dreamville have generated new buzz, rivaling Coachella.

Tabitha Johnson, a junior Communication Studies major said, "Coachella isn't as hyped up as it used to be anymore." Other festivals have generated more popularity in recent years. "I'd rather go to Rolling Loud, it has great artists and it also isn't as expensive," said Johnson.

Junior Communication Studies major Leya Alom said, "[Coachella] General Admission for the whole weekend starts at \$500 while Rolling Loud is only \$300." Alom said the overall expenses for Coachella are far more than other festivals which are not only cheaper but closer to urban areas.

Johnson said, "Looking back at headliners like Drake [2015] and Travis Scott [2017], Coachella was in its prime."

"Dreamville had headliners like Nicki Minaj and Sza who I could see for the fraction of Coachella prices," said Alom.

"I think the experience might be worth it overall but why pay for more when there are just as great performances at other festivals," said Johnson.

This year, Coachella sold only 80% of tickets by the time that the festival began. Billboard reports that this is a 14%-17% dip from the previous year.

Alom said, "I remember back in 2017 how popular Coachella was and how everyone wanted to go." Alom said, "There was almost a sense of exclusivity when people went but I don't feel like it's the same as before." In 2017 headliners like Lady Gaga and Kendrick Lamar helped the festival gross its highest income of \$114 million. "I feel like most artists now profit more from their own tours rather than attending festivals," Johnson said.

"I've been to Rolling Loud and it was an amazing experience," Johnson said, "I didn't have to spend an absurd amount on tickets in comparison to Coachella." Coachella is still extremely popular but I think it's become extremely overrated Johnson said.

Alom said, "I would love to go to Coachella but I think that any other festival like Lollapalooza would give me the same experience."

Coachella is still recognized as the top music festival here in the U.S. with millions of people wanting to attend. Some turmoil regarding the festival has a lot to do with the overall cost of attendance and also a lack of performances from previous bigger artists. This year's festival has dismissed some of those thoughts however, the question still remains whether or not Coachella is still living up to the success it had years ago.

# Thoughtful Mother's Day gifts beyond the store aisles

ARIANA ROSALES  
STAFF WRITER

Mother's Day is Sun., May 12, and while store-bought gifts are always appreciated, there is something truly heartfelt about gifting mom with something that has been made or chosen with lots of love and thoughtfulness.

It can be stressful trying to find that perfect gift to give back to the women in our lives who have nurtured and supported us. However, gifts don't have to be extravagant to show your appreciation or put a smile on her face.

A day of relaxation and pampering is a great way to show your appreciation and help your mom unwind. Luka Brancato, a sophomore on the baseball team, said, "My mom loves to take baths, so putting together a basket with things that go into a bath basket is easy to make." Customized gift baskets are a perfect way to show someone you remember the small details about them.

Personalized gifts with sentimental touches will mean everything to moms. Emmarie Gonzales, a sophomore, said that her mom has different nicknames for her and her brothers. Gonzales said, "She calls me 'pumpkin,' so one year I got her a pumpkin necklace so I could always be with her. I think it is nice to make something personalized or unique for the people we love to show we truly listen and care."

Gonzales added that there are ways to send your love and gratitude through digital cards. She said, "I use an app called 'Givingli' that sends my mom a virtual card that I can personalize with

pictures and text. You can also add gifts and money to the card that is sent." Gonzales mentioned that this is a simple, yet effective gift for those who may be away from home this Mother's Day.

"I think you can't go wrong with a good skincare product, a good perfume, pretty flowers or a nice dinner at her favorite restaurant," said Lanna Lee, a senior. She mentioned that her mom likes to have relaxing evenings at home and also go through old photos. A scrapbook capturing special moments over the years filled with handwritten captions is a distinctive way to evoke nostalgia.

Most of the time, memories and quality time can go beyond material gifts. Gonzales said, "One memorable Mother's Day experience I had with my mom was going on a hike to the Hollywood sign. This was a nice experience because I could see how much joy a simple hike brought her."

Brancato added, "We always go to brunch and baseball games because she says what makes her happy is seeing her kids happy." Brancato said going to the games with his mom is one of the most memorable Mother's Day experiences he has had, proving that the memories you create together will be cherished for years to come.

Lee added that her mom enjoys going to church together as a family on Mother's Day, mentioning that as one of her more memorable experiences. Lee said, "I remember her being so happy we were all together that day."

With the hectic chaos of everyday life, the best gift you can give is the gift of your time.

# "Civil War" leaves filmgoers feeling uneasy

HEATHER HERSHFIELD  
STAFF WRITER

The dystopian film "Civil War" debuted on April 12 almost as a futuristic warning to Americans of a divided nation. The movie is in the action and thriller genre with an R-rating "for strong violent content, bloody/disturbing images, and language throughout," according to IMDb.

The basic plot consisted of following photojournalists working to capture moments of Americans fighting with one another. A24 produced it with director Alex Garland, known for films such as "Annihilation," released in 2018. The movie stars Kirsten Dunst as the main character, Lee Smith, and Cailee Spaeny as Jessie. The film starts with a President of the United States, known to be serving his third term of office.

There is a big red flag there, as presidents are restricted to two terms per the 22nd Amendment, implying corruption in the government. Then, the movie transitions to following a photojournalist named Lee Smith, who captures photos of protests and uprisings in New York against police forces. We learn that California and Texas have become allies, revolting against the government and calling themselves the 'Western Forces.' From there, Smith heads to D.C. with a group of peers, hoping to interview the president and capture photos.

Based on the trailers I had watched previously, I expected to be fully immersed in the war. However, perspective is unique to this film. The protagonist was not a soldier or hero, rather, it consisted of a group of journalists who were not directly involved or on a specific side of the conflict.

This was a shock to me but by no means an unpleasant one. It was refreshing to dive into a journalist's point of view, trying to document the events and advance their careers amidst the disaster happening in the U.S. Highlighting journalists showed us how powerful the media can be in keeping our country informed and how needed they are in our society.

While the film does not follow soldiers or troops, watching the journalists does not spare you any violence or apprehension. You'll be clinging to the edge of your seat, mouth covered, awaiting the next scene with wide eyes.

Throughout the film, I still had no clue who I should root

for. No one clearly states whether they support the president or the Western Forces. But that may have been the point, as both troops created bloodshed and terror, which shows how disastrous a civil war would be for America. Neither side was necessarily good or bad; rather, the war played the villain.

The film also included photos that the journalists were capturing. They ranged from images of protests, soldiers dying and deserted landscapes. Each photo evoked an emotion of sadness or unease as they came up on the big screen, and it brought the scenes to life.

The production worked to make the film as eerily realistic as possible. Actors fired real firearms for gunshot sounds in the movie, shooting blanks. This is typically uncommon for films; however, Garland wanted it to be close to reality. After watching it in IMAX, I can attest that the shots were extremely convincing.

The majority of the scenes left a lasting impression. Watching the Lincoln Memorial and the White House being destroyed in the movie by its own citizens was disheartening. These landmarks represent our country and the power we hold as a nation.

While the film only showed occurrences on the East Coast, we can speculate that NATO would lose America as its biggest ally due to the division. The domestic destruction would leave us defenseless to foreign powers control, which raises the question of what other horrors a real civil war would unlock.

At the end of the movie, I was left feeling a sense of unease. Our greatest enemy is proven to be ourselves as we crumble from within. Is this what lies ahead for the future of America?

With our political differences dividing the nation already, a civil war does not seem that far-fetched. While physically dividing the country is extreme, I hope it encourages Americans to cling close and stay united. One nation under all.