

Mount Mercy TIMES

A student publication

mountmercytimes.home.blog

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Class of '21 Can Walk

For COVID-19 Safety, Ceremony Divided by Dept.

By Veronica Jons
Editor-in-Chief

Graduation at Mount Mercy is set to be in person. The public announcement was made by Tim Laurent, president, on Feb. 21, that Mount Mercy plans an in-person commencement for 2021 graduates, including last year's 2020 graduates.

"There was a lot of effort that went into last year's virtual ceremony," said Nate Klein, vice president for student success. "Not being able to see people walk across to get their diploma just wasn't the same. But it was the best we could do with the given situation."

"It feels great to be invited back for the 2021 graduation," Connor Christophersen, a current grad student who graduated in 2020, said. "I feel like last year's online commencement went well, but it will be great to watch Mount Mercy continue on with the tradition of an in-person graduation."

Commencement is set for May 16 at the Alliant Energy PowerHouse event center. COVID-19 protocols will be used, with mandatory social distancing and masks. To make this possible, there will be limited attendance, resulting in multiple ceremony groups.

"Getting to walk across the stage at graduation with the rest of my cohort makes everything we worked for during our time at Mount Mercy feel so real," said senior Abby Richardson.

"I've grown so much with the help of this group and knowing that we get to end our college experience together with a true graduation ceremony means the world to me."

Graduates will be divided by department, resulting in groups of 100-200 students per ceremony and a more condensed itinerary. Students will be allowed to have guests in attendance, and faculty and staff may attend. In proper post-pandemic fashion, there will be a livestreaming option for those who choose it.

"I am super excited to have a chance to have a real college graduation," said senior Jacob Perks. "I've been waiting for the moment since walking onto campus freshman year."

"Being the first in my family to walk across the stage is a huge accomplishment and I'm happy I get to enjoy that with my family," he continued.

Officials note that the 2021 commencement plan may be subject to change. For more updates regarding the May 16 commencement date, see <https://www.mtmercy.edu/academics/academic-support/commencement>.



Annie Barkalow/Times

Potholes show up at this time of year as winter turns to spring, seen on a street near campus. Thawing and freezing breaks up the pavement, creating a challenging journey for the many Mustangs who commute to Mount Mercy University.

Bumpy Roads

Snow, Potholes Complicate the Journey to Campus

By Annie Barkalow
Staff Writer

Construction and snowbanks and potholes, oh my!

Roads this time of year are tedious and sometimes perilous, and a good reminder that campus living has its benefits. Students can walk from their dorms to classes without ever stepping foot outside, thanks to the tunnels that snake under the campus. Thank you, tunnel-diggers of yore, whoever you are. God's blessings rain down on you now and forevermore.

For off-campus students, however, the pathway to class is paved—or rather pot-holed—with peril during winter. According to the

"I did leave school early when there were reports of a large snowstorm that was imminent. Thankfully, I made it home in time and caught the entire class on Zoom."

Scott Larson, finance major

registrar, roughly 64 percent of Mount Mercy undergraduates commute to school, some driving from long distances. Icy roads, driveways blocked with snow, construction detours, tall snowbanks blocking the view of roads and sketchy side streets make the commute to higher learning an exercise in faith (is there a patron saint of highways)?

For students who commute to school every day during winter, keeping track

of the weather forecast is a necessity.

"I leave the house 10 minutes earlier than I usually do," says senior Scott Larson, a finance major who commutes 45 minutes from Clarence.

"I did leave school early when there were reports of a large snowstorm that was imminent. Thankfully, I made it home in time and caught the entire class on Zoom." The large snowstorm was one of several in

February that piggy-backed on each other, causing accidents and delays. Blizzard conditions were to blame for a 40 car pileup on Interstate 80 west of Newton.

"It's been a lot of drifting in my car this year, that's for sure!" said sophomore Andrew Lorig, chemistry major.

Adding to the difficult weather conditions is the major road construction going on in Cedar Rapids, which has temporary closed of some streets that lead to Mount Mercy.

"Up until a few months ago, 29th Street was closed

♦ **Bikers Face Different Set**
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Times Wins 7 Awards in Annual ICMA Contest



Jada Veasey/Times

Courtney Hoffman, managing editor, a senior, works on the page layout plan for this edition of the newspaper in the Times office on Feb. 28. Hoffman won the most awards at the recent Iowa College Media Association contest, taking three, including the best newspaper staff blog in Iowa.

"I'm really proud of the whole Times staff. We have some amazing writers who work hard and are passionate about what they do."

Annie Barkalow,
staff writer

By Courtney Hoffman
Managing Editor

Four Mount Mercy Times writers were honored with seven awards at the annual Iowa College Media Association (ICMA) Awards Ceremony on Feb. 18.

The ICMA is composed of student media organizations at several colleges and universities across Iowa. Each year, entries in print media, television, and radio media are judged and awards presented in a number of categories at the conference.

"It's always a great reminder why the team puts in so many hours at the office to deliver quality content to the public," said Veronica Jons, editor-in-chief. "The recognition at the annual ICMA is always very rewarding and makes all the hard work worth it. It makes me proud to be the Times' editor-in-chief with such a great team."

The Times received first place for best staff editorials. In addition, four Mount Mercy Times journalists were honored.

Jons received a third place award for best page 1; managing editor Courtney Hoffman received a second place award for best feature photograph, third place for best profile story, and first place for best blog; senior opinion editor Jada Veasey was honored with a first place award for best opinion writing; and staff writer Annie Barkalow earned second place for best blog.

"I feel honored and pleased for my blog to be recognized," Barkalow said. "I'm really proud of the whole Times staff."

We have some amazing writers who work hard and are passionate about what they do. I was so glad Mount Mercy received recognition for that."

A junior communications major with a creative writing minor, Barkalow says she blogs about many things, including losing friendships and battling mental illness.

"I've had individuals reach out and say 'me too.' If I can make that connection with a reader, it means I've done my job as a writer."

"For me, it feels validating," Barkalow added. "I love writing, and I hope that I can touch someone with my words."

Veasey has served as opinion editor for the Times for two years—she jokes that opinion writing comes naturally to her as someone with a lot of opinions. Despite this, the junior nursing major says she was surprised with her first-place win for opinion writing.

"I was shocked to have won in the opinion category," Veasey said. "I never dreamed I'd actually win in the category, seeing as I was competing with so many other talented writers from across the state, many of them being actual journalism majors."

"I'm proof that you don't have to study journalism to contribute to the newspaper," Veasey added. "If you want to write, come write. We'd love to have you on the team!"

More Mount Mercy Times content can be found on our website at <https://mountmercytimes.home.blog/>. For a list of student and university-affiliate blogs, see <https://mountmercytimes.home.blog/mmu-blog-pages/>.

Heads up:

Apply to be Editor-in-Chief

The Times will soon be accepting applications for editor-in-chief for the 2021-2022 school year. Students must submit a letter of interest, resume, and writing samples for review. Contact Joe Sheller (jsheller@mtmercy.edu) for more details.

M2AP Board Hosts Musician

On Monday, March 8, M2AP Board will host musician Sessay at 7 p.m. in the University Center. Have fun and jam out in the UC with M2AP Board!

President's Lecture

On Tuesday, March 9 at 7 p.m., Mount Mercy will host Dr. Zena Hitz as she delivers the annual President's Lecture in an online format. Dr. Zena Hitz is a tutor at St. John's College. Her lecture will address leisure, learning, and happiness.

Stations of the Cross

Join campus ministry every Friday for Stations of the Cross. Interested students can visit the chapel on Fridays from 1-2 p.m.

Silent Eucharistic Adoration

Reflect on the Lenten season at Eucharistic Adoration hosted by Campus Ministry. If interested, visit the chapel between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on March 9.

Virtual Retreat Set For Spring Break

The department of volunteerism and service learning will host a virtual retreat from March 15-18. The retreat allows participants to help their communities through conversation. For more information, check out the events page on the Mount Mercy app.



Annie Barkalow/Times

Detours caused by road construction (above) and limited visibility due to snow piles at corners (right) are challenges for Mustang commuters this spring.

Bikers Face Different Set of Issues Commuting



◆ Bumpy Roads continued from page 1

right off the interstate, so I would have to continue up to 32nd Street, take a right there instead, and then eventually turn right on Prairie Drive. In the mornings, that initial right lane onto 32nd Street would be backed up quite a bit,” says junior Alan Milliman, a major in computer science and math who commutes from Solon.

First Avenue, one of the main arteries that runs through Cedar Rapids, has been under construction since late summer 2020 as part of a major renovation project to build a pedestrian underpass between 29th and 32nd streets.

Most students who drive to school find the road work annoying, but necessary. Lawson takes the detour in stride.

“High-quality streets require renewal from time to time and I am happy to see the city spending money on some-

thing productive,” he says, though admitting that driving two blocks further than normal and circling around is tedious.

Junior Morgan Ingwersen, a journalism major who drives 40 minutes from Central City, also dislikes detours but echoes Lawson’s sentiment. “Making sure the roads are in good condition is very important,” she says.

Students and faculty who bike to school have a slightly different view. For Lorig, who commuted to school by bike until winter, the reduced traffic lanes and uptick in work trucks made travel difficult.

“I really wish there was some safer way to commute by bike, but, especially on First Avenue, I end up riding on the sidewalks when no pedestrians are about.”

Joe Sheller, associate professor of

“High-quality streets require renewal from time to time and I am happy to see the city spending money on something productive.”

Alan Milliman, junior, computer science

communication, says the construction hasn’t been much of an issue for him since he takes an indirect route on quiet streets on his bicycle. “Things

that affect cars don’t have as much of an effect on me,” he said. The biggest obstacle, he continued, is getting around snow that piles up at the end of sidewalks from the plows. Finding sidewalks and trails closed with no warning is also a hindrance.

Thankfully, there’s light at the end of the tunnel. Spring is on our doorstep, melting ice and snow. The underpass under construction on First Avenue will connect to the CeMar trail that runs by Mount Mercy, providing a safer alternative route for those who bike—or run—to school. For now, the mobile Mustangs continue to take precautions as they make their way to school.

Simulation Shows Impact of Actions on Climate Change

By Gwen Johnson
Staff Writer

Students could play with a variety of solutions to climate change and explore the effects they would have during a virtual climate change simulation held Feb. 26 via Zoom.

“We can talk ourselves into apathy—you and I don’t have that option anymore,” Rachael Murtaugh, director of sustainability and stewardship said.

There are reasons why taking on climate change can seem incredibly overwhelming. For example, the global temperature rising over 4 degrees Celsius in this century could lead to sea level rise and melt two-thirds of the Himalayan glaciers. One out of six species would go extinct, and we are already seeing changes in the weather, generally for the worse.

This is why, in the words of sustainability graduate assistant Ricardo Etienne, “We can’t only be thinking about the future; we have to be thinking about now.”

Because of positive changes made by companies at a large scale level, the global temperature rise prediction has improved from a 2018 estimate to an increase of 3.6 degrees Celsius by 2100.

Participants at the simulation event were split into small groups. They then chose two or three variables to adjust and see how different aspects of climate change were affected. These alterations were then put into the simulation, which would show the effect on things like greenhouse gas emissions and ocean acidity. Notable selections were increases in tree planting and renewable energy use and decreases in deforestation and meat consumption.

The main lesson Murtaugh wants people to take away is that there are actions that we can still take.

For those that are interested in their own impact on the environment, she suggests keeping in mind the power of where we spend our money—preferably at thrift stores and local businesses—and be mindful of our rate of consumption.

She also recommended going to www.footprintcalculator.org, a website where people can input information about their lifestyle to see how many Earths worth of resources it would take for everyone on the planet to live like them. The carbon footprint is also broken down by area, with suggestions in each one.

Whether it’s shopping less on Amazon or going vegetarian for some meals, being willing to be inconvenienced for the greater good can help solve big problems. In Murtaugh’s words, “It’s not too late to mitigate.”



Screenshot of simulation

The virtual climate change simulation was Feb. 26 via Zoom. Participants learned how many Earth’s worth of resources a specific individual uses.

Performance Poet, Hip-Hop Artist Teaches Students to ‘Stay in the Flow’

Annie Barkalow
Staff Writer

Student writers at Mount Mercy recently heard how to tune into their power in purpose through poetry.

On Feb. 15, performance poet, hip-hop artist and pastor Iyana “YaNi” Davis shared her wisdom, wit, and talent to students and faculty alike in a two-part presentation titled “Peace, Purpose and Power: Stay in the FLOW.”

Davis, as the visiting spring writer and a guest artist in Professor Mary Vermillion’s Intermediate Creative Writing course, guided a poetry workshop and performed some of her own pieces while sharing part of her life story.

Junior Emilio Ramos, a communications major minoring in creative writing, was one of the students in Vermillion’s class who participated in the workshop. Asked what he was hoping to learn, Ramos said he aspired to be introduced to a variety of poetry.

“As a writer, it is easy for me to only focus on my preferred style of writing, that being prose,” Ramos said. “So I try and get as much exposure to other types of writing as I can to broaden my scope of experience.”

Lizzie Miene, an English major minoring in graphic design, took an introspective approach. “I was hoping to gain more of an understanding of

“She definitely offered new ways for me to be able to put down into words what I wanted to say.”

Lizzie Miene, English major

myself and my own personal writing style,” she said.

Participants in the workshop were encouraged to use some unconventional methods to inspire creativity before writing, including blowing raspberries and saying “boo” as low and long as possible. Those that were self-conscious were able to turn off their camera and blow raspberries in private (one of many bonuses to Zoom).

The exercise was part of a process Davis called a “mood check” before writing. Discussing literary devices and giving examples in a variety of poetry, she encouraged participants to create their own poems based on their background and how they saw themselves. Some chose to read their poems out loud, and some Davis read for them. There were a few heartfelt moments when students shared something deeply personal.

“She definitely offered new ways for me to be able to put down into words what I wanted to say,” said Miene.

Describing herself as a “bridge builder, disrupter, pastor and friend,” Davis shared the source of her inspiration with the participants. “I’m in love with

words...a lover of people, a lover of life,” Davis said. This was evident as she recited her own pieces, a mixture of poetry and hip-hop that she called “holy hip-hop hermeneutics.”

The hope and power behind her work partly came from a dark time in her life when she wrestled with kidney disease and

diabetes. In 2016 she collapsed while filming a PSA about women’s power on the set of ESPN. After getting a kidney transplant in 2018, she stayed in a coma for three days. Davis said she felt invisible during that time. “I wanted to get my power back,” she stated. Part of the healing process involved tapping into what she called “peace, purpose, and power,” an essential part to being in a “flow state.”

“Flow state is when you are in your zone—fully

immersed in a process or activity. When you flow you “know how to be,” she said.

Reflecting on this experience, Ramos said the workshop was the best one he’d attended so far as a student. “Rev. Yanni was so energetic and charismatic that it felt easy to get drawn [in] by her passion. Every time she spoke or performed a piece, or even read something a student wrote, you could hear her style and flow in every word,” said Ramos, adding

that he would love for her to return in the future.

“After attending the workshop, my day, in general, was a good day. She has such a positive attitude and her energy followed me throughout the day. I felt inspired and motivated to write which is normally more of a difficult process for me,” said Miene.

The free event was livestreamed and was sponsored by the Cultural Affairs Committee and Mount Mercy’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

MOUNT MERCY TIMES

NOW HIRING

Are you interested in learning the ins and outs of newspaper production? Want to show your leadership skills?

The Mount Mercy Times is in search of new Editor-in-Chief for 2021-2022!

To apply, you must provide three journalistic writing samples, a letter of interest, and a resume that includes three references. All materials must be submitted to Madelyn Orton,

MMU writer/content strategist, by Monday, **March 22**. Email PDF files to: morton@mtmercy.edu.

Other editorial positions are available, for 2021-2022. If you are interested, contact Joe Sheller, jsheller@mtmercy.edu.

News Flash: COVID-19 Doesn’t Take a Break Just Because You Do

Be Careful: Our Second Pandemic Spring Break Approaches Soon

This month marks one year since COVID-19 hit the United States and Americans watched their nation go under lock down, following other countries.

The country transformed for Americans, who went from living freely to do as they wished, to living in fear of leaving the house or not wearing a mask. Overnight, schools were shut

Staff Editorial

The opinion of Times editors

down, mental health declined, non-essential jobs dried up, and stimulus checks were deposited.

We had spent all of March into the summer months under lockdown, putting a pause on our lives. Many people picked up new hobbies, discovered hidden talents, and set at-home goals for themselves.

Yet here we are—a whole year has passed, and few things have changed since then. Perhaps masks will never fully go away, maybe everyone will continue to be more aware of social distanc-

ing, and perhaps constant sanitation will be adopted.

While we don’t want to see people in lockdown and not living their life to the fullest, we also don’t want people to forget about the pandemic. Spring Break is right around the corner. Be cautious of your choices. COVID-19 is nowhere near gone, and it doesn’t take a break while you are on break.

Spring Break travel is a popular bucket list item for high school and college students alike,

but we are still in the middle of a global pandemic. Choose to stay home, choose to relax with family or friends (socially distanced, of course), make the decision to learn a new hobby, or binge a new show. Check off some pandemic friendly things from your bucket list.

Don’t be blinded by the normalcy of the pandemic. Now is not the time to be exposing yourself to new people, being in enclosed spaces like planes, going to parties, and ignoring COVID-19 recommendations.

The actions people make now will directly affect the future of this pandemic.

People choosing not to abide by COVID-19 safety recommendations during this time could cause the pandemic to last longer. If our students, faculty, and staff choose to be reckless, then it can easily result in spikes of positive cases on campus, restrictions being re-applied, and a longer wait to normalcy.

If everyone who is tired of COVID-19 played their part in ending the pandemic, we all could go back to enjoying the things we loved before it started.

Gen Eds Do Have Value

Sometimes, schoolwork is frustrating. Shocking, I know! Who knew that earning a life-changing degree could stress you out? I have had a stressful beginning to my spring semester; it just seems like so much is happening at once.

This semester I’m enrolled in two nursing courses, an honors seminar, and a philosophy course. The philosophy course is an intro level one, and I signed up for it purely because Mount Mercy says I need it to graduate. As you might imagine, I, a nursing major, was not super excited about the idea of spending time reading and writing about philosophy.

When it came time to write my first essay of the semester, I was discouraged. The content was not easy for me to understand, and I knew it would take me a decent amount of time to gather the sources I needed and to complete the reading required to write the essay. In the back of my mind, I wondered, “Why do they even

make us take these classes? I’m going to be a nurse, not a philosopher!”

I wrote the essay, though, and I learned a lot while doing so. By the time I was done with my readings, I was genuinely interested in the text. But more importantly, I realized why a philosophy course might be a smart thing for a nursing student to take – it forces you to ask and answer big questions. Those are two things I’ll one day have to do as a nurse, even though the questions and answers will look a lot different.

After I turned in the first essay, I started approaching other essays with more enthusiasm. I’m learning a lot about both philosophy and myself. The whole experience is making me grateful I chose a liberal arts school that has a vested interest in creating well-rounded students.

I know that general education courses (called core curriculum at Mount Mercy) can be mentally taxing and may even feel like a bit of a waste of time for some of you. But I encourage you to think about how you can apply what you learn in these courses to your field of study. I think one day we’ll all be better professionals because of it.

But more importantly, I realized why a philosophy course might be a smart thing for a nursing student to take—it forces you to ask and answer big questions.

Opinion



Jada Veasey
Senior Opinion Editor

Lent Brings You Closer to Christ

Ask Yourself, What Distracts You From Your Faith?

Each year around this time, I get asked the same question repeatedly, “What are you giving up for Lent?”

The conversation will lead to a statement such as this. “I really need to lose weight, so I am giving up desserts.” That is a good thing, but we are called to go deeper, to go beneath the surface and into our hearts. Open your heart and ask: What is distracting you from God? In what places do you need to grow in your faith life?

Only after honest reflection am I able to choose what I am giving up. I will admit that I have fallen into the bad habit of giving up something for Lent and then doing it again right after Easter. This defeats the purpose.

Lent is a time designated for us to focus on our relationship with Christ. There are three pillars that the Church

gives us so that we can grow closer to Christ. The first pillar is prayer.

Prayer, simply put, is a conversation with God. You cannot know a person without talking to them and then listening to their response. How well would you know your spouse or friends if you never talked to each other? Communication is essential in all relationships, and thus, prayer is important in order to pursue a relationship with God.

Fasting builds off prayer. It is removing the things that obstruct our relationship with God. This is what most people are referring to when they say that they are giving up something. By fasting from the clutter in our lives, we can freely journey closer to Christ.

Almsgiving is the final pillar. Almsgiving is giving of your time, talent, and treasure. Time. How can you give your time to those around you and to God? Talent. God created us with many beautiful talents and gifts. How can we give these to those around us and to God? Treasure. This does not only mean our money.

Think about your shoes,

clothes, and other items that you own. How can we give these to others? In a practical sense, when I think of almsgiving, I think of letting someone use my “stuff.” A classmate needs an extra pencil or a note paper. A coworker needs you to print something for them. A family member needs your car.

In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 6, we read about the three pillars. Jesus tells us how to pray, fast, and give alms. Firstly, He tells us where to direct our focus.

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 6:1). Doing good deeds can be a great way to witness Christ’s love, but the focus of the good deed should not be on ourselves.

We should pray, fast, and give alms so that we can grow in our relationship with God and do all things for His glory. That is the purpose of Lent.

Faith on the Hill



Vanessa Milliman
Columnist

Ashley Hinson Doesn’t Understand the Meaning of ‘Equality’

Her Explanation for Her Refusal to Support the Equality Act Shows Her True Colors

Iowa Congresswoman Ashley Hinson has hidden behind her lack of understanding of the First Amendment and religious liberty to oppose the Equality Act.

The Equality Act expands protections to the LGBTQ+ community and was passed by the House on Thursday with the approval of 244-206 votes. Three Republicans bravely crossed party lines to admit that humans deserved basic rights and sided with the Democrats.

The Equality Act bans discrimination in the workplace, housing, public education, and public accommodations. This may sound familiar because the Equality Act is an amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

However, Hinson voted against the bill, stating in a tweet Friday that: “No one should face hatred or discrimination

Opinion



Jessica Abdoney
Staff Writer

of any kind and I will fight for everyone to be treated fairly and with respect. But I won’t support legislation that undermines the First Amendment.”

Hinson managed to contradict herself perfectly in a 280-character limit. A round of applause.

Hinson clearly states the purpose of the bill in the first half of her tweet—for people to be treated fairly and not face discrimination of any kind. The Equality Act provides protection against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

So, if Hinson voted for this bill she would be acting on the promise of, “I will fight for everyone to be treated fairly and with respect...”

Hinson voted against the bill

because of religious liberty and the First Amendment. The problem with this reason is that The Equality Act does not ‘undermine’ the First Amendment.

In its simplest terms, it strengthens civil rights protections and protects those from being mistreated or discriminated against because of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Equality does not violate the First Amendment.

Using the First Amendment is a weak excuse to constitute outdated views and to promote bigotry and villainize the LGBTQ+ community. By voting against this bill, Hinson is upholding the message that the LGBTQ+ community should not be afforded the basic rights that she takes for granted every day.

Hinson’s official statement on the Equality Act is that it, “threatens” religious liberties. The conservative party prides itself on religious freedom, but it is easy to conclude that religious freedom is exclusive.

The Equality Act does not restrain religious institutions from living under this bill. If Hinson was concerned about how religious organizations felt about this bill, she would have noticed the 100 faith-based organizations that endorsed it. The endorsements ranged from Baptists to Evangelical Protestants, including one from her own state, the Iowan Unitarian Universalist Witness and Advocacy Network.

If Hinson truly cared about her constituents and protecting the First Amendment, she would have done her research and not hide behind falsities. Instead, Hinson is playing her fiddle to match the tune of the conservative party and solidifying her base.

Equality does not violate the First Amendment. Using the First Amendment is a weak excuse to constitute outdated views and to promote bigotry and villainize the LGBTQ+ community.



Editorial Staff	
Veronica Jons Editor-in-Chief	Jada Veasey Opinion Editor
Courtney Hoffman Managing Editor	Victorja K Heires News Editor
Josh Harmon Multimedia Editor	Joe Sheller Faculty Advisor

The Mount Mercy Times is a biweekly student publication serving MMU students, faculty, and staff and those close to the Mount Mercy University community. The Times is published on alternate Thursdays during the school year (each issue has a Thursday date, but the paper is usually distributed Wednesday).

In addition, the Times maintains a student-run website for the dissemination of additional news in various forms, including Times TV video stories.

Membership on the staff of the Times is open to any MMU student, full- or part-time, undergraduate or graduate.

Please attend one of our staff meetings, which are all open to the public, or contact an editor or our advisor for more information. Meetings will be announced in the paper, via social media and with on-campus posters. During the pandemic, meetings may be remote, at the discretion of editors.

Staff Writers are listed by name on the stories they write, photographers are

credited on photos.

Content in the Times represents student writers, and is not official communication from Mount Mercy University. Editorials express the opinions of the Editorial Board and may not be the opinion shared by the university nor by all individual Times staff members. Bylined commentaries and cartoons reflect the opinions of the writer or artist.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Letters should be concise, 300 words or less, and preferably emailed. The author’s name, phone and address must be included. The name is published with the letter. Longer commentary, in the form of guest columns, is also encouraged. Besides the name, a photograph of the author is published with guest columns.

The Times reserves the right to edit or omit submissions. Letters and other submissions may be sent to the Times via email, campus mail or brought to the Times office in the lower level of the Busse Library.

The Times sells advertising space. Advertisers are responsible for their own content, but the Times reserves the right to refuse an ad at its sole discretion.

The Mount Mercy Times will not print material found to be in poor taste or that it deems detrimental to a person’s personal character. However, provocative comments on matters of public interest are encouraged.

Letters are due Friday at noon for consideration of publication the following Thursday.

Mailing address:
Mount Mercy Times
Busse Library, Lower Level
1330 Elmhurst Drive NE
Cedar Rapids IA 52402

Web: mountmercytimes.home.blog

Email: times@mtmercy.edu

Student Continues Classes from Home in Malaysia

I was prepared for the day to come. Suddenly, everything was canceled.

It was the weekend of Spring Break. The bowling team was supposed to travel that day to sectionals in Addison, Illinois, but it got canceled the day of. The whole team was devastated by the decision that was made. No sectionals meant no nationals.

It was my first season with the team, and we even ranked second nationally. No words could describe how sad and disappointed I was on that day. It felt like all our hard work was for nothing.

Then, I remember receiving an email from the school saying that would be going fully online. At the same time, I received an email from the Malaysian Embassy here in the United States. It said that if there were any Malaysian students here who wanted and planned to go back to Malaysia, we should do it as soon as possible, as they did not know if countries might close their borders.

I called my parents back home, panicking, asking them to change my flight schedule. We got it changed, but with some extra cost. I was supposed to fly back home at the end of May, but we got it changed to early April. April arrived, and I flew back home, fearful of getting infected. My flights to get home were Cedar Rapids to Chicago, Chicago to Doha, and Doha to Malaysia. It took me around 35 hours to get home.

Malaysia was on lockdown during that time. They had a strict procedure where everyone who arrived from overseas needed to be quarantined at a hotel for 14 days with no human interactions.

Opinion



Ayra Aminuddin
Staff Writer

I had a hard time staying awake while I was in quarantine, as I was still jet lagged from traveling.

We were escorted to the hotel by busses. Frontline workers would just put food in front of our rooms, ring the bell, and leave.

While in quarantine, I got tested twice. Both my tests came back negative, so after 14 days, I was able to go back home. Anyone who tested positive was immediately sent to a specific COVID-19 hospital.

The 14-hour difference between Malaysia and the United States did not help for my online classes at all. I was lucky that only one of my classes was going on synchronously--I remember it started at 10 p.m. and ended around midnight Malaysian time.

I had a hard time staying awake while I was in quarantine, as I was still jet lagged from traveling. I am lucky that professors here at Mount Mercy are understanding. They gave me time to complete my assignments for the semester.

Most people stayed home during the lockdown because you would need a letter from the authorities to travel out of your district. My four months at home were fun but also boring. I got to spend most of my time with my family, who I had not seen for a year and a half. We did a lot of things together, like cooking and baking, but I was still sad that I could not see my friends.

Bowling centers were closed and were only back in business during the last month I was there. No lie, I miss throwing a shot so bad. Bowling drills at home are not the same as throwing a shot on a bowling lane. I was glad that they finally allowed bowling centers to open with standard operating procedures.

The pandemic taught me to never take things for granted. Do what you have always wanted to do, because you never know what the future holds.

Editor's Note: A story on page 6 of this issue reports on students stuck in Peru.

Campus Cleanup Continues



Annie Barkalow/Times

Many in the Linn County are still recovering from the derecho on Aug. 10, 2020, which did an estimated \$11 billion of total damage to utilities, properties and agriculture. Hundreds of thousands of trees in the Cedar Rapids area were damaged or destroyed. Cleanup and reconstruction efforts continue. A damaged tree, a huge maple that stood at the entrance to the drive to Lower Campus and Warde Hall, was removed from the Mount Mercy campus (above) a week ago.

Texas Winter Vortex Causes a Nightmare for State Residents

By K'Asia Parks
Staff Writer

Texas' sunny weather was clouded with snow when a winter vortex hit and left many without water, power, and their homes.

The winter vortex hit midweek, and Texans were not prepared for the vicious weather. As their pipes burst, temperatures dropped to below zero, and nearly 24 people died. And if the chaos of the weather wasn't enough, many Texans also faced thousands of dollars in energy bills as they struggled to stay warm.

J'Kimbria Criss, nursing major, lived in East Texas for 20 years. Even though this tragedy has devastated many, Criss still plans to return home, believing that Texas could do better with better leadership and preparation.

"They could help by getting people clean water and being better prepared for this kind of weather," she said. "I do not believe that anybody was prepared, and that was the problem."

Texas native Norma Linda Mattingly, associate professor of education, spoke about her family's experience as the storm hit.

Mattingly described family members that struggled with pipe bursts, a half a day without heating, and unpreparedness for the winter weather. Mattingly says her mother and sister were lucky enough to only have lost power for half a day. But more problems arose, and most Texans faced large energy bills for their usage.

"There were all these reports that they were going to be charged an exorbitant amount of money for their heating bill," Mattingly said. "My sister said she could not sleep, and she called me on Sunday morning, just very worried and kind of crying. She said, 'I do not know what I am going to do about this bill.' I said let us cross that bridge when we get to it."

Mattingly felt many were risking their lives using dangerous ideas to stay warm, and many more faced the fear of exorbitant energy bills. Many struggling Texans are trying to recover with limited resources, and the state fell into one of emergency.

Alma Apolonio, social work major, has two friends that currently live in Texas that discussed their experience and how this storm affected them.

Breeana Enriquez, from Austin, Texas

has lived there for 2-3 years. Enriquez lives on the third floor of an apartment complex. She was lucky with no power issues, but had issues with water and pipes bursting. Enriquez says they were not provided with proper resources and the lack of materials caused more problems.

"We did not have the proper resources and were very unprepared," she said. "It is still a struggle to get water from the stores."

"We had to get snow in a bucket and put it in a pan on the stove to flush toilets," Enriquez added. "I work at a hospital and they had employees who had to stay there for a couple of days because of how bad the roads were. We don't have shovels or much salt here for the roads, so it was much harder than it would have been if we were more prepared."

Angela Nuñez has lived in Rio Grande Valley, Texas for 15 years. Nuñez and her family kept warm by staying in one place and conserving heat as much as they could. But she also felt Texans were not well prepared, including Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

"Our senator was not well prepared for

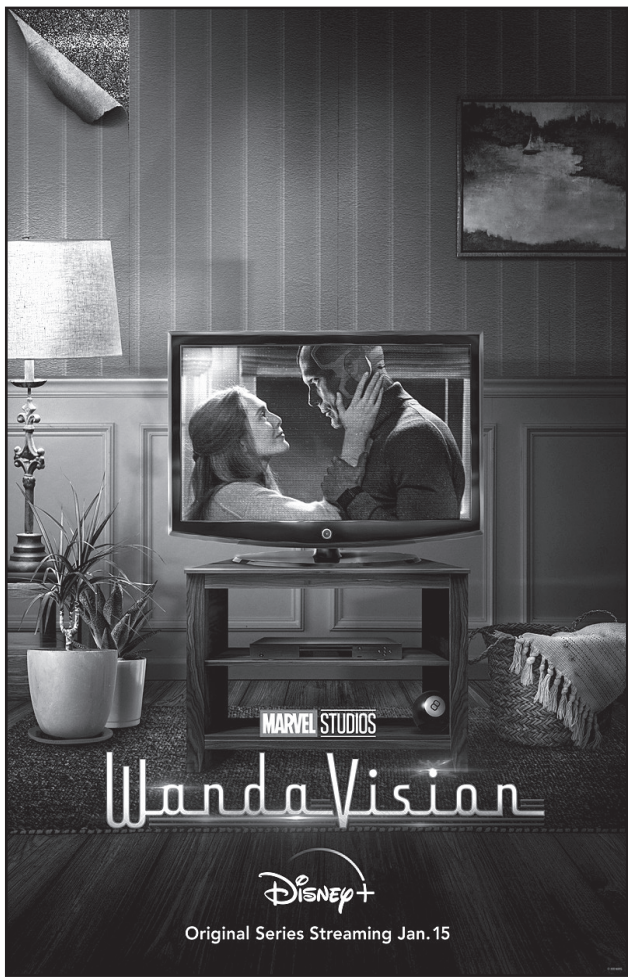
the storm and did not expect for power outages all over Texas," Nuñez said. "Here in the Rio Grande Valley, our electric company was rotating power outages so the plant would not burn. The issue was that the ERCOT was not allowed by the state of Texas to bring power back, which was wrong of them to do so."

Nuñez shared her thoughts on what the community should do, how to spread the resources to help others, and how to come together as a community to help one another.

"Share resources to help those around us; many people do not know the help that lends around the community such as shelters, food banks, animal shelters," she said. "The community has come together to help those who still struggled after days without light, no food, and help them get back to how things were."

Donating, sending prayers, and looking for ways to support the community are ways to help during this devastating time. Many are urging residents to be kind, support one another, and share as they work to recover from this storm that has hit the state.

Disney+ Show "WandaVision" Adds Value to the MCU Catalog



"WandaVision" official release poster

A Cast of Colorful Characters in Zany Sitcom Situations Keeps Viewers Watching Weekly

By Jada Veasey
Senior Opinion Editor

The debut episode of Marvel's "WandaVision" hit the small screen on Jan. 15, premiering on the streaming network Disney+ and delighting comic book fans around the globe. The show revolves around Wanda and Vision, a couple and a popular pair of characters from the "Avengers" franchise. WandaVision is a cross between a drama and a sitcom-spoof, and it will eventually tie into the greater Marvel Cinematic Universe.

I was not sure I would love WandaVision when the show first dropped. I'll be honest, I had never loved either character in the "Avengers" movies, and I didn't think a TV show would change my opinion. I've never been happier to

be wrong!

"WandaVision" shows both Wanda and Vision at their very best. Together, the couple is charming, funny, and incredibly volatile. Wanda and Vision are two of the most powerful heroes within the Marvel universe, and the television show reflects that.

The basic premise of the show is that Wanda and Vision are trapped in an alternate sitcom version of reality. The viewer slowly discovers who is running the show and is left to contemplate what that means for others in the Marvel universe.

The show's cast is very talented, which is part of what makes it so fun to watch. Elizabeth Olsen and Paul Bettany reprise their MCU roles as Wanda and Vision and have so much chemistry on screen.

Kathryn Hahn plays cooky, or maybe sinister, neighbor Agnes, and brings an element of humor to the show. Other notable cast members include Randall Park, reprising his "Ant-Man" role as Jimmy Woo, an extremely lovable and laughable FBI agent, and Kat Dennings as scientist Darcy Lewis, a fan favorite character from the "Thor" films.

"WandaVision" is a unique show for a streaming service because it drops episodes weekly rather than

all at once. This model means that viewers are left on the edge of their seat every Friday as another side of the story unfolds. The show has created a massive internet following as fans try to guess what will happen in the next episode. Marvel's trademark is its easter eggs, so every episode spawns a treasure trove of new fan theories.

Though some people may not like the weekly episode model, citing its similarities to cable TV, but I think it was a smart move for Disney to make. For one thing, it means you can't binge the entire series using a Disney+ free trial, so the company is definitely making money off "WandaVision." I also think that dropping a new episode each week is a great strategy during a pandemic -- the passage of time is wonky but watching a weekly television show is one way to ground yourself.

"WandaVision" is a good show, and I recommend to anyone with an interest in Marvel films or comic books. I especially recommend it to fans of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, as the show will be an integral part of upcoming MCU films.

I rate "WandaVision" four out of five stars.



Mahlon Steepleton/Times

Mustangs (above) attempt to block Missouri Baptist's spike to win the third set.

Stangs Fall to the Spartans in Four

By Mahlon Steepleton
Sports Editor

The Mount Mercy men's volleyball team lost in four total sets to Missouri Baptist University on Feb. 25 at the Hennessey Rec. Center. Missouri Baptist was ranked No. 5 coming into this match-up with the Mustangs.

The Spartans won the first two sets with scores of (26-24, 25-22), although the Mustangs came back in the third set by winning in a back-and-forth fight (35-33). Missouri Baptist then ended the game by winning the fourth set (25-20).

Junior Tiago Almeida led the Mustangs with 18 digs. In addition, senior Evan Gaskill and sophomore Ryan Tilkens tied for the lead in kills with 13 each.

For the No. 14 ranked Mustangs, it was special to go up against a top five team.

"I do not look at rankings often but playing top 10 teams is special and it is always super fun and competitive," said freshman Rafael Vieyra. "It is what molds us into better players."

The Mustangs held their ground, but still have things they need to work on.

"We need to adapt quicker on offense," said senior Ben

Ruggles. "We also want to be more fluid offensively. The team needs to have better setups."

The Mustangs are also trying people out at new positions lately, and it has been a little tough adjusting to the new system.

"We are trying a new setter, which is a tough adjustment," said Head Coach Mary Kay Van Oort. "Especially with hardly any practice and on short notice. Our regular setter is doing well as a hitter, and we needed that from Ben Ruggles."

The Mustangs will play Friday, March 5 against Graceland University.



Mahlon Steepleton/Times

Freshman Rustine Talaboc (right) serves the ball mid game in the first set. Mount Mercy men's volleyball (below) dig a ball and are preparing for the setter to set one of the hitters up for a kill.



Ertz and Mckinney Earn Weeks Worth of Athlete of the Week Honors

By Mahlon Steepleton
Sports Editor

Mount Mercy is honored to have two record-breaking student athletes. For the fifth week in a row, graduate student Andrea Ertz was named the NAIA Track and Field Athlete of the Week, and student Dennis Mckinney was named the NAIA Athlete of the Week for men's basketball for the fourth time in five weeks.

Ertz was named Co-Track Athlete of the Meet after a successful weekend in the 2021 Heart of America Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships. The reason for Ertz' accomplishments came from earning 30 points to help the women's team.

Ertz has been dominating the last five years at Mount Mercy for the women's cross-country and track and field teams. She has been running since her sophomore year of high school and got interested because of her sister, who wanted to join the Marine Corps and decided to start running with her.

Ertz finished her undergraduate program in December 2019 and decided to come back and attend graduate school to complete her MBA degree. In this time, she decided to continue competing in track and field, and will be going to the NAIA National Championships this



Annie Ertz/Contributed

Annie Ertz



Mahlon Steepleton/Times

Dennis Mckinney

week for the Mustangs. She qualified in the women's 800, 1000 and 4x800 meters events.

"I feel very honored to be recognized with the athlete of the week awards for multiple weeks," Ertz said. "Our conference has a lot of talented runners, so each week I knew I had to be on top of my game to stay competitive with them."

Ertz has been working hard ever since the outdoor track season was cancelled last March.

"I have put in a lot of training between last year's indoor season up till now," she said. "So, it feels good to know that the training is paying off."

Also balling out for the Mustangs is senior Dennis Mckinney, who was named the NAIA Athlete of the Week for men's basketball with also being a first-team all-conference for the Heart of America.

Mckinney led the Heart and ranked sixth overall in the NAIA in scoring at 24.3 points per game. Mckinney also led the Mustangs in rebounding (7.1 rpg) and 3-point field goals. His 78 threes moved him into second place in school history with 230 total. He also was ranked fifth in the nation for three pointers made.

Mckinney is also sitting currently in third place on Mount-Mercy's all-time scoring chart with 1,779 points; he is only 2 points away from second place. Mckinney has worked hard on his game to get to where he is right now.

"A lot of my hard work has paid off," Mckinney said. "I get by on work ethic, not talent. I also pushed for it every single game and every week I saw my name for Athlete of the Week, it pushed me to get better."

Both head coaches for Mount Mercy are very proud of their athletes' performances this year. For head men's basketball coach Aaron Jennings, it is nice to have a hard-working player like Mckinney on your team.

"I feel very blessed; Dennis is amazing," Jennings said. "He has earned everything that has come his way. He has put in

the work, day in and day out."

Similarly, assistant track and field coach Tad Hulst has been blessed to coach a standout athlete like Ertz for the last four years now.

"It is really fun," Hulst said. "She is the type of athlete you love to coach. Not because of her elite level talent, but because of her work ethic,

"It feels good to now that the training is paying off."

Andrea Ertz, graduate student

grit, and how coachable she is." "She's bought into what it takes to reach that next level and takes care of business, not just the two hours a day at practice," he continued. "It is the other 22 hours a day, every day as well."

Ertz will be back for next year's track and field season after completing this 2021 outdoor season. She will be continuing to take MBA classes during the season and is looking forward to graduating next spring.

Mckinney has a big decision on what his future will be in the sport of basketball. He has a couple of options for next basketball season.

"The plan is what I can see about going pro. If it is not for me, I will be coming back to Mount Mercy University," Mckinney said.

Mustangs Dominate at Indoor Track Conference

By Mahlon Steepleton
Sports Editor

The Mount Mercy men's and women's track and field teams competed in the Heart of America Conference Indoor Championships on Feb. 19 and Feb. 20 at the Hughes Fieldhouse indoor facility at Northwest Missouri State University.

The men's team scored 40 total points and finished in eighth place out of 11 teams. The women's team scored 72 total points and finished in sixth place out of 10 teams and collected five individual conference titles as well. Graduate student Annie Ertz dominated the field with three overall first place titles.

Ertz got conference champion in the 1000 meters and the 800 meters races Ertz also anchored the women's 4x800 relay team to a first-place victory along with teammates

Kelsi Huhndorf, junior, and freshman Carli Reitinger, hitting an overall time of 9:33.84 Huhndorf got first in the 3000 meters and third place in the mile.

Also performing well for the Mustangs was Jessica Ertz who got honorable mention in the 1000 meters. Freshman Bre Nail was a conference champion in the shot put, throwing 12.96m.

On the men's side, sophomore Nathan Skala won honorable mention in the 800 meters race with a time of 2:00.56. Freshman Ryan Clancy finished fourth in the mile.

Senior Luke Nickelson will be heading back to the NAIA National Championships. Nickelson qualified for nationals in the triple jump category. Nickelson placed third in high jump, and he followed that with a second-place finish in triple jump, jumping 14.00 m overall.

This will be the third year in a row that Nickelson has made nationals for the Mustangs.

"It is definitely a blessing, because it is nice that I am getting better and better every time I have gone to nationals," Nickelson said. "It will be nice to see how I compete and finish overall."

The Mustangs 4x800 also had a good day, placing fifth with an overall time of (8:04.50). The 4x800 team was led by Skala, senior Cam Steffens, freshman Gyanziel Quinonez and sophomore Oscar Lopez. They were 2 seconds away from making nationals.

The individuals who qualified for nationals will compete at the NAIA Indoor Track and Field Championships at South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota, on Wednesday, March 3 through Saturday, March 6.

Sports in Short

Men's Volleyball

The Mustangs beat the Graceland Yellow Jackets in five sets on Feb. 19 at the Hennessey Rec. Center. In a five-set game, the Mustangs pulled out a 3-2 (25-19, 25-27, 22-25, 25-21) win against the Yellowjackets. Senior Evan Gaskill led the Mustangs with 14 kills.

Men's Basketball

The Mount Mercy men's basketball team rolled by 30 points against Culver-Stockton College

in a Heart of America match-up on Feb. 20. The final score was 103-73. Senior Dennis Mckinney led the Mustangs with 23 points. Freshman Anthony Horton Jr., added nine assists.

The Mustangs beat Baker University by a score of 94-81 at the Hennessey Rec. Center on Feb. 25. Senior Bailey Basala led the Mustangs with a total of 29 points, and senior Dennis Mckinney helped out, adding 9 total rebounds for the Mustangs.

Men's Baseball

The Mount Mercy men's baseball team won both double-

headers against Morningside College on Feb. 21. The team won the first game 11-1. They rolled in the second game 17-8. The teams competed at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Mustang baseball team followed up their double-header sweep of Morningside College on Feb. 22. This time, the Mustangs won the first game 7-2. They then came back and shutout Morningside 6-0.

Women's Softball

The Mount Mercy women's softball team swept a doubleheader against Waldorf

University at the Packer Dome in Austin, Minnesota on Feb. 26. The Mustangs won the first game in an easy 14-2. In the second game, the Mustangs rolled 12-4.

Women's Bowling

The Mount Mercy women's bowling team won the Kohawk Invitational by getting first place out of 13 teams on Feb. 27.

Men's Bowling

The Mount Mercy men's bowling team got fifth out of 16 teams in the Kohawk Invitational on Feb. 27 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Upcoming Home Games

March 6 & 7

Men's baseball vs. Saint Ambrose University at noon in the Plaster Athletic Complex.

March 13 & 14

Men's baseball vs. Grand View University at 1 p.m. at the Plaster Athletic Complex.

March 20 & 21

Woman's softball vs. William Penn University at 1 p.m. at Busse Field.

March 23

Men's volleyball vs. William Penn University at 7 p.m. at the Hennessey Rec. Center.

March 24

Men's baseball vs. Waldorf University at 4 p.m. at the Plaster Athletic Complex. Woman's softball vs. University of St. Francis at 4 p.m. at Busse Field.

March 28

Men's baseball vs. Graceland University at 1 p.m. at the Plaster Athletic Complex. Women's soccer vs. Waldorf University at 2 p.m. at the Plaster Athletic Complex.

Heard on the Hill

What people are saying on topics of interest

By Josh Harmon
Senior Multimedia Editor

With the mid-point of the spring semester approaching and spring break coming up, the Times asked students: What is your dream spring break destination/vacation?



Sam Leonard, freshman, nursing major.
“Saint Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, hammocking on the beach.”



Luke Munsey, freshman, finance major.
“I want to eat pasta on the beach in Italy.”



Haley Martin, junior, nursing major.
“Learn how to surf in Hawaii.”



Andrew Lorig, sophomore, chemistry major.
“New York City, visiting museums.”



Cristina Villalobos, freshman, business management major.
“I enjoy photography, and my dream place to travel and photograph would be Alaska, specifically to see the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights).”



Gloria Osei Tutu, junior, communications major.
“This spring break I am going to Columbus, Ohio to sight-see. I enjoy traveling anywhere I haven’t been for the experience.”



Nate Skala, sophomore criminal justice major, readies for a track practice.

When the Game Becomes Life

Competitive Spirit Motivates in Play, Sports

By Andrew Lorig
Staff Writer

“Man, you ever play ‘Uno?’” Whether he is on the track for the Mustangs or in the midst of a friendly card game, Nate Skala, a sophomore criminal justice major, is a competitive person.

Having both participated in and won state championships for most of his high school career, Skala has been competing his entire adult life. While he may joke about his infamous “quick-draw” ‘Uno’ abilities, no matter the event, Skala is always trying to achieve more through competition. “I got to catch that adrenaline,” Skala said laughingly as he spoke about his longtime family ‘Uno’ matchups. “Whatever the activity, I set out to accomplish.”

However, that drive does not only manifest itself in card games and races; for Skala, his athletic mindset has morphed into a way of life. Having placed third at the 2019 Iowa State Track Meet in the 800-meter dash, Skala shows this mindset has paid off.

Quick to connect his life to track, Skala explained that his work ethic in school and his perseverance in a race are one and the same. Specifically, Skala mentioned that without goals or another runner ahead of him, “Things go badly quickly.” With each new objective and starting gunshot, Skala has another chance to hone his work ethic. “When I get my toes on the line,” Skala said. “It’s all about the chase.”

Despite his successes both in and out of athletics, Skala admits this competitive nature is not always a positive. Checking some recent track meet results, Skala pointed out a few rough races that he had struggled to finish under his normal time frame. After coming up short, Skala suffers at the hands of his own mindset; yet, as Skala points out, a few bad results do not undermine his ambition to succeed. “Running is itself a life lesson,” Skala claimed. “Life is all about your pace; sometimes you have to slow down, but it’s all about being able to ramp things up later.” For Skala, his competitive

nature has not only been influential in his own life, but it has helped him in his relationships as well. Mentioning a particularly grueling recent race, Skala detailed the encouraging conversation he shared with his father afterwards. Regardless of the outcome, Skala and his father are both committed to Nate’s success. For Nate, that bond is not blood exclusive. Referring to his track family, Skala pointed out that his competitive nature only adds fuel to the burning ambitions of the Mustangs. “Each of us is here to see the other succeed,” Skala said as he finished untying his indoor running shoes after track practice. “No matter the meet, they always have your back.” Looking ahead to graduation, Skala wants to play the final ‘Uno’ hand in his athletic career’s deck: the reverse card. By working as an assistant coach, Skala hopes to finish out his athletic career by giving back to the sports that have molded and shaped his adulthood. While he has two and a half more academic years to compete as a Mustang, if there exists competition in his world, Skala lives to play.

SNAPSHOT

Meet the people on the Hill

Nate Skala

Two from MMU Stuck in Peru By Pandemic

One Hospitalized with COVID-19

By Nabil Abugattas
Staff Writer

Matias Baracco and I are both full-time international students at MMU, and part of the men’s soccer team. He studies business management and marketing, and I am an English major. Last September, both our families decided we had to come back to Peru because of how the pandemic had affected them economically, and on Oct. 27 we were able to travel back to Peru. When the spring semester was going to begin, the borders of Peru were closed for international flights, and we had to stay. Baracco said he decided to stay in Peru because of the struggles the country was going through. “Because of how bad the economy of Peru is right now,” he explained. “A lot of families need financial support, that is why I had to stay.” Right now, Baracco is working to bring a little extra money into his house. The cost of living in Peru is cheaper than the United States; this reduction of our daily expenses is bringing a lot of relief to both of our families. My decision to stay was pretty much the same as Baracco’s. We are both from the same city, and we both had to stay to support our families. Unfortunately, the way our country has been handling the pandemic is terrible. Many businesses were closed, instead of opening with health protocols, which affected



The view of the neighborhood where MMU student Nabil Abugattas lives in Lima, Peru, a beach in summer.

our parents’ jobs. A mandatory lockdown was implemented, and it lasted seven months. Most people did not respect the lockdown due to political turmoil because of the previous president. People decided to do massive marches to protest. This generated a massive second wave of infections, skyrocketing the amount of people infected, and emptying the country’s medical resources. But not everything about having to stay in Peru is bad. I get to live on the beach—I know it’s pretty cold in Iowa these days. We are in the middle of the summer here. Of course, I miss seeing my friends and teammates, and class would probably be easier if I didn’t have to work completely online. I also get to help my family with their economic situation as this

pandemic goes. Baracco has also found a bright side to staying in Peru. “This pandemic is no help, and nothing is for sure,” he said. “I want to spend the most time possible with them as long as I have to be around.” Luckily, both of our families have been healthy since the pandemic started. Baracco has stayed healthy as well. Unfortunately, three weeks ago I got infected with COVID-19. This affected me negatively. First of all, I had trouble breathing, my ears were closed, and I got a big stye in my right eye. Because of the trouble breathing, I had to spend a week in the hospital. I was feeling so sick that during most of the two weeks that I was infected that I was unable to participate in class. That made me fall behind



Nabil Abugattas

in all of my classes; I am struggling to catch up, but all of my teachers are supporting me and helping me to do so. Baracco and I had a similar routine before I got infected. We would work together from 7-10 a.m. Then we would have class. I would finish class the latest, at 4:20 in Peru (there’s a +1-hour time difference with Cedar Rapids), and then we would work again from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Then we would each go to our house to spend time with our families, and work on homework. Baracco is using this routine. I had to stop working when I got infected, and I won’t go back to work until I catch up with class. Baracco is planning to go back to MMU in August, after the Iowan summer, because he needs one more semester to graduate. I don’t plan on going back to live there. I will be allowed to participate in graduation by the end of this semester, and during summer I will take two online classes to complete my credit requirements. Then I’ll receive my degree.

Search for President Resumes

By Veronica Jons
Editor-in-Chief

A presidential search is under way at Mount Mercy University after the departure of Dr. Bob Beatty in September. Candidate applications are due on March 15, after which the search committee will review applicants and move to the next step. The search committee members in December finalized the presidential advertisement. Once all the applications are formally submitted, stakeholders will have group listening sessions to determine the most qualified applicants. The school plans this spring deadlines to hold discussion forums with candidates. By the end of March, the search committee will review applications and choose between six and eight. From there, semifinalists will have meetings and three will be chosen to move into the selection process. Those final three will have discussion forums with students, faculty, and staff before the top presidential candidate is chosen. “There were great processes in place that were followed and everyone on the search committee had a voice on who was chosen,” Dr. Kim Bro, dean of nursing and member of the search committee, said in a statement last year. Due to COVID-19, the new search may look different, with possible virtual discussion forums and interviews. In July, the future president of Mount Mercy University will take over. Continue to follow the Mount Mercy University website for updates on the search.