
Bard Free Press - All Issues (2000-2018)

Bard Free Press, 2000-2018

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Bard Free Press (May 2019)

Bard College

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FEATURE

10 Things I Hate About Bard 5

Bard Welcomes a New Farm Manager 8

Kevin Duong, Beloved Politics Professor, To Depart 12

Changing Your Name at Bard 17

Off-Campus Student Employment 19

NEWS

Understanding Increases in Tuition 3

Kline Cook Asks Students Not to Park on Hill 10

Local Man Banned From Campus 11

OP-ED

Volunteer for EMS Drills 3

Dear Reader,

Thanks for picking up a copy of our last issue of the year. We've put a lot of work into these stories. Some have been in the works for months, and we have been saving them for this end-of-semester special issue. It is a pleasure to be able to present these stories to you all, and I hope you enjoy them.

With the end of this semester, I have been Editor-in-Chief of *The Free Press* for a full academic year, and I have learned so much from the writers, editors, and readers who are part of the process. Though difficult, it is so rewarding to be able to keep up FP's tradition of providing news for the campus and its community. It is also a big responsibility--one that I did not fully understand until I was at the helm. The FP team and I talk frequently about the obligations and commitments we have to our readers. Making the right choices as reporters and as members of the Bard community is extremely important to us as we continue to bring you the news.

The level of engagement we have had with readers and writers this semester has been humbling. After a difficult last semester, we got a lot of help from students who reached out with pitches and ideas, who followed up on articles we printed, and who continued to read and support our paper. My hope is that going forward, we can further interact with the community in ways that make us better at documenting Bard's ongoings in the way that students, workers, and faculty members need.

As the year ends, we are also beginning to think about how we can improve things in the fall. We hope to bring you more stories, and to do so more regularly. We also hope that more of you reach out and help us produce FP. We welcome writers, artists, photographers, editors, and anyone who loves the news. If that sounds like you, feel free to shoot me an email sometime. I hope you all have wonderful summers, and I look forward to starting this up again in the fall.

Best,

Rachel Hodes
Editor-in-Chief
rh7996@bard.edu

Why We Should All Volunteer for EMS Drills

Alyssa May White

This year, I participated in Bard EMS' Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) drill. This annual drill is critical to keep EMS running smoothly in case of a real emergency. It tests our EMTs on protocol for things like triaging large numbers of patients. The drill also throws them a curve ball in the form of actors pretending to have various ailments. This is where Bard's general public comes in. You can sign up with the EMS Drill Sergeants to be one of the actors in the scenario.

My first thought when I made it to the Campus Center was how glad I was that I knew a drill was going on. Actors needed to come before the actual drill to get makeup, and on my way to the Multipurpose Room, where the false tragedy actually took place, I passed actors on the way to the bathroom or to get coffee who were already sporting some pretty gruesome-looking fake injuries. The scenario was an electrical fire, and the pretend injuries definitely matched the drill. If I didn't know the drill was that day, I probably would have been making a call to EMS.

I walked into a pretty relaxed atmosphere. Right away I was given a shirt, because I was going to have a pretend broken collar bone, and there was a possibility for my own shirt to be ruined in the course of the drill. Once I was changed, I joined a circle of people on the floor, getting and creating fake injuries. I was sent to a woman named Maeve, because in addition to the broken collarbone, I had a fake electrical burn, and she was the specialist for that very particular injury. We all talked and joked with each other while the makeup went on, and spoke about our roles in the drill. The Drill Sergeants also provided us with tasty snacks while we waited for it to be go-time. Before they went to get the rest of EMS, they checked that we didn't have any last-minute questions, and then it was time for places.

We all chilled until the last second. It was the opposite of what I would imagine in a real emergency; all was calm until the EMTs arrived, and then chaos erupted as we started acting out our ailments. If you did theater in grade school and haven't been able to break into it in college, EMS drills are the outlet for you. It was really fun to get into character, especially with what they gave me. I was a drunk, disoriented time bomb. I enjoyed incoherently moaning to EMTs about how much pain I was in, waiting for one of them to make the wrong move. Once they were done categorizing patients by severity, one EMT settled in to treat me. Inevitably, he made the move I knew to wait for. Up to that point, I had been complaining about the collar bone, but as soon as someone attempted to treat the burn, I was supposed to flip, and flip I did. I cursed this poor man out. I felt a little guilty about it after, but in the moment, it was cathartic and satisfying. There were no hard feelings; when the drill was done, he high fived me.

More important than how fun it was for me, it gives the EMTs really important practice. Something like a mass casualty incident is something that doesn't happen often, and something we hope never will happen. Events like the recent fire in Robbins that occurred the evening after the drill remind us of the unpredictability of campus life. It was good to know, after having helped with the drill that day, that our campus EMTs were ready and willing to handle it. If you want to have a fun afternoon and know you're helping your community at the same time, consider signing up for an EMS drill.

The Sticker Price

Evin Guinan

At Bard College, Taun Toay, the Vice President of Enrollment and Strategic Initiatives, and the Board of Trustees, hold the responsibility of setting

Bard's tuition. With the recent 2.5% increase in tuition, sitting down with Toay for an interview seemed like a perfect opportunity to get clarity on not only the reasons behind a tuition increase, but on the philosophy behind it at Bard.

Toay is important, but as mentioned, he is just one man in the process. As the self-described, "person most responsible for arguments on tuition setting," it's essentially his job to come up with a strategy for setting financial aid policy and an amount by which to increase Bard's tuition, then to give his pitch to the Board. Tuition raises are an unfortunate inevitability, but, as with most things, the context surrounding that situation is complicated. Toay states that increases in tuition are "more driven by finance than considering how it factors returning affordability, things that factor more into student life, retention and the broader access to Bard," but the practice is not completely one-sided in that sense, and, as Toay explains, "our focus isn't on lowering tuition, it's on lowering net costs for the people who need net costs lowered."

Bard's most recent 2.5% tuition increase, one "which is well below historic norms," was chosen to "insure some affordability and access for returning students." This may seem counterintuitive, but the intricacies of the system are unfriendly to a casual viewer. Toay explains that this half a percent difference "equates to roughly \$300,000 for the college," an amount that is then "funneled back in the form of financial aid for returning students." It's really a situation of sticker price versus net tuition. Bard's listed tuition is not necessarily what its actual cost will be. Bard's average financial aid package is close to forty-thousand dollars, but, according to Toay, financial aid is "something like a discount rate... that's money that the institution isn't collecting." Bard gives "over fifty million a year" to its students. That fifty million comes right out of the one hundred million that Bard makes off of tuition. This equation is "also why it's important that tuition increases every year, because the portion that's paid in, that's how we cover costs."

Bard's financial aid system is not a meritocratic one, and Toay weighs in on Bard's policy with a blend of idealism and financial logic: "We live in a country where it's possible for some people to pay \$200,000 a year," but to make that Bard's sticker price would be "out of step with the market." Then "in order to level the playing field," Toay says, Bard charges an amount that "allows for us to extract as much as we can from those with the ability to pay." What is being set up at Bard is "a progressive price structure... if you make more, you pay more," with the ultimate goal of bringing costs to zero for "the people who can't pay anything."

"The institution is better not having the sticker price be the barrier to entry," Toay says, "You could look at this two ways, one is that even the full payers are coming at subsidy or you change the system to placate to people who can afford a higher sticker price, a higher net tuition, and you become a less diverse place. Not just in terms of racially, but especially socioeconomically, geographically. You wouldn't be drawing the best minds from the whole nation."

The brass tacks of the matter is, in Toay's words, that "At the end of the day \$70,000 isn't even enough to cover a Bard education." Part of the reason Bard has to keep increasing tuition, keep getting money from full paying students, is to keep competitive with the greater collegiate market. One of Bard's greatest strengths is its faculty, and the "biggest part of the budget is faculty salaries." This is not just professors, people whom Bard is competing with other institutions to acquire and keep, but workers that upkeep the college. "To keep staff not falling behind," Toay says, "you want to give cost of living increases... Those are the drivers of why tuition has to go up." While unfortunate, the problem of high tuition is a greater systemic one, beyond the confines of Bard College. Not only that, but it's a necessity of survival for the institution itself to increase its tuition. As Toay says, "every year it has to go up."

10 Things I Hate About Bard: Why So Many Students Transfer Out

Lilly Stewart

Last year, a comparatively high number of Bard students transferred out and left. The retention rates for freshman at most liberal arts colleges across the country are hovering around 90% and higher, and in general don't go below 80%. Transfer-out rates change from year to year, ranging anywhere from 0% to--Bard's highest from the 2017-18 academic year--16% (as reported on College Tuition Compare). For comparison, Skidmore College, similar to Bard in academics and tuition, had a transfer-out rate of 9% in 2016-17 and 0% last year, putting its average at 0.64%. Bard's average transfer-out rate is 1.86% due to the drastic increase in students transferring from Bard last year. Another comparison is Vassar, which is known as a rival of Bard's, but is similar in almost every way. Vassar's transfer-out rate is 6% as of late 2017, with an average of 0.43% (College Tuition Compare). Additionally, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that 37.2% of college students transfer at least once within six years.

Transferring is not uncommon, and Bard students are no exception. Students' reasons for transferring are unique to their own circumstances, but a 16% rate would mean approximately 390 students left Bard last year. This means there must have been some common complaints from students. Bard's culture, academics, athletics, and communication between faculty and students have come into question. In addition to the frustrations Bard evokes in the students attempting to transfer, difficulties have arisen in the process of transferring itself. Whether it be complications with faculty in completing and sending required materials, transcript mishaps, or fumbles with the financial aid office, frustrating obstacles have been a recurring issue for some students applying to outside schools.

Junior Anneke Stern applied to transfer from Bard in her freshman year. Majoring in the vocal arts as an opera singer, Stern explained that her major "is the only undergrad department that isn't offered in the conservatory." Not being a part of the conservatory herself, Stern feels that her department has "none of the benefits--no funding, no manpower, no anything. It's really really small." This was her main reason for attempting to transfer from Bard, and this year she is only applying to conservatories. She revealed her disappointment with Bard's music department: "If you're outside the conservatory, you don't get a lot of attention." She was upset overall with the size of the music program itself, rather than the professors, which is where she feels the "beauty of Bard lies." Stern remarked that after spending almost three years in her department, she has maxed out all her music theory and diction options. The reason for this, she claims, is that "they don't have enough money to expand on a lot of the departments here, not just music." Stern's frustrations with Bard's infrastructure don't end there, however, due to her experiences attempting to transfer.

In her application process, she ran into complications in the registrar's office. Stern had been deferred from her top choice school, which requested her final grades to be sent in order to make their decision. On her final transcript, there was a failing grade in one of her classes, which Anneke explained "was supposed to be an A, instead of an F." This mistake was due to a miscommunication about a couple of essays that Stern's professor claimed were lost. Once Stern cleared the issue up with her professor, she requested the updated final transcript to be re-sent to the university she applied to. The registrar's office then confirmed that the grade was fixed, and that the new transcript would be sent off. Unfortunately, Stern was rejected from her top choice school. Curious, she checked BIP and discovered that her grade had not been changed, meaning the university she applied to got two copies of identical transcripts, both with misinformation negatively affecting her GPA. This was frustrat-

ing to Stern, and reflecting on it, she feels there was a “lack of attention to detail and care and effort [in the registrar’s office].”

Attempting to fix the issue herself, Stern reached out to the college she applied to immediately and explained the issue to them, to which they responded that if Stern could provide an updated transcript as soon as possible, they would consider her application again. But, as Stern explained, “it was over the summer, and no one was around, so by the time they got the new transcript out, it didn’t really matter.”

In her sophomore year, Stern didn’t attempt to apply again: “That kind of wrecked it,” she explained. She figured she would stay at Bard for the following three years. However, things didn’t improve for Stern, so this year she is attempting to apply again.

Despite the complications she faced, Stern asserted that her relations with professors were positive. She claimed they were gracious about recommendations, and even followed up with her about how the process was going. She remarks, “That was probably the easiest part.” This year, she knew the possible obstacles which could pop up in her application process, which compelled her to start “following up with absolutely everybody.” Having garnered a distrust for Bard’s administration, she even brought her own addressed envelopes to get the forms mailed, “just in case.” Despite this attention to detail on her part, and after following up with various schools, she still had to arrange for a couple forms to be resent because they did not arrive to their respective destinations. Overall, Stern went to these extreme levels of checking and checking again because, after her first attempt: “I didn’t trust them to handle it themselves.”

Sophomore Hunter Davenport felt frustrated not with the academic programs at Bard but with the services available to students. A practicing Catholic, Davenport revealed his frustration at the lack of a Catholic priest on campus. When he initially applied to Bard, there was a priest on campus, but when he ar-

rived the priest was gone, and there had been “no notice of that.” Bard’s tuition was raised from 2017-18 to this year, which was also a point of frustration for Davenport. “It became unaffordable for my family.”

Additionally, Davenport felt there wasn’t enough involvement with sports at Bard as he would like. As a part of the swim and soccer teams at Bard, Davenport remarked, “I didn’t feel like there was a lot of school pride for athletics.” For Davenport, the hardest thing about the transfer process itself was telling friends he had made that he was leaving. He felt like he had found a place when he first arrived to Bard, and then was disappointed to realize that it wasn’t the right fit. “I got frustrated with myself kind of, by trying to decide whether I didn’t want to leave.” He admitted that the entire process of transferring was “frustrating” and “annoying,” purely because he had to do everything he had done in senior year of high school all over again. However, Davenport didn’t run into any major obstacles with the registrar’s office, various materials arriving correctly, or with professors. For him, the process went smoothly other than being tedious in practice. Like Stern, he remarked that the professors he got recommendations from and interacted with were “very helpful.”

Currently on gap year between his freshman and sophomore years, Seth Barrett chose to leave Bard for more personal reasons. He critiques Bard’s community and culture for being cliquey and inelastic. For him, the issue is that “the groups at [Bard] are extremely exclusive, especially if you aren’t wealthy and/or from New York or Los Angeles.” He felt that Bard was not only isolating in location, as he preferred a city environment, but isolating socially as well. He revealed that he struggled with depression, which at the time was “directly linked with [his] being at Bard.” He remarked that he is aware of Bard’s low retention rate, and felt pressured by his advisor and others not to leave Bard, but ultimately he knew it was the best choice for him. “I was unmotivated to do my work based off of the environment I was in,” he

explained, detailing how his grades suffered as a result of Bard’s distancing and status-driven atmosphere. “Finding things I liked to do with people I like to be with was a challenge.” Additionally, Barrett felt that because of Bard’s location, there is a “boring mundaneness” to everyday life, and it is frustrating how difficult it is to get anywhere off campus. According to Barrett, Bard’s high transfer rate has everything to do with campus culture: “I think Bard fosters a really toxic environment.” Barrett proposes that rather than attempting to hold on to students who are unhappy and wish to leave as a result, Bard should take action against issues that make many students upset in the first place. “Maybe the school should focus more on problems with school culture that lead to so many transfers.”

Barrett’s process of transferring wasn’t without its difficulties either. Because he decided to take a gap year, he discovered he must begin paying off his student loans immediately after finishing freshman year due to the fact that he wouldn’t be taking any classes for credit. “No one at Bard let me know this, nor was any help in helping me figure out how to deal with it. Instead I found the financial aid office incredibly rude.” The financial aid office put a block on Barrett’s account because they claimed he owed an outstanding “July/August 2018 service fee” of \$700, which he wasn’t notified of until it was too late, and his account was frozen. This made Barrett unable to send in his transcripts until he paid the mysterious fee. “I had to scramble together the cash before I could submit my transcripts to other schools.” This was frustrating for Barrett, especially since every other aspect of his transfer process went smoothly. To apply for a gap year he simply had to push a button, and like Davenport, he ran into no difficulties with the registrar or various paperwork arriving at the right places. However, similar to Stern, he felt pressure to navigate the process almost entirely by himself: “I ended up having to do all the heavy lifting on my own.” His grievances with the financial aid office stemmed from the lack of proper communication on their part. Barrett posits that students on finan-

cial aid could benefit “if the financial aid officers can have a meeting with students before they transfer so they have a better understanding of what’s happening to their loans, and where there money is going.”

Just as both Davenport and Stern described, Barrett praised his professors in his process of transferring. “My professors were very helpful [with] writing my recommendations and my guest journalism professor actually encouraged me to apply to her university,” Barrett commented. It is clear that despite other difficulties with various faculty and staff at Bard, students attempting to transfer face little to no adversity from professors.

To hear that Bard has a transfer-out rate of 16% and to realize that several students have left due to inadequacies at Bard can seem disappointing. Additionally, the sheer amount of obstacles faced and hoops students have to jump through to complete the process itself can be discouraging, although it is most likely a symptom of transferring from any school. But there are reasons for Bard’s low retention rate, at least in comparison to similar and/or surrounding schools. Whether it be the exclusive social scene, subpar academic or athletic opportunities, isolated location, or financial issues, there are ways in which Bard is imperfect. For some, and last year for roughly 400 students, these issues can become toxic or detrimental for those who are looking for something better for their future or their mental health. Stern, Davenport, and Barrett all had different reasons for leaving, and faced complications along the way which might have deterred them from leaving at all. However, like many others, they fought through the tedious process in hopes of studying someplace new where they could thrive as the best version of themselves. When asked to give advice to anyone thinking about transferring, Barrett sums it up: “Do it, you won’t regret it...don’t waste four unhappy years.”



Photo c/o Bard College

Rebecca Yoshino, The Bard Farm, and Seeds as Resistance

Wyatt Reu

Rebecca Yoshino, the recently hired director of the Bard Farm, has come with a mission to transform the way we understand farming... and to decolonize our diet.

The Bard Farm was founded, by students, back in 2012. Supported entirely by student workers and volunteers, the farm aims to produce around 20,000 pounds of organic veggies and fruits for campus dining annually, some of which is donated to recovery programs every semester. That's almost 10 tons of food all coming from a small 1.25-acre plot of land behind Robbins and Manor.

Yoshino grew up in the Hudson Valley and returned after working in Minnesota for the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA), a non-profit that helps immigrant farmers plan and elevate their farms by assisting with planning crops, securing

contracts, quality control and food safety.

Prior to her work there, Yoshino launched and directed a farm in Minneapolis called the Wozupi (pronounced woe-zhu-pea) Tribal Gardens with the intent of working with the indigenous Sioux community to reestablish traditional growing practices. This is sort of Yoshino's main deal. She's passionate about seeds, specifically heritage seeds and the ways that heritage crops can help build a stronger connection to culture and history (especially those that have been destroyed by colonization). Working with tribes all over the Midwest, Yoshino helped build fledgling food systems with a focus on heritage seeds. She explains to me how at the turn of the century, farmers basically stopped saving their own seeds and began to grow dependent on large seed

companies. But, she says, learning how to store and save local, regionally adapted seeds not only makes better food but also reduces our dependency on big corporations and fosters regional sustainability.

Which brings us to her mission here at Bard. Yoshino wants to decolonize our diet, introducing to the farm heritage crops from across Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean and other places. This 'Diaspora Garden' as she calls it, would create an inclusive space for students to create meaningful connections to land and explore cultural heritages in a tactile, immediate way. Even as it stands now, Yoshino sees the farm as a space to ask questions about what's happened to our relationship to food within the United States.

In addition to these steps towards inclusivity and cultural connection, Yoshino envi-

sions the Bard Farm as a resource for interdisciplinary research at the College. In our interview she said "What are the ways that we can be revolutionary, here?" She wants to use the resources at the farm to support active scientific research on climate change including studies on local soil health, carbon farming and carbon sequestration.

In the fall, she'll be working with visual artist Emilio Rojas to create an art installation depicting the southern U.S. border wall with rows of heritage-corn. Whether it be through growing heritage crops, researching climate change, or hosting art installations, Yoshino is set to prove to us how seeds and farming can be an act of resistance.

Kline Cook Asks Students Not to Park on Hill

Bronwyn Simmons



Students are asked not to park on the hill behind Kline Commons. c/o Rachel Hodes

Betty Nicolato, a cook at Kline, approached the *Free Press* about the problem of students parking up on the hill by the West side of Kline. "I have a little concern about student parking on the hill," she said. "Number one, it's a fire zone where they park, and we had, for instance here, about a month ago, when the firetrucks and the ambulances couldn't get up here right to where we needed them to be for a very serious emergency." The circumstance that Nicolato referred to was when Ishmael Thomas, a recently deceased dishwasher at Kline, was in critical condition before he died, and the cars parked in the fire zone blocked the emergency vehicles from being able to drive up to the building to the scene. While Nicolato, who used to be a volunteer firefighter, doesn't think this is to blame for Thomas' death, she did say it slowed down the process of attending to his medical needs. "We park up there—it's management parking and handicapped parking. We are all right here, so if something happens ... we could all get out and move our vehicles. If a student parks up there, we have to call security, give them the number off the car, and then they have to contact the student to come get their car off the hill because we have an emergency. It's just not right. It's just a dangerous situation, them parking on the hill."

Nicolato says the time span of student parking on the hill varies. "I've seen them park for a whole day, and then I've seen them park, come in, get lunch, sit here and eat, and then eventually they'll get their car. Or park there, and we got trucks coming in, and they'll double park just to run in to Green Onion. Sure, it's convenient, but it's not proper . . . And it's illegal."

To avoid giving students tickets, Nicolato says the dining staff tries to talk directly to them first without calling security. "Sometimes we get it thrown back at us, rude remarks, but we're only just telling them for their own good so they don't get a ticket. It's not because we're picking on them, we're just saying 'Hey, this is management parking, no student parking, it's a fire zone,' and you'll get, 'Oh, I'm only gonna be a minute.' You know, that minute could be someone's life."

Recently, when Nicolato attempted to tell a student not to park on the hill, they retorted that she should stop smoking by the door. "It's not an entrance, it's an exit, and there's an ashtray there," Nicolato said in her defense. "Sometimes they oblige, sometimes they don't. And just look at us and keep on walking. It's disrespectful. I'm everybody's friend here, I'm not rude, I'm just saying, 'Hey, help out here.'"

Nicolato thinks that putting out an email telling students not to park on top

of the hill could help change this problem. "Use common sense," she said.

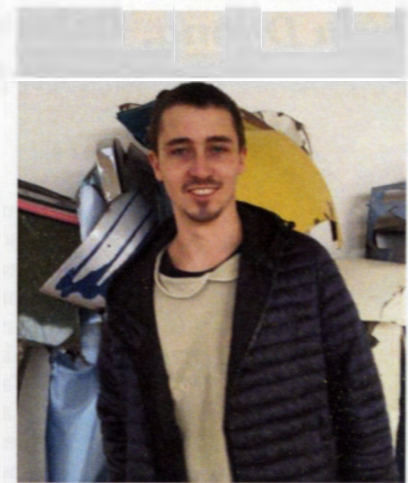
When asked for comment, John Gomez, the Director of Security at Bard, responded, "This is the first I am hearing about this. I will have the guards check the area for illegally parked vehicles. Vehicles are not permitted on the hill (signage at the bottom of the hill stating this)."

Local Man Banned From Campus

Alyssa May White

On Thursday, April 25th, Security Director John Gomez sent an email to the student body regarding a sighting of Stephen Dachs, a 22-year-old Red Hook man who has been banned from campus. The email from Director Gomez included up-to-date photographs of Dachs and instructions to call Security if he is spotted on Bard grounds. It is unclear why exactly Dachs was banned from campus, and Director Gomez was unable to comment beyond, "an incident at the Stevenson Gymnasium." A quick check of arrest reports from the Daily Freeman reveals that Dachs was arrested and ticketed for DUI on Route 15. In another report from the same source, Dachs was charged with endangering the welfare of a child and with harassment with physical contact. It is unlikely that either of these is the offense that resulted in the ban, but there are no records of his arrest that reference Bard College or the Stevenson Athletic Center.

More information may be available on Dachs's most recent infraction on campus. According to a post by Chris Blake in the Bard Students Facebook group, Dachs was allegedly caught drugging drinks on campus. When asked in the Facebook thread by student Frankie Witz if Security had been made aware, Blake said, "I posted due to an email the security director sent out so yep they know!" This post is given credence by another email sent out by Director Gomez shortly following the email about Dachs be-



Stephen Dachs, a Red Hook Resident, is Banned From Campus. Image c/o Bard College Security

ing a persona non grata about an attempted drugging at Smog. This email was also sent out on Thursday, April 25th, a mere hour after the original email about Dachs. The second email does not explicitly mention Dachs, but the timing along with the student post seems to connect the two.

According to Gomez, Dachs has "no connection to Bard." When asked how many times Dachs has been spotted on campus since he was banned, Gomez said, "That I don't know. I received a report a couple weeks ago, and that's when I sent out an alert based on what was brought to me. And I am aware of him. Prior to coming to Bard, I was with the State Police for thirty years, so I'm familiar with Mr. Dachs." The incident that resulted in a school-wide email has been the only reported incident. On the subject of how dangerous Dachs is, Gomez said, "It would be a very different alert, right, if I thought that it was very dangerous, and it would probably be in conjunction with law enforcement." Dachs is not too dangerous for a student to approach if they feel confident in such a move. Gomez said, "He shouldn't be on campus. There's nothing wrong with a student saying, 'Hey, are you Steve Dachs? You shouldn't be on campus. I'm going to call security.'"

Kevin Duong, Beloved Politics Professor, to Depart

Bronwyn Simmons

The *Free Press* recently caught up with departing Assistant Professor in Political Studies Kevin Duong. Professor Duong, who teaches political theory and European intellectual history, is leaving Bard to teach at University of Virginia. Duong has only taught at Bard since Fall 2016, but in such short time has become an incredibly beloved and respected professor among Bard activists, political science nerds, and history students alike. He will be missed by both students and faculty.

His job at Bard was Duong's first full-time teaching position. Before teaching at Bard, Duong was a TA and teacher at Cornell in Ithaca, New York during his time there as a graduate student. Prior to that, he was an adjunct at Middle Tennessee State University. During his undergraduate years, Duong first became politicized during the Iraq invasion and was active in the anti-war movement. He is currently a member of the Mid-Hudson Valley Democratic Socialists of America.

When in graduate school, Duong co-founded the Cornell Graduate Student Union. "We began actually as a bunch of pretty hardcore radicals who wanted to do a totally horizontal consensus model of unionization," he said. The union went from four people to several hundred in under two years, and Duong became a paid organizer with the American Federation of Teachers and the New York State Union of Teachers in an effort to organize Cornell graduate students. Duong described the formal union recognition defeating vote as "the most disappointing day of my life," when the union lost by 40 votes. "The University committed so many unfair labor practices, though, that the election was negated. So technically there was actually no outcome. And so the union to this day is still organizing for another election."

As a union organizer, Duong was frustrated upon coming to Bard and being told that the faculty could not formally unionize (labor law prohibits private institution faculty from unionizing). Bard faculty are part of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which is technically not a union but is recognized by the administration as a negotiating body; Bard's chapter is part of the collective bargaining arm of the AAUP. Duong recalls his new faculty orientation meeting, when the Dean of the College glorified the fact that Bard faculty had representation, yet were not in a union. "I flat-out asked the Dean at the time, 'You're not using the word union, like, is this a union?' And she'd be like, 'But you have representation.'"

Duong responded, "No, no, no, like, can we strike?" He continued, "The dean went white and then pulled me aside later and was just like, 'Isn't it so great that you have representation but it's not a union?' And I was like, 'No, I used to be a union organizer. I want it to be a union.'" Duong was looking forward to working with the AAUP when he became tenured at Bard, and is disappointed that he won't have that opportunity. Of Bard's current AAUP chapter President, Professor Swapan Jain, Duong said, "So Swapan is so heroic. It's kind of amazing what he's doing because AAUP is not an actual union but . . . through strategic brilliance has been able to win a lot of concessions from the administration."

While Professor Duong thinks it is important to be critical of Bard as an institution, he wants to express how much he enjoyed his time here. The Bard community has been very important to him, and he had a difficult time deciding whether to accept University of Virginia's job offer. Finally, he did accept it, partly because "Bard is a very, very difficult place to work at." He tem-

pered this statement by saying, "It's a super good community. The people here and the students are really good," but he affirmed that "as an actual place of employment, it's brutal." Duong went on to express his frustration with Bard, saying, "I think in general, Bard treats our work as a lifestyle, and they do that in order to extract as much labor out of us as possible for way, way, way [more than] what is reasonable going into a typical work week. And I really dislike that. The fact that they treat teaching at Bard as a moral mission for which you should martyr everything about your life to that moral mission, and so therefore we're discouraged to never think of it as an employment situation, as a labor situation. So the administration the entire time I've been here loves asking faculty to go above and beyond their necessary duties for the good of the College and the good of student education, but there's never a question of how to compensate us. You're just kind of expected to do these insuperable acts of unpaid labor. And UVA was very good—they actually explicitly said we will never do that to you, when we ask you to do service, we will find compensation for it."

When asked further about his relationship to Bard, Duong said, "I've never been at a place where I've censored myself so much. The reason I've had to censor myself is because I've never worked at a place that was so hierarchically organized. Every institution is hierarchically organized. Few places are so hierarchically organized that you're effectively an at-will employee, at least in terms of university contexts, I think. So that is weird."

Duong dislikes the "distinctive bureaucratic work of Bard: crite sheets, moderation. Things that no other institution does but which sucks up a huge amount of time. Which makes the semesters even more difficult than they should be."

He went on to say, "With the administration, there's this humongously uneven distribution of advising, which puts a disproportionate burden on faculty and relieves other faculty of any advising or supervising duties. So not only do I have to teach the

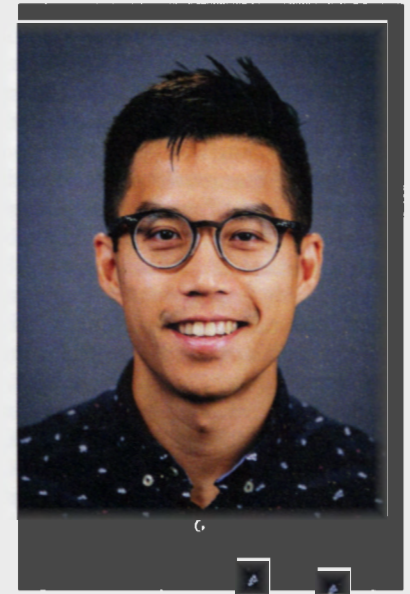


Photo c/o Kevin Duong

full teaching load, I also (less than actually some of my female colleagues) have a gazillion senior projects and advisees that I'm doing, whereas some of our colleagues had, like, three advisees and no senior projects. That breeds resentment among the faculty because it means that people are just disproportionately shouldering the burden of the advising work in a way that is really unfair."

When pressed about the gender discrimination issue he had raised, Duong said, "It's a combination of, I think, female faculty members, junior faculty members . . . Yeah, to give you an example, in my program, these are the extremes: We'll have one faculty member with three advisees and another faculty member with thirty. So that's a difference of order of magnitude 10, so, it's like, that should have never been allowed. And the fact that those—I think they're being redressed now—but inequalities like that have basically marked the entire time I've been here . . . [E]normously disproportionate shouldering of the burden of advising. So that sucks."

Duong went on to explain the complication of Bard's faculty presidential appointments' earning more money than other

faculty members who do more work for the college. “[T]he labor is unevenly distributed. We have tons of faculty who just don’t do much but cost so much money, so, so, so much money. We have special presidential appointments who basically do little teaching, no advising . . . They suck up a huge amount of money, but they don’t do the day-to-day work of running the College. And so, you know, maybe we wouldn’t be understaffed if the labor was evenly distributed. I wouldn’t know, we’ve never done it, we won’t ever do it. And so I think in its current arrangement, everyone feels overworked all the time.” Duong thinks that a couple of these celebrity appointments are necessary to keep the College academically competitive and financially afloat, but not most of them. “I have such a hard time imagining that people are giving donations for some of the presidential appointments that we have. I think that some of the presidential appointments that we have are just because Leon [Botstein] feels like it.”

When asked if he sees Bard as a white supremacist institution, Duong answered, “It’s white supremacist, but no more, no less than I think other colleges. It’s white supremacist in the sense that we live in a white supremacist society, so our values reflect that. So, for example, we don’t value black liberation; we value free speech. We don’t value an egalitarian workplace; we value charismatic leadership. We don’t value the contributions of our faculty of color; rather we value the glory and heroism of white presidential appointments. So in that sense, yes . . . I think our faculty and staff of color feel super embattled, especially those who are black Americans . . . Not an easy place for faculty of color, for sure, because you constantly see your contributions diminished when compared to the superstar presidential white guys.”

While he has experienced frustration with Bard as an institution, Duong expressed his appreciation for the Bard community. “The students are awesome. The teaching experience is really great. I feel like I have a fair amount of independence in what and how I teach. I really like that. I like the students

I teach, too. They’re really responsive.”

He went on to praise the Bard faculty: “There are tons of folks here who are working really hard to make it a better, most just, more equal place. So many people are doing things, small and big, to make it a more democratic place. That culture of institutional reform isn’t evenly shared among the faculty, obviously. But it’s there. And it’s amazing. This isn’t a faculty--well, it’s not a group of junior faculty--who are complacent about institutional reform and destroying the hierarchies which make Bard what it is right now. I often joked that we need to abolish the Office of the President. Well, half joked. But who knows--maybe someday we can do it here. There’s certainly enough willpower among some of the more critically-minded faculty to reimagine what a democratic college would actually look like. The point is that there’s a critical mass of faculty committed to justice, and that means the institution has a future. I’m guessing that the place I’m going, UVA, has a faculty culture that is complacent about institutional hierarchies. For obvious reasons, they’re much more committed right now to dealing with white supremacy in Charlottesville. One of my former teachers used to always tell me, though, that you should begin the work of making the world more egalitarian by beginning where you are. Work on where you live and work. Bard folk are doing that.”

“What I will miss least is the administration, which has always felt absolutist. And always something that everyone at some point is unconsciously thinking about, like living under their shadow or something. The thing I won’t miss at all is the constant, everyday experience of the sheer asymmetries of power, which are so palpable.”

When asked if these “asymmetries of power” are due to President Botstein’s leadership and if he thinks that Bard is ruled as a “cult of personality,” Duong responded, “Yes, and yes. I think he helps foster a culture, yes, of deep power asymmetries. I think he knows it, too. I don’t think it’s a secret. And there are moments when I kind of

tend to think that Bard is almost like a vanity project for him . . . [H]e’s super obsessive about its public-facing profile, its brand, of having hotshot professors. Yeah, I think the cult of personality aspect is a pretty good way of looking at it. It’s ironic because he . . . likes to brand himself as a defender of free speech, but he seems to be totally unaware that if you have free speech at Bard, then you’d actually have to make an egalitarian workplace . . . [F]or people to be able to speak freely on diverse things, they have to not be afraid of punitive action by their bosses. And the fact that he deliberately fosters an absolutist workplace totally undermines and makes me think that he’s not serious when he’s like, ‘Oh my God, Bard stands for free speech.’ If he was really committed to that, then he’d have to create an egalitarian workplace, which is the last thing I could imagine Leon Botstein ever creating.”

Duong was recently quoted saying that Bard was run tyrannically, so the Free Press asked him for an example of this kind of leadership. “[F]aculty will unanimously vote up someone for tenure, and Leon on a whim decides to fire them. And there’s no appeal. I mean, there’s a formal appeal process that never works. Instead there are lawsuits,” Duong said, laughing. He told the *Free Press* that faculty members sometimes have to sue for tenure after President Botstein denies it to them. “I don’t know whether it’s true, but people joke that there’s apparently a law firm in New York City that basically specializes in lawsuits to Bard.”

Duong went on to provide two examples of encounters with the President that he thought demonstrated his “absolutism” in leadership. “[T]his is crazy: When Leon was trying to retain me, I mentioned that part of the reason I wasn’t sure about whether I should stay at Bard was I didn’t know how certain my future here would be. And Leon’s response was, ‘If I say you’re safe, you’re safe because I make the decisions around here.’ It’s not like it’s smoke and mirrors about the absolutism. The dude makes all decisions when it comes to hiring, promotion, tenure, and the retention of faculty. Just a really crystal clear example of

the fact that all the power is in his hands.”

Duong’s second example was his hiring interview with the President. “[L]eon makes gut judgements about faculty, which are based on almost nothing . . . When he hired me, it was supposed to be an hour-long, maybe even an hour-and-half-long interview. It was only twenty minutes, fifteen of which he spent screaming at someone on the phone, and then the remaining five minutes said, ‘I have a good gut feeling about you,’ picked up his phone, called the Dean and told her to give me a job without first even consulting my own program.” Duong called this experience “truly shocking.”

The Free Press asked Duong about the College’s plan for President Botstein’s retirement. “I haven’t gone to the last faculty meeting, but they did say something like, ‘There is no succession plan until there is an endowment.’ Duong says the College will “probably implode” post-Botstein, due to its being broke. “Maybe the Board of Trustees will save us, maybe big donors will save us, or maybe the College will just collapse. I mean, it’s hard to predict. I think part of the frustration with a lot of faculty is the huge amount of uncertainty in the future of the institution. It doesn’t look good from what I’ve heard.”

Duong explained how it regularly takes three to five months for faculty to receive basic reimbursement checks from the College. “If you need a reimbursement check that is too big, they’ll often not give it to us because they tell us it might bounce, which is pretty bad when you try to cash a check from your institution that’s, like, a thousand dollars and they tell you it might bounce,” Duong remarked.

When asked to elaborate on the College’s financial situation, Duong replied, “I think even the faculty don’t know exactly how bad it is, but to give you a hint, apparently last year, I’m told, Bard was taking out payday loans to cut paychecks.” Duong went on to say, “When I first got here—this is really bad—I wanted an Apple desktop, and they couldn’t get me one because Apple wasn’t

sending computers to Bard anymore because we were so behind our bills. So you can infer from these kinds of examples a pretty bad financial situation, I think.” When asked about Bard’s investment, Duong said, “We’re super donor-money-and-tuition-driven, so I don’t think we have exactly the most elaborate or complicated investment portfolio in the universe.”

On a more sentimental note, Duong told the *Free Press*, “What I’ll miss most are my colleagues. Many of them I’m friends with, I’m really close to. It’s a really good community of younger faculty.” He elaborated, “I may have mixed feelings about the institution, but the people and the community are worth staying for. And if I hesitated for so long about leaving, it’s because I developed bonds here that I wanted to protect. I feel very lucky, because even though I’m in the division of social studies, most of my close friends are actually outside of it. I feel at home with friends in the humanities and the arts. And in many ways, the French program has become my second home. That’s something that’s really valuable, because at a bigger institution, it’s easy to become stuck in your discipline’s silo and not have close friends and colleagues outside of that. But here, I feel embedded in a much wider and more diverse intellectual community. Funny enough, I think it actually made my scholarship better, too. Political science can be a really narrow discipline. God knows I spent most of graduate school rebelling against it. My friendships here with folks outside of political studies seeped back into my own work.”

Another thing that Duong will miss is Bard students’ attitudes towards a liberal arts education. “Before Bard, I was at places where the students were relentlessly pre-professional. All they ever thought about was what would come after college, what job they could get, how they could land bourgeois jobs in bourgeois urban centers, become lawyers or consultants or bankers. It’s complicated, because at Cornell, this was an expression of bourgeois class power. At Middle Tennessee State University, this was survival. The students

there came from the working class, and what they wanted was a stable income and security. At both of those places, though, I had to work really hard to justify studying political theory to the students. I was always having to invent reasons why studying Rousseau had real world applications. But at Bard, I’ve never once had to justify to my students why political theory is important. It’s just obvious that it’s important to understand Rousseau. That’s awesome. Because the students get to just enjoy the thrill of learning political theory, which is what I felt when I first studied it. That said, my parents are still not enthusiastic about what I do. They’re still thinking, what actually is it that Kevin does for a living? Why is he still writing? Didn’t he graduate?”

“Is Bard really a place to think?” asked *The Free Press*. “No, it’s a branding exercise,” said Duong. “I wish it was. But if it really was committed to that, then it would make an egalitarian place.”

In conclusion, Duong wants to leave Bard with this quote: “Never, ever forget that Bard is first and foremost a workplace, not a family. We should be nice to each other, but it’s actually more important to me that the institution’s justly organized than for people to like each other. I think that’s super important.”

Lastly, Duong added, “One of my former teachers told me something that was always super important to me: that you should always leave institutions more democratic than when you entered them.”

Say My Name, Say My Name Changing Your Name at Bard

Nicholas Fiorellini

Since the Fall 2018 semester, Bard administration has allowed students to change their names on Student IDs and e-mail addresses through an online form. The name change form will allow an individual’s chosen or preferred name to be listed on all class and residence hall rosters and the post office. Depending on what options you choose, it will also change the name listed on a Student ID and e-mail.

Filling out this form does not constitute a legal name change; a student’s legal first name must appear on legal documents, including financial aid and employment records, bursar bills, transcripts and other legal documents. Students who have legally changed their names should contact Peter Gadsby in the Registrar’s Office.

The Free Press talked to students who have undergone the name change process—without legally changing their name prior—at Bard. Although many have successfully updated their names on student IDs and in the Bard system, others attest to the trials and tribulations of the onerous process.

In a Queer Student Organization meeting, club leaders and members discussed their experiences updating this information with the school. At the start of the 2016 academic year, before the current form became available, junior Olivia Cucina, who is a co-head of the Queer Student Organization, recalls starting the process with Kevin Dean, former Dean of First-Year experience, “Even Dean Dean told me that people would be very resistant to changing the letters in my e-mail. I want administrators at Bard not to push back against simple changes like these.”

The process was frustrating and time-consuming; wherever she turned, Cucina met a bureaucratic wall that pre-

vented her from moving forward in changing her name in the Bard system.

“When I tried to get my name changed in the Bard system freshmen year, I asked around to see where I can get this done,” says Cucina. “People told me to go to IT, but they told me they didn’t have the authority to make these changes and I should go to the dean. The deans then referred me back to IT and the cycle continued.”

After a back and forth between the deans and the IT department, Cucina was able to get a new student ID and e-mail display in the Spring 2017 semester. Today, although her student ID is updated and her e-mail display publicizes her current name, the initials in her e-mail reflect the letters of her dead name.

Clubs have addressed this process before and stressed its inefficiencies. Cucina told *The Free Press* how the Trans Life Collective advocated for Title IX to create the Google Survey form. “It’s in the Bard App and sometimes no one gets around to look at the responses and update the information,” she says.

Junior Jasper Francis, also co-head of the Queer Student Organization, was one of these individuals who had previously submitted a request but was ignored.

“It’s frustrating that they handle it this way,” they tell *The Free Press*, “But I just kind of let it be and ignore it, since I don’t want to deal with the process.” Before first-year Lou Rosenblatt updated his name, he told the Queer Student Organization and *Free Press* about how his e-mail that did not display his current name interfered with his registering for classes.

“I had a problem my first semester where I couldn’t register for classes, because I would e-mail a professor under my cho-

sen name and they would forget or cannot find me while registering students for class and I got rejected,” says Rosenblatt.

Unaware of the Google Survey form he could fill out, Rosenblatt contacted the registrar directly on how to change his name on his Student ID and e-mail. Although his Student ID is now up to date, Rosenblatt still claims to be unsure how the rest of the Bard population should go about properly changing their e-mail address. “I wish this information was more transparent,” he says.

Located as a tab in the Bard App, administration does provide a public list of resources of allies on campus, reporting options and assistance, a summary of the school’s gender-based misconduct policy and the nondiscrimination policy under a Trans Resource Guide.

Using the word “trans” as an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth, the guide includes information regarding housing, name changes, location of gender-inclusive restrooms, and individuals on campus who can provide assistance with quotidian college life.

“Bard College is committed to providing a safe and inclusive campus for trans students, faculty, staff, and visitors. The Bard College Trans Resource Guide provides information and resources available at the College as well as in our community,” the Guide states.

The Trans Resource Guide, which is updated as policies, practices, and facilities change, includes information regarding housing, name changes, location of gender-inclusive restrooms, and individuals on campus who can provide assistance with quotidian college life.

Although the Trans Resource Guide in the Bard App does not explicitly mention how an individual can change his, her, or their name on his, her, or their Student ID or e-mail, the long-form versions of the guide from previous aca-

demic years provide this information.

Student advocates believe that this information is not well-advertised, especially to returning students that do not go through orientation or are not on social media, and should be better advertised to all students throughout the school year.

Junior Jane Colon-Boney tells *The Free Press* that they did not know this Guide—or app—existed. When they were a first year, they claim, “The only app that administration suggested was this now-defunct planning app that existed in 2016 and I’ve never heard anything about it since.”

The app Colon-Boney refers to is the first iteration of the Bard App—which no longer exists—that was available for Bard first years to use during the Language and Thinking and Citizen Science programs in the 2016-2017 academic year.

Both co-heads of the Queer Student Organization believe the Trans Resource Guide on the Bard App should include more information and that the online guide should be updated every year.

“While I am impressed that Bard did put the Trans Resource Guide on the Bard App, it has the same problems I had with it before: There is no information on healthcare, it’s only rules and reporting options and nothing you can do,” says Cucina. “If you want to start the process of changing your name or contacting health services for therapy for gender therapy issues, there’s nowhere to go.”

Both Cucina and Francis want the Bard population to know that not all is grim for those looking to change their names on his, her, or their Student IDs and/or e-mails. On May 2, 2019, less than two days after re-submitting the name change Google Survey form that Francis has previously submitted—and been subsequently ignored—Francis’ e-mail was updated and they received a new Student ID with their current name, free of charge. •

Students Working Off Campus

Rachel Hodes

Walk into a shop or restaurant in the surrounding towns of Red Hook and Tivoli, and odds are high that you will find at least one Bard student is working there. Although Bard offers work study jobs on campus, many students have decided to look a little further for their source of income.

One such student is Jamie Gillette, ‘20, who has worked at Murray’s, a cafe in Tivoli, for almost two years. Gillette, a Written Arts major, has consistently found it more financially profitable to work off-campus service industry jobs rather than find something through Bard. The trade-off, she says, is a busier schedule, with less time for homework and extracurriculars. Still, businesses that hire students tend to be cognizant of their employees’ commitments. “My bosses are also former Bard students, so I think that it’s a very understanding atmosphere in terms of scheduling around classes,” explained Gillette. “People are very willing to jump in and take each other’s shifts because we all know we’re students and have busy lives. And my bosses allow me to have consistent days too, so it’s not like I’m getting a weekly schedule that changes.”

Still, there are some jobs that are simply not conducive to the demands of a student schedule. “I used to work at a different place freshman year, and their scheduling was just too unpredictable for me,” Gillette said.

On-campus work study jobs allow students to work up to 13 hours per week, or 26 per two week pay period. Gillette, who works three shifts per week at Murray’s, is doubtful that she could find enough on-campus work to support herself in the way that she is able to do with her service industry job. Even so, the time she devotes to working has complicated her life as a student. “I’m taking 17 credits this semester, which is not the most I’ve taken but it’s still a pretty intense workload

with the classes that I’m taking,” she said.

The balance between work and school can be difficult to figure out. “This semester, I’ve had to start working another day a week, just because I was abroad and so I’ve had to work a little bit more when I got back. Because of that I’ve had to reduce the amount of extracurricular things that I’m able to do just because I’m a full time student and I still need time to do my homework.” Losing out on opportunities that are fruitful, but unpaid, is often an effect of the student’s work schedule. “When you have to work as a student, seeing people who don’t need to work as students be able to pursue things like unpaid internships during the summer, which are just not an option anymore when you have to partially or fully support yourself, that can be difficult,” Gillette admitted.

Yet, there are plenty of things she loves about her job, which helps foster a sense of community. “Honestly, it’s hard for me to imagine the experience of Bard students who don’t have the experience of working in Tivoli or Red Hook, because it does integrate you so much more into the community. Even, just for instance, I have this regular, Patrick—do you know Patrick?—he owns an art gallery in Red Hook, and is always coming up to me and asking me, like, ‘Oh, I’m making this flier for this art show, do you know anyone who would want to be in it,’ or, ‘You should come to this.’ And I’m good friends with one of my regulars who does World War II skydiving reenactments. So he’s like, we have each other’s numbers and he’ll send me info and videos of his latest jumps.”

While some students have abandoned the idea of working on campus completely, others piece together a combination of on and off-campus jobs. Siena Sherer, ‘20, who studies Electronic Music, has worked a number of assorted jobs, including one currently at the Fisher Center on the sound crew, and one as a dishwasher and prep cook at the Traghaven Whiskey Pub, which she recently quit.

“I’ve always kind of cobbled together a



Tivoli's main street, Broadway. Image c/o Coldwell Banker

couple different ways of making money, because I think I'm a freelance worker at heart," said Sherer. For several weeks, she juggled both of these jobs as well as her busy schedule as a student. When I asked her which job gave her more flexibility in terms of hours and scheduling, she responded: "Well, with the Fisher Center stuff, it's more akin to working freelance because it's on a show-by-show basis unless I'm going in to help with maintenance which is still sort of dependent on the show schedule. So there will be times when I'm working a lot there, I guess, and times where there aren't that many things going on that I need to do. But the bar is regular, so if I need to go home for like a week or something like that, that would be an issue, I'd have to have someone cover my schedule." The on-campus Fisher Center job gives her more flexibility in scheduling, although it asks her to work longer shifts. The work at the bar was reliably scheduled each week, and broken down into four to five hour shifts.

Still, Sherer, who lives on campus and does not have a car, has had difficulties with getting to her off-campus job. "Usually it's okay because the shuttle does run before

and after the times I should be showing up and leaving respectively, but when I was here over spring break doing that job, I actually got stranded in Tivoli a couple times, because the shuttle stopped running, and, you know, if there was a time when they needed me in at 5 or 4:30 I'd have to be in Tivoli at 3:30 and just wait there. And I don't live there so it's kind of frustrating."

Gillette, who lives in Tivoli, is able to walk down the street to get to her job at Murray's. The convenience of working in the town where she lives, and of feeling like her job gives her access to the Tivoli community, is specific to the concerns of a student who lives off campus. After a semester abroad in Budapest, Hungary, the return to Murray's and to Tivoli was a reminder of the connections she shared through her work. "It was also funny going abroad, being away, and I come back and all of my regular customers are like, 'where were you?' And we talk about Budapest, and you find out all these weird things, like a lot of them lived in Budapest or they have family— it's just, there are so many opportunities to connect with people."

