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## The precarious world of booking SAO concerts

The group has repeatedly brought hit artists to campus before they made it big

BY EZRA CRAKER  
A&E Editor

In 2018, Phoebe Bridgers performed for the Student Activities Office concert series. Just three years later, she's a globally touring artist with four Grammy nominations. As a small Christian college in the Midwest with no alcohol sales to speak of, Calvin may not be the most obvious venue for ascending artists. But SAO staff continues to bring a varied group of artists to campus every year, including some with Bridgers-like promise. How do they do it?

"It's different for almost every artist," said Jack Droppers, director of SAO. There are several ways an artist can be booked. Sometimes, Student Activities Board members will tell Droppers about artists they're listening to and he'll reach out. "If we're able to book that artist, it's usually pretty rare."

Sometimes, agents reach out to Droppers instead. He receives about forty emails from agents a week and about one or two of those will be national touring artists. Many of the acts that come to campus are booked through long-standing relationships with agents built by former director Ken Heffner.

SEE SAO, PAGE 4 ▶

## Recycling to return to campus by early December

BY ABIGAIL HAM  
Managing Editor

Recycling bins will once again be dispersed across campus by early December. COVID-19 restrictions, not staffing reductions, have been the main source of delays in reintroduction of campus-wide recycling, according to John Haley, National Management Resources Corporation's associate director of facilities for Calvin.

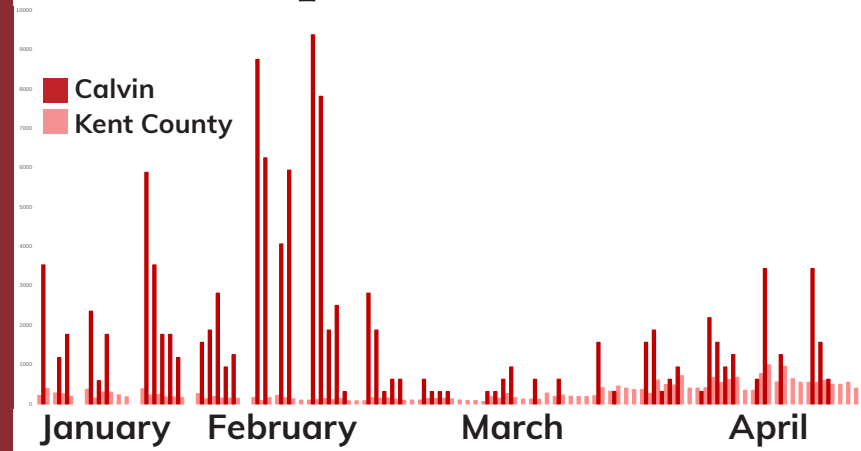
There are single stream dumpsters back in place by the facilities center and by the Knollcrest East apartments, and although pickup hasn't started campus-wide yet, students and employees are invited to bring recycling there.

"We've been working closely with the [COVID Response Team]," Haley told Chimes, pointing to pandemic-related restrictions as the main source of delay in reintroducing recycling across campus. Despite having reduced staffing after the summer departure of over half of facilities staff, which started the semester with grounds crew at 85 percent capacity and maintenance at 75-80 percent capacity, "Manpower ... has not been a hindrance," according to Haley. "It's just more-over, when we're told we're able to ... get back to that [pre-pandemic] point."

SEE RECYCLING, PAGE 3 ▶

## Calvin's COVID dashboard doesn't follow standard epidemiological practices

### SP21 cases per million



## The university's 2020-21 case counts were frequently higher per capita than peer institutions and Kent County

BY SARAH GIBES  
Sci-Tech Editor

Throughout the past year, Calvin's COVID-19 caseload rate has frequently been two times higher than that of Kent County. Calvin has also carried higher caseloads than other colleges in Kent County and Michigan.

According to data obtained from Calvin's dashboard, when adjusted for Calvin's population, Calvin's caseload reached its highest point in February 2021, at 4,150 new cases per million. In comparison, Kent County had 100-150 new cases per million during the same period.

Calvin's COVID-19 dashboard does not show standard epidemiological data. The dashboard only reports the number of active cases each day.

"Usually in epidemiology we count case rates," said biology and public health professor Erica Boldenow, who runs Calvin's dashboard. "It's information about the number of cases per population over a particular time that matters most for preventing disease transmission."

Boldenow also noted that, although this method has its own challenges — it's notoriously difficult to estimate the size of a population — it more accurately represents the spread of a disease.

When Calvin's COVID-19 cases are adjusted for a population of 3,200, an estimation of on-campus and off-campus students using the Fall 2020 Day 10 report, the university's case rates for the 2020-21 school year are significantly higher than the surrounding community. They're also higher than rates at Aquinas College, Grand Valley State University and the University of Michigan in weekly averages of cases, according to the dashboards available on those institutions' websites, as well as that of the Kent County Health Department.

Boldenow noted that the dashboard was designed in order to meet the needs of the

general public.

"We made the dashboard to have information that people wanted," Boldenow said. Most people are not aware of how to read and interpret standard epidemiological data, so the dashboard was designed to only show how many new active cases were present each day.

"Even though it's standard practice in epidemiology to report case numbers per population, it's always challenging to do so," Boldenow said. One challenge is estimating the size of a population. At Calvin, for example, Boldenow said that the student body size changes during the semester. It's also difficult to account for part-time students, graduate students and dual-enrolled students.

"Per population data would ultimately be an estimate anyway," Boldenow said.

In addition, standardized epidemiological data takes time to produce.

"It is standard practice to count the number of new cases per day, but those are always backdated to symptom onset," Boldenow said. Given the time it can take to get a COVID-19 test and receive results, it can take a week or more after symptom onset for an individual to have their data recorded.

"It gets confusing for the average person to use a dashboard like that. It can take up to two weeks for the data to stabilize," Boldenow said. Calvin's reporting method eliminates this delay by simply recording the number of active cases each day.

The problem with only reporting active cases, however, is that it is harder to understand the rate at which the virus is spreading. Epidemiologists look to see if a disease is spreading exponentially, because it's much harder to stop a disease from spreading when it reaches or exceeds the exponential section of its growth curve.

SEE DASHBOARD,  
PAGE 5 ▶



## Shuttered by supply-chain issues, RVD now fit for occupancy

BY ABIGAIL HAM  
Managing Editor

Every year, a residence hall undergoes renovations while it's empty over the summer. This year that dorm was Rooks-Van Dellen, but for the first time ever, Sept. 1 came and went as renovations continued. Due to reduced staff capacity, facilities staff weren't able to dedicate as much time to the renovations as would usually be the case and this, coupled with supply-chain issues, meant the dorm did not receive an occupancy permit until Oct. 12.

"We were able to slow the pace a bit during the summer, given that there wouldn't be a need to have the whole building ready by September," Director of College Housing and Operations Jay Wise told Chimes. "With the Facilities department undergoing a change, it was also a good summer to make that a lower priority."

"While we waited for the final inspection process, we used empty suites scattered around campus, and this proved to be sufficient for the number of cases we've had"

RVD was originally scheduled to be shuttered and renovated during the 2020-2021 school year. Due to COVID, however, the dorm took on a new role as a space for housing quarantined and COVID-positive students. The plan for this year was to have one or two floors continue serving that purpose, Wise told Chimes. "But while we waited for the final inspection process, we used empty suites scattered around campus, and this proved to be sufficient for the number of cases we've had ... we would normally have preferred to put positive COVID cases in an isolated hall, rather than in empty suites. That said, we know that both options can be done safely, and the affected students were accommodated well."

According to Wise, an issue with the installation of the fire suppression system in RVD delayed completion of the residence hall's renovations. Staff learned late in the summer that the current fire panel, a control system designed to choreograph various fire-related responses throughout a building, would not pass inspection. Supply-chain issues made it difficult to acquire a new panel,

SEE RVD, PAGE 3 ▶



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Chimes reports the news and opinion of the Calvin community while fostering dialogue, promoting accountability, and providing practical learning experiences.

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# CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

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## Enrollment, Synod 2022 and morale top agenda items in new presidential position profile

BY ABIGAIL HAM  
Managing Editor

The Presidential Search Committee is looking for someone with the skills necessary to guide Calvin through a tumultuous period of its history: someone who values a balance between tradition and innovation, skillful risk management, a mixture of realism and optimism, and a commitment to Calvin's mission.

This goal is explicated in the position profile released Oct. 15. The 17-page document details the desired traits of the next president, as well as the agenda (what the new president will be facing when they arrive) and a dive into Calvin culture designed for potential candidates. The profile developed for the new president is based on the feedback generated from the community in surveys and listening sessions over the past few months.

"Constituents demonstrated great commitment and passion for Calvin's mission and future," PSC Chair Mary Tuuk Kuras told Chimes. "As you can expect, the committee's greatest challenge was distilling the feedback into manageable components to complete the position profile."

The committee has selected 14 central attributes desired in the next president to guide the search. These include "a financial strategist," "a student-centered leader," and "a culturally competent and sensitive person." Cultural competency includes the ability to "honor ... the diversity of God's creation" and to persist in a commitment to "advancing diversity

and inclusion in aspects of the university's life and programs."

Although the PSC has not limited their search to CRC members, "All candidates will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of and a commitment to Calvin's mission," as well as to be someone "who understands and embraces Calvin's Christian identity, understands the Reformed tradition in higher education, and carefully stewards the university's relationship with the Christian Reformed Church."

When it comes to Calvin and the Christian Reformed Church, the document notes that although the next president will be selected by the board of trustees, they will also be put before Synod at its summer 2022 meeting. The document also emphasizes the commitment of Calvin's faculty to "growth in Reformed Christian commitment," and the centrality of Reformed Christianity to the Vision 2030 plan.

The leadership agenda for the next president includes building on the Vision 2030 plan, ongoing implementation of the new core curriculum (which went into effect this fall), boosting enrollment via further investment in graduate programs and "new undergraduate programs that reflect Calvin's ethos," continued pursuit of the goals outlined in the FEN document, fundraising, innovating through the Global Campus and planning the university's sesquicentennial.

But it doesn't all sound so fun. The document suggests that the results of Synod 2022's action on the Human Sexuality Report will have the new president's work cut out for



The PSC is seeking candidates who value both tradition and innovation.

PHOTO FROM CALVIN.EDU

them. "Once the synod acts on the committee's report, the new president, the Calvin board, and community will be well served by a careful and respectful conversation about the synod's action that considers the perspectives of campus constituents and external stakeholders," the position profile reads.

According to Kuras, Calvin's next president "should be a skillful listener who can navigate the various Calvin constituencies and lead with grace, no matter what the topic. The human sexuality report is but one example of the expected future landscape for the next president."

Another agenda point identified for candidates and nominators is the need for "inspiration" in the wake of "difficult steps" taken to cope with enrollment challenges. "These actions, combined with the pandemic itself, have highlighted the need to

boost morale and a sense of hope about the future," the profile reads. "The new president will have the opportunity to provide inspiration and a sense of optimism that will help lift the spirits of a dedicated faculty and staff."

"The Search Committee has heard those voices [faculty and staff] and is mindful of the current state of morale, even as it acknowledges the difficult financial decisions that have been made to position the University effectively for the future," Kuras said. "Intentional long-term strategic financial planning can generate a thriving future for the University that the next President will inspire with optimism and grace."

The committee will begin reviewing applications in November, and the full consideration deadline for applications is Jan. 4, 2022.

## Calvin students reflect on upcoming Kentwood general election



PHOTO BY ELEMENTS DIGITAL ON UNSPLASH

Kentwood City residents are encouraged the visit the city's website to learn more about the election.

BY JOCELYN NUÑEZ-COLÓN  
C&C Co-Editor

The city of Kentwood's general election is well underway, with incumbent mayor Stephen Kepley and First Ward City Commissioner Emily Bridson competing for the highest office in the city's government, providing students hailing from the Kentwood area with opportunities to engage in politics.

"The November 2 election in Kentwood is important because every policy making position is contested between two candidates. All voters will choose two city-wide policy making officers — the mayor and an at-large city commissioner — and each of the two wards will choose another ward-specific commissioner," political science professor Doug Koopman told Chimes in an email.

Voting in the upcoming election, according to junior Ben White, is an opportunity to contribute to the greater good of his community. "I'm planning on voting. I've already nailed down who I am voting for. For me, honestly, it's an election — so I will vote if I am able because I see voting as a privilege and civic duty," said White.

With three different ballots offered based on

voter precincts, positions on the ballot include mayor, city clerk, city treasurer, city commissioner at large and a city commissioner for Wards one and two.

Precincts one, four and five can also vote on the Operating Millage proposal — a proposal offering \$11.3 million to the Kelloggsville Public Schools district to work on renovations for various schools in the district.

The city clerk and city treasurer positions are uncontested. Candidates Dan Kusiack and Laurie Sheldon are set to become city clerk and treasurer respectively. All other positions have two candidates running.

The election is a milestone for junior Katie Van Dyke, as it will be the first general election she will vote in as a resident of Kentwood. Though she has yet to decide who she will vote for, Van Dyke hopes to have a mayor who is passionate about bringing change in the city while also being open to new perspectives.

"I would hope that they're open to discussions, that they have things they're passionate about yet are humble enough to have difficult conversations with people," said Van Dyke.

Mayoral candidate Emily Bridson is Kentwood's current first ward commissioner, first elected in 2017. Hailing from the Lansing area, Bridson has more than 10 years of experience in the city, including serving as a commissioner for both planning and parks and recreation. Bridson is a member of Kent County's City/County Building Authority and the vice-chair of Kalamazoo County's Solid Waste Management Planning Committee. She also works at Spectrum Health's vaccination clinics.

Bridson has garnered endorsement from notable political figures such as Michigan Sen. Winnie Brinks and 76th District state Rep. Rachel Hood, with an emphasis on issues relating to the local economy, environment and community health.

In an email to Chimes, Bridson stressed the importance of students getting involved in politics. "It's critically important that all of us are part of our community's decisions and solutions. Students are underrepresented as elected officials and this needs to change. Awareness of the issues and voting in local races has the potential to involve more students and also ensure everyone's voices are heard," she said.

Stephen Kepley, her opponent, affirmed the importance of college involvement in local politics. "It is important that all residents living in a community register to vote and study the issues and the candidates who are running for office. Local governance has a great impact on our day-to-day lives ... It is important to elect officials who have the experience running and leading keeping our communities safe, clean, and a fun place to live," the candidate said in an email to Chimes.

Kepley has served in Kentwood for 18 years. For the past eight, he's been the city's mayor, and he previously worked as the director of engineering and inspections for 10 years. During his tenure as director of engineering and inspections, he oversaw the rebuilding of city hall as well as the construction of the Kent District Library. As mayor, Kepley managed the rollout of police body cameras as well as the city's inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility study and program.

Kepley, who is endorsed by current Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalynn Bliss and former Kentwood mayor Bill Hardiman, is running on a platform that emphasizes issues like public safety, business and employment and schools, youth and neighborhoods. Kepley and his wife Susan also have a link to Calvin: They serve as off-campus advisors for Mu Kappa, a student organization for children of missionaries as well as students who identify as third-culture kids.



# Let's talk about sex

## Calvin students reflect on sex ed

BY MICHAELA GIOVANNELLI  
Religion Editor

Sex education in grade school is awkward, eye-opening and varies in quality across the United States. In a study conducted by the National Survey of Family Growth (CDC), 96 percent of female teenagers and 97 percent of male teenagers reported that they received formal sex education before the age of 18. Still, the variety of influences and levels of education covering sex adds variables those statistics do not take into account.

### Purity culture history and impact

According to Kelsey Colburn, sexuality series director at Calvin, American students largely do not get holistic sex education. Holistic sex education is different than what is normally given because “[Kelsey and her coworkers] want to reframe it as something that is physical, emotional, spiritual, but [with] a lot less sexist and misogynist implications.”

Historically, sex education has been taught with an emphasis on the male's biological drive for sex, implying that it was harder for men to refrain from sexual desires, according to Colburn. This perspective tends to reduce women's sexuality, and suggests that men struggle with uncontrollable sexual urges and that women have a responsibility to help keep themselves pure, Colburn added.

“It was particularly hard on women because it was a woman's job to keep both the men and women pure,” stated Colburn.

This ideology of purity culture, as Colburn put it, was pervasive in the Church in the late 1980s and 1990s, teaching that humans should remain pure until marriage, and that purity means not engaging in sexual activity. “What does that mean about sexual assault on their purity? [If that happens], what does that mean

about their relationship with God?” asked Colburn.

Junior Stephanie Oosterhouse was raised within this culture. “My perspective of sex definitely intersected with purity culture because growing up I was taught that sex outside of marriage was the worst sin someone could commit,” Oosterhouse told Chimes.

Jose Muñoz, a senior at Calvin, was raised in Honduras and also impacted by purity culture. While the church affected his initial view on premarital sex, it wasn't a large influence. “At a point of my life, I felt guilt, as religion will point at those people who have premarital sex but as I was growing older and making my own decisions this guilt left my body. When I transitioned to a public community college sex was normal, and it did not have anything to do with religion,” Muñoz said.

The negative attitude the church often portrays about sex evoked similar questions from Oosterhouse.

“While for most other sins, the church preached about forgiveness and second chances, there is still a pervasive idea that once you lose your virginity, it's kind of over for you,” Oosterhouse said. “It's a sin that you can't come back from.”

Alex, who grew up in the Catholic church and identifies as an asexual woman, also experienced the effects of purity culture. Her first exposure to sex education was through her Catholic middle school, with teachings on heterosexual sex. Alex's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

“I think purity culture has a lot of problems, especially when it comes to basing one's worth on their sexual inexperience, and I wish it focused more on giving people the tools they needed to understand sex and encouraged Christians to have safe, consensual sex,” Alex said in an email to Chimes.

Alyssa Tiscareno, a junior at

Calvin, experienced both public and Christian schooling growing up. “I don't believe that I was affected by purity culture much. But I also think that is mostly because I was taught sex education at a public school. They taught that sex was more about trust and act of love, rather than an act only between spouses,” Tiscareno said in an email to Chimes.

### Perspectives on birth control

In addition to perspectives offered in school, students told Chimes they were shaped by family members' beliefs, as well as by a lack thereof.

“My family never told me anything about sex. My parents never had a sex talk with me so I would have to figure it out with friends or older family members,” Muñoz said. A family member who is a physician helped Muñoz understand what sex is. Two of the main lessons Muñoz learned were about respect for the partner and the “weird or rare things sex could be like,” Muñoz stated.

A large part of sex education is contraceptive use, in which both Oosterhouse and Alex relied on the internet and family advice to learn more about.

“I was fortunate enough to have a family that was okay with contraceptives, so when I needed birth control for other medical reasons, there was no judgement or hesitancy from my family,” Oosterhouse said.

“My middle school only taught me the basics of condoms and birth control pills. I learned about other forms of birth control in high school such as shots and IUDs, but I also talked to my female family members. They'd been on varieties of birth control and explained their personal experiences which helped understand not only how they worked, but how common they were,” Alex said.

Tiscareno did not have a large family influence. “My immediate family and I never discussed sex or contraceptives. It was always just assumed I would figure it out one day,” Tiscareno stated.

Muñoz did not learn about con-

traceptives until he was 17. His only knowledge then was about condom use and the Plan B One-Step emergency contraceptive. Now, through older cousins, the TV and friends, he is aware of other contraceptive methods.

### Sex education at Calvin

Colburn has experienced that people are nervous to teach about contraception because they believe students are more likely to have sex if they are well informed. However, she has found that when they actually teach about sex holistically, including contraception, students will make more informed decisions on sex and it leads to less hookup culture and less casual sex.

At Calvin, Colburn noted, students tend to hold diverse thoughts on sex. She carefully considered how to actively come at the diverse thought. “Instead of diversity of thought leading to polarization, we want it to be grace-filled conversation,” Colburn stated.

“I think it's interesting how little Calvin talks about sex and contraceptives. I don't think I've ever actually heard an official Calvin standpoint on the matter,” Oosterhouse said. “I think it could be good for Calvin to be a little more open about it and at least promote safe sex.”

Alex also had something to say about how Calvin tends to approach sex. “Something I've noticed with

Calvin couples is their drive to get married so they can have sex. They date for three months and then marry each other so they can have sex in a way that honors God. But I don't think that's a marriage that honors God's plan,” Alex said.

To Muñoz, attending Calvin felt a bit like returning to high school. “I felt [I was] in an environment sometimes hostile to sex and without the liberty to speak it, but with time I realized that it varies depending on friend groups,” Muñoz said.

Colburn encouraged thoughtful conversations about sex. She gave some tips on how best to have a meaningful discussion with someone about the topic.

“I think it's agreeing before the conversation to keep an open mind about differences,” Colburn stated. She added that it takes a lot of trust for those conversations, and she encouraged people to stay curious and not to get defensive.

The Sexuality Series and the Sexuality and Gender Awareness Club are two ways to get involved in those conversations. The Sexuality Series is hoping to have a roundtable discussion on LGBTQ sexuality in November. To get involved, students can email Colburn at [kjc49@calvin.edu](mailto:kjc49@calvin.edu).



PHOTO BY KAITLIN COLBURN

SAGA members pose with posters affirming the LGBTQ+ Christian community.

# Service Learning Center kicks back into gear with new partnership system

## Tier One Organizations

The Refugee Education Center - 2130 Enterprise St  
Home Repair Services - 1100 Division Ave  
Granville Avenue Arts and Humanities - 644 Grandville Ave  
Community Food Club - 100 Division Ave  
Alpha Grand Rapids - 1725 Division Ave

The SLC introduced a new tier-based system for program partnerships.

LAUREN VANDEN BOSCH  
Staff Reporter

This year, the Service Learning Center has decided to change the way local organizations partner with them in order to build more intentional relationships with specific organizations.

The Service Learning Center is an office on Calvin's campus that serves as a “bridge between students and staff at Calvin and the greater Grand Rapids community,” according to senior Rebekah Van Zoest, the partnerships coordinator at the SLC.

It used to be that any organization in Grand Rapids could reach out to the SLC; the center would then attempt to connect students with over a hundred different opportunities. However, this stretched the center's time and energy.

“It was limited in what we could do with the partners. It's not like we could guarantee, ‘Oh, we're going to have a group of 20 people that will show up for this event,’ which didn't seem to be the most helpful,” said Amy Piescer, chief of staff at the SLC.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided the time needed for the student staff of the SLC to rethink the system. Their response was a tiered system with three tiers in all. With no particular protocol to follow, they tried to

select a wide variety of organizations with different objectives.

Tier One is composed of five organizations with whom they've signed a one-year memorandum of understanding agreement. This past summer, the staff visited these organizations and determined how the SLC could help them achieve their goals.

Tier Two is also composed of five organizations. However, there is no memorandum. The SLC is committed to checking up on these organizations at least annually and getting the word out about opportunities related to them.

Tier Three operates in much the same way as the old system. Anyone that's interested can still contact the SLC to advertise their volunteering opportunities; the difference is that the other two tiers get higher priority and more emphasis.

Although many Calvin students work with the SLC through their academic coursework, students can also reach out to the office, located in Spoelhof Center 301, on their own as an extracurricular activity. Access to a car is not required, as the center provides rides to many of the volunteer opportunities.

Alicia Lindemulder '22, the Streetfest co-coordinator and former education coordinator at the SLC, personally wished that she'd known about the Center and gotten involved during her freshman year and she encouraged other students to check it out.

“I really appreciated how much service learning helped me understand the community,” Lindemulder said. “I am thinking about doing nursing in a more community setting rather than a hospital. I'm grateful that I found the Service Learning Center at Calvin, because I don't think I would have recognized that this is a passion I have until I met people that pointed me here.”

You can also find out more information about and stay updated on the SLC via Calvin's website, their blog, and their Instagram account, [@calvin\\_slc](https://www.instagram.com/calvin_slc).

RVD

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Summer work included re-carpeting stairways and halls, installing new lighting, painting, new mattresses, door locks and bathroom upgrades, as well as the fire suppression system. According to Director of Facilities Russell Bray, Calvin has an agreement with the state of Michigan to install fire suppression systems in one dorm per year over the course of seven years; now in the sixth year of that agreement, only KHvR still lacks one.

Reduced staffing also slowed the process. “We didn't fully know how many people would transition [to National], how many would leave,” Bray told Chimes regarding the changes made to facilities over the summer. Ultimately, more than 50 percent of facilities staff did not transition to National Management

Resources Corporation and no longer work at Calvin.

“We used more outside contractors than we normally would to make sure high priority projects got done,” according to Bray, but some staff who chose not to transition stuck around as independent contractors: “We're really appreciative of those people,” Bray said.

The Van Dellen side of the dorm is now complete, and can accommodate quarantined students if necessary. The Rooks side, according to Bray, is still in need of renovations to sinks, countertops, doors and carpeting.

RECYCLING

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

According to Haley, the main hold up has been related to concerns about contact during collection which have delayed getting a “green light” from the COVID Response Team. These concerns are magnified when recycling requires hand sorting to prevent contamination. Before the pandemic, three to five people typically had contact with recycling between its initial collection point and the single stream dumpster at facilities. These people were in contact with things “from hundreds, if not thousands, of people,” according to Haley.

Under pandemic restrictions, however, hand sorting is not possible. Individual recycling bins are being repainted and labelled while out of

circulation in hopes that distinguishing them from regular trash bins will reduce contamination. According to Director of Facilities Russell Bray, contaminated loads can't be recycled. Haley told Chimes this not only disrupts the recycling process, resulting in more trash being sent to landfills or incinerators, but also incurs extra expenses.

Facilities is asking for the community's help to reduce contamination, which includes bags, shredded paper, cords, cables, hoses, clothing, batteries and medical waste.



# SPORTS & ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

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## Calvin student draws international recognition through ping-pong



PHOTO COURTESY TAHEER ALIBHAI

Sophomore Taheer Alibhai (left) and his friend Alikhan Kazia have gained a large following with their trick shot account.

**BY GRACE TOMA**  
Staff Reporter

Calvin sophomore Taheer Alibhai has made a name for himself as co-founder of PongMastersKE, a Kenyan two-man team that delivers masterful ping-pong trick shots on Instagram. The other half of the duo is Alibhai's close friend, Alikhan Kazia, a former member of Kenya's national table tennis team.

The two friends first met at a table tennis competition in Kenya and started the group in 2017.

Alibhai manages the group's digital content and public relations while his friend performs the shots. The sophomore dedicates approximately 10 hours each week — sometimes remotely from Calvin — to uploading Kazia's performances of extraordinary ping-pong tricks using everyday items.

"We just enjoy the process of doing something that somebody has never seen before, and just making people say 'Wow,'" said Alibhai.

In one trick, a ping-pong ball hovers in the air from the pressure of a blowdryer. An old dart board has been placed behind the dryer and the suspended ball. Kazia calmly serves another ping-pong ball so that it passes the suspended ball by a hair's

breadth, bounces off the dart board behind it and returns to hit the first ball, taking its place while the old ball lands in a cup placed on a stack of books in front of Kazia. It happens so fast, one might miss it.

Shots like this one have garnered a large following for the pair. Boasting 32,000 followers, the group is Instagram-verified. But their fame extends beyond social media.

**"We just enjoy the process of doing something that somebody has never seen before, and just making people say 'Wow'"**

PongMastersKE stands out as one of the only ping-pong trick shot artist groups in East Africa.

Alibhai and Kazia have been featured on media platforms both at home and abroad, including notable sports outlets like Kenyan Television Network, ESPN, SportsCenter, Sky Sports, Whistle Sports and the International Table Tennis Federation website. The Chelsea Football Club also commented on

one of their videos, a dream come true for the True Blue duo.

Since the group's rise to public renown, Kazia has broken three world records. He currently holds the Guinness Book of World Records titles for the most ping-pong balls bounced into a cup in one minute, the fastest time bouncing ping-pong balls into five cups for an individual and the most table tennis serves into a cup in one minute.

"The sport itself is not as big as other sports," Alibhai said, "but in terms of our niche, I can say that we've been recognized quite nicely for it."

The Pongmasters hold formal agreements with Tigertail Sports and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, a Kenyan wildlife rehabilitation unit that cares for orphaned elephants.

Alibhai said he appreciated having access to huge promotion platforms and considered it a chance to positively influence a younger generation.

"There's younger creators who look up to us and you know, they get inspired by shots," he said.

The group is well known within its niche community and has collaborated with smaller ping-pong trick shot pages to coordinate challenges and combination shots. They are also in contact with GM Golf, a YouTube star widely known for his golf trick shots, and hope to work with other big-name artists like Dude Perfect and Pongfinity in the future.

Although the group's main motivation is to have fun, Alibhai admitted that it takes a lot of hard work, patience and commitment to deliver their content. The duo starts planning their next trick shot after each successful execution. About 95 percent of the time, the final shot ends up differing from the initial plan due to the limitations of physics.

Alibhai described the process as one of trial and error. It's taken the group 48 hours to perfect and film some shots while others have been executed in under five minutes.

At Calvin, Alibhai is majoring in international relations and with a minor in communications. The sophomore said his experience handling PongMasterKE promotions has overlapped with some of the content in his current communication classes.

He and Kazia have agreed to keep PongMastersKE going for as long as they can.

"Even as we get much, much older, you know ... maybe we'll be the new, like, 70-year-olds who are doing trick shots," he said.

## Hollywood stars duel to the death in film adapted from alum's book



PHOTO COURTESY 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

"The Last Duel" is a #MeToo story from the brutal world of medieval France.

**BY SAMANTHA KORECKI**  
Guest Writer

It's not everyday that a blockbuster based on a Calvin alumnus' book hits theaters nationwide. "The Last Duel," adapted from 1979 graduate Eric Jager's historical true crime tale, is set in 14th century France and involves knights, squires, maidens and kings. Jager is an American literary critic and specialist in medieval literature, and it shows. The film centers on Sir Jean de Carrouges, a respected knight, and Jacques le Gris, a noble squire, who are sort of frenemies. While Jean is away in Scotland for battle, Jacques viciously assaults Jean's wife, Marguerite. Jean takes the incident to court and the two men agree to duel to the death in order to prove whether Marguerite is telling the truth. This thriller is directed by Ridley Scott, whose iconic works include "Alien," "Blade Runner," "Gladiator" and "The Martian." His expertise is evident on screen, as the story is told with painful authenticity.

"The Last Duel" deserves praise for its historical accuracy and depiction of life in medieval France, as its set and script bring this true story to life again, hundreds of years later. The movie is uniquely divided into a four-part, multiple-perspective structure which constantly changes the viewer's feelings toward each character. The genius of this structure is that it doesn't reveal who the true protagonist is until the end. It forces

viewers to continuously reevaluate their own perspective. The viewer is drawn to Jean, then Jacques, and finally, Marguerite. The story is truly about her courage to stand up and speak out against her rapist, risking her life in the process. Conversations with other female characters throughout Marguerite's account reveal the unfortunate truth that rape was incredibly common in medieval France, and rarely ever spoken about. "The Last Duel" provides a window into the horrors that women had to endure on a regular basis during medieval times.

This story is especially harrowing because of its true origins. It's rightfully rated R, as the scenes of violence, sex and assault are graphic. It is not a feel-good movie, but still exceptionally well done. It's worth the watch for those intrigued by medieval France, women's history or true crime. It is the type of movie that is uncomfortable — and sometimes painful — to watch, but can certainly be appreciated afterwards. Marguerite was a survivor and an inspiration for standing up for herself in a society that did not grant her the same rights as her attacker. Her story provides important insights about why other women did not speak up back then, and why there is still stigma around it today. Marguerite became one of the first women to stand up, and every time a woman tells her story, she makes it easier for the next woman to do the same.

### SAO

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A group of SAO staff also attend the Pitchfork Music Festival each summer to recruit talent. While attending shows, staff keep their eyes out for acts that might perform well at Calvin.

When searching for artists, SAO considers a few questions in addition to logistics: How does the artist speak to the cultural moment? How do they interact with faith? How do they deal with controversial issues?

Then there's the issue of a fair price. How much should newer artists be offered? "With artists that are up and coming, it's a very hard thing to ask," said Droppers.

Calvin's limitations make it both a tough sell and a unique experience for artists. On the one hand, the school's constraints can be a challenge. SAO doesn't have a budget like student life divisions at bigger schools, so it can't offer as much up front. And it can't serve alcohol like other venues, which can add profit to money made back through ticket sales.

"We can only promise so much money knowing we're going to get only so much back," Droppers said.

On the other hand, Calvin is a different kind of venue than many artists normally play, with Droppers noting Calvin's

attentive audiences. Some artists enjoy performing at Calvin so much they end up wanting to return. According to Droppers, the vibe suits certain genres well, like folk.

The promise of future notoriety is only kind of a factor in choosing artists. While it can be a point of pride to book someone before they get famous, it's unsurprisingly hard to predict future success. Established artists with tours under their belt can be more dependable acts than more inexperienced artists who have breakout potential.

"It's almost more important that the concert is good than that the artist has name recognition two years later," Droppers said.

He compared booking to horse racing — you can study all you want, but at the end of the day, success is up in the air. Once, Droppers tried to book rapper Tobe Nwigwe with an offer of \$20,000 before Nwigwe had an agent. He didn't get an initial response. By the time Nwigwe had an agent and responded, he was charging \$40,000 for a livestream and had appeared on playlists by both Michelle Obama and Beyoncé. "The music industry is so unpredictable right now," Droppers said.

But whether an artist is primed for global fame or simply puts on a good show, SAO concerts are still five dollars for students. Upcoming is retro rock band Major Murphy on Nov. 5. Tickets can be purchased on the SAO box office website.





## From stars to cells, Calvin students showcase summer research

BY TIMOTHY LIN  
Staff Writer

Close to 100 students participated in funded scientific research last summer, working with 36 professors on a total of 73 projects. Students presented these projects in a poster fair on Oct. 22 in the Science Complex.

The number of students with funded research this year is a significant rise from last year's 57 students, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused many projects in 2020 to shut down and prevented students from joining research in person. About 28 percent of student research positions were externally funded by grants from outside the university, while 56 percent were funded by private donors and 15 percent were internally funded by Calvin.

Spread across different parts of the Science Complex, this year's student showcase featured research from a diverse variety of scientific disciplines, from ecology to cardiovascular health.

Junior Katie Van Dyke and fellow student researcher Elizabeth Hansen worked on a long-term project focused on an ecosystem preserve north of Grand Rapids in Grandville, on Flat Iron Lake. The land had been restored into a prairie by Carol and Fritz Rottman, and donated to Calvin in

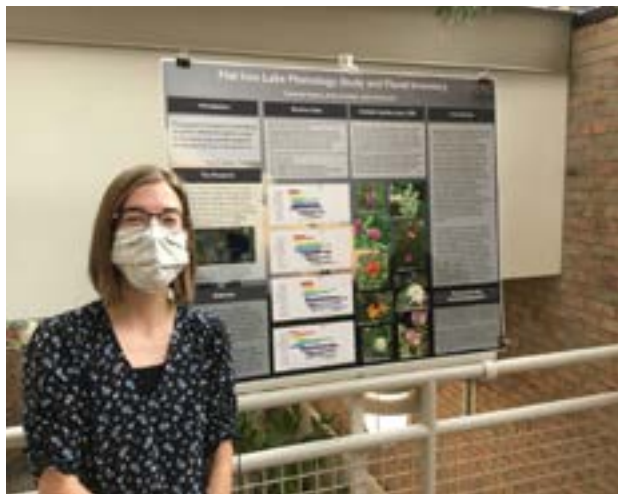


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY LIN

Almost 100 students participated in 73 research projects in the summer of 2021.

chunks over many years.

The project began in 2010 and Van Dyke, who is majoring in biology and writing, is the most recent of many Calvin students to work on it. She and Hansen had the opportunity to study the effects of climate change over time on the blooming period of the prairie plants in the preserve, all whilst living directly on the land. According to Van Dyke, a typical week of research included doing routine surveys of the ecosystem preserve and recording when certain species started, continued and finished flowering for the season.

"The goal is to see how plants are affected by the shifting climate and ultimately see if there is anything we can do about it," Van Dyke said. "I sort of fell in love with the land and with the work. Everyday was filled with just walking around looking at flowers. And I understand that not all field work looks like that in the professional world, but just being out and getting my hands dirty a little bit was such an experience."

Martin Vanderschoot, a junior majoring in environmental science, was one of 15-20 students who conducted research at Plaster Creek this past summer. These students worked on a variety of projects all supervised by Professor Dave Warners. The Plaster Creek Stewards is a community environment restoration project originally initiated by two Calvin professors, and currently maintained with support from several local organizations, including Calvin.

Vanderschoot, along with senior David Martinez Vasquez, conducted research on the biomass of reed canary grass, an invasive plant species that has covered both banks of an agricultural creek, smothering native species and biodiversity and

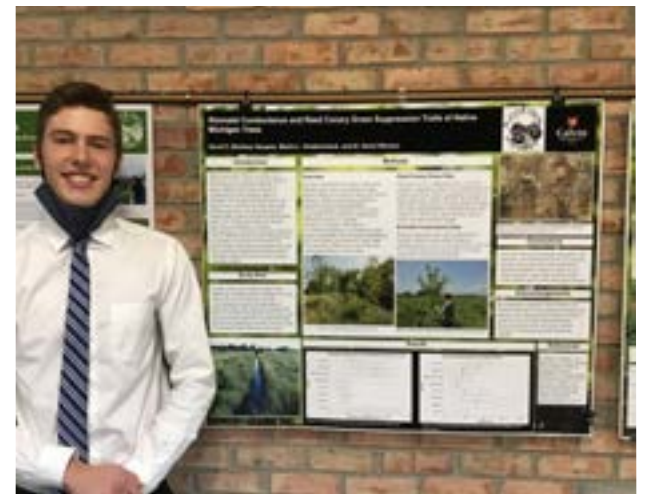


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY LIN

About 15 students worked on research projects with the Plaster Creek Stewards.

creating a risk of localized flooding. Vanderschoot and Vasquez experimented on different tree species to find out which species had the best ability to conduct water and control flooding. They also tried to find correlations between tree species and reed canary biomass, in an effort to discover the best tree for reducing both risk of flooding and the growth of reed canary grass. These Plaster Creek research projects contributed towards an understanding of environmental factors and ways to restore damaged lands. The program's long-standing contributions to environmental education were recognized internationally in 2014.

Marian Henderson, a junior majoring in biology and Spanish, did research this summer with the Samuel and Jean Frankel Cardiovascular Center at the University of Michigan Health on testing the efficacy of Adeno-associated-virus-mediated gene replacement therapy to cure hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, an inherited cardiac disease. Originally accepted for summer of 2020, pandemic measures delayed her involvement to summer of 2021.

Currently available treatments for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, Henderson explained, are limited to treating the symptoms of the disease and increasing the patient's quality of life. Henderson's research focused on gene therapy in search of a treatment option that would target the root cause of the disease and reverse cardiomyopathy.

The experience, Henderson said, taught her how much of a learning process researching can be: "If one experiment fails, it doesn't mean a failure in general, but becomes a new problem to solve in the research process."

### DASHBOARD

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Recording only the active number of cases per day — instead of the standardized, per population data — also may have led the Calvin community to underestimate the virus' spread in January 2021. During interim, the university's caseload may have appeared low, averaging between 20 and 35 active cases per day. Yet in January, there were only about half the number of students taking classes on campus. Thus the case rates were actually much higher than they appeared and a factor of 100 higher than Kent County. This data demonstrates that the exponential growth seen later in the semester likely began in January.

Despite the challenges of providing accurate, accessible information about Calvin's COVID-19 caseload to the general public, Calvin has managed to keep a steady, lower number of cases throughout the 2021 fall semester. According to Boldenow and the dashboard, Calvin's case numbers have averaged between two and 10 new cases per week.

"Numbers aren't super great, but they're steady," Boldenow said. "We don't see any exponential increases."

Vice President for Student Life Sarah Visser noted that, at this point in the semester, "approximately 85 percent of our students are vaccinated or planning to be vaccinated. As this number continues to increase, we believe our campus community is further protected against the spread of COVID-19."



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# FEATURES

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## Urban geography course shows students there's more to Grand Rapids than meets the eye

BY JAMISON VAN ANDEL  
Sports Editor

A 15-minute drive away from Calvin's secluded campus, two dozen students and a veteran professor pile out of three large vans. They emerge in the shadow of the towering Basilica of St. Adalbert, which has stood watch over its quiet downtown neighborhood for over a hundred years. Once everyone's gathered, the professor begins teaching, but instead of a PowerPoint and whiteboard, the buildings and streets are his teaching tools. Armed with paper handouts full of class material, the students listen and ask questions as Professor Mark Bjelland leads class in the heart of the city.

On each corner, a building or street example brings course

Bjelland's "Urban Geography" class (Geo 310) meets for 50 minutes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, but students also get to experience an additional, three-hour lab session on Wednesday afternoons in which they visit different parts of Grand Rapids.

Junior Addison Arendt said the course is "one of my favorite classes I have taken at Calvin ... Every week is engaging and focuses on new topics and ideas."

The urban geography course was originally developed by Professor Henk Aay, who constructed a set of course materials about Grand Rapids and took students around the city while teaching the class. Later, Professor Jason Van Horn added a geographic information systems component to the

*"This experience ... turns the whiteboard into reality"*

"I think [the lab and lecture] fit like a hand and glove," Bjelland said. "They really work together."

In a recent example, Bjelland and his students went from talking about education and healthcare as important factors in downtown spaces to visiting Medical Mile and Grand Valley State University's downtown campus, witnessing the housing and economic expansion that's come as a result.

"This experience [of exploring Grand Rapids] turns the whiteboard into reality," said Arendt. "Seeing the city up close helps me understand concepts that we have talked about in class."

During most lab sessions, the group commutes to a new Grand Rapids neighborhood, where they walk, bike or drive around the area, frequently stopping to examine urban features.

*"Over the course of the semester, Bjelland and his students biked over 75 miles"*

Over the course of the semester, Bjelland works with a number of Grand Rapids agencies that host lab sessions, including Habitat for Humanity, Inner City Christian Federation, the Ada Downtown Development Authority, Grand Rapids Black Businesses, Neighborhood Ventures and the Alpine Township planning department.

Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Bjelland to get creative with the course, especially when it came to travelling from Calvin to different Grand Rapids locations. Historically, the class has used a couple of vans as its predominant means of transportation, but Bjelland turned to public transit and bicycles to allow for better social distancing. Over the course of the semester, Bjelland and his students biked over 75 miles.

*"The course is an opportunity to see the city in which they live and learn in a different light"*

This year, as social distancing guidelines lightened up, Bjelland chose to incorporate the best parts of his social distancing plan into the course permanently, adding two walking labs and one biking lab.

A number of students from the class have gone on to careers in city planning in places like Ypsilanti, Chicago and Seattle, with several now in leadership positions.

For all students, the course is an opportunity to see the city in which they live and learn in a different light — even if they've had considerable experience with parts of the city already.

"I grew up in the Grand Rapids area and we have been to so many places I have never been in all the years I have lived here," said Arendt.

This experience isn't unique, according to Bjelland. "We go places that most Calvin students never go," he said.

"A lot of students never ride public transit. A lot of students never really get far from campus," Bjelland added. "We tend to be kind of isolated in our corner of the region over here."

With each lab session and each passing semester, Bjelland bridges the gap between Calvin and other Grand Rapids communities, showing students there's more to the city than they might think.



The Basilica of St. Adalbert, pictured in the back, is one of the sites where Geo 310 students meet to learn about the city.

content to life. Three church buildings with corresponding schools in adjacent neighborhoods demonstrate the territorial nature of parishes in the late 1900s. An old high school-turned-apartment-building highlights how old buildings are being repurposed today, the appealing arches over each window showcasing the pride that communities took in the appearance of their shared spaces.

*"Bjelland's work in the years since has continued to develop a course that's dedicated to showing students real-world examples of in-class content"*

class, leading GIS exercises in the classroom while Aay took students on field trips in Grand Rapids.

*"Suddenly the leader of a three-hour lab exploring the city, Bjelland had to do some quick learning and planning"*

Bjelland took over the class when he came to Calvin in 2013. During his first year teaching the class, Bjelland was learning right alongside the students.

"I moved [to Grand Rapids] on August 17, and then started teaching at the beginning of September," said Bjelland, who had only briefly visited Grand Rapids previously. Suddenly the leader of a three-hour lab exploring the city, Bjelland had to do some quick learning and planning. Fortunately, he was able to lean on the course materials that Aay had developed, along with his own experience living in the cities of Minneapolis, Vancouver and Seattle.

Still, teaching the class required considerable on-the-go preparation. "I was usually driving around or riding the bus or walking around late Tuesday night practicing for my Wednesday labs, at first," said Bjelland.

Bjelland's work in the years since has continued to develop a course that's dedicated to showing students real-world examples of in-class content.



Professor Mark Bjelland leads class in the heart of the city.



The course incorporates two walking labs and one biking lab.



## Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban need your help

BY FRESHTA TORI JAN  
Guest Writer

*TW: this story contains graphic descriptions of violence.*

Afghanistan may be thousands of miles away, but the humanitarian crisis currently happening is affecting our own Calvin family.

People are often surprised when I tell them I was a shepherd in the hills of Kabul, raised in poverty and land-mines. I was a shepherd who loved the destroyed palaces and libraries of Afghanistan, the ruins of school buildings I saw come back to life and breed some of the bravest individuals I have ever known.

About seven years ago, I was very fortunate to escape the Taliban and pursue my education in the United States. Then, on Aug. 15 this year, Afghanistan collapsed and once again became dominated by the enemies of humanity. Several weeks

ago, I had accepted that Aug. 15 would be the last time I ever heard my mom's voice. That morning I fell to my knees as I heard gunshots over the phone and my family screaming as they watched bodies falling around them by the Kabul airport. That day, hope was the only thing that kept me alive.

By the grace of God, my family was recently evacuated. My family served alongside U.S. military corporations for many years in Afghanistan which put them in high risk. In addition, my family is Hazara, the indigenous ethnic minority that is currently facing a genocide. As you might imagine, being a part of these categories means torture and death by the Taliban, who have recently taken complete control of Afghanistan. Some of my own friends and families were recently slaughtered, beheaded and crucified — we are talking about crucifixion in 2021, not about a story

from biblical history.

"For many Afghan refugees like my family, being relocated to the United States means starting from zero."

My family, like many others, left with all of their belongings behind. However, the trauma and pain does not end there. While still in Kabul, they had to be in hiding for many days, spending over a week without much food or water. They had to burn all of their documents, school books and even toys as the Taliban went through our town, knocking door to door. For four days, they tried to make it to the airport before the Aug. 31 deadline. During their last attempt, the activation of tear gas almost ended their lives. All four of my nieces and nephews were

trampled and separated from my sister and my mother. My sister passed out, broke a rib and dislocated a shoulder. My mother fractured a leg in two places, yet she still found the courage to find the rest of the family.

For many Afghan refugees like my family, being relocated to the United States means starting from zero. As servants of God, it is our obligation to put on our armor of service and provide them with a place of refuge.

Today, because of the sudden abandonment and incompetence of the Biden administration, both Afghans and U.S. citizens still stranded in Afghanistan have to suffer.

"As a village, we have the power to pick up our Afghan allies and walk beside them during this time."

Here at Calvin, we have promised to think deeply, to act justly and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. I want to remind you of this mission, and ask how you will help when duty calls in a time such as this. As a village, as a Calvin community, we have the power to pick up our Afghan allies and walk beside them during this time. Today, I call you to take action. You can donate to my nonprofit, Sew True, or through gift cards to help my family, and you can donate your time and skills to help make meals, provide transportation and assist with people who speak English as their language. Hold your elected officials accountable, telling them to not forget the U.S. citizens and Afghan allies stranded in Afghanistan. Calvin University, Grand Rapids residents, now is the time. We are the village that can bring healing to the rest of the world.

## As a Christian university, Calvin needs to put more focus on its theatre program

BY JESSA MORREN  
Guest Writer

I'm a part of a huge extended family of Calvin graduates — 23, to be exact. As the story goes with many folks in longtime Calvin-dominated families, I wasn't sure I wanted to add to that number.

Seeing Calvin Theatre Company in action changed my mind.

I attended two CTC productions with my high school: 2017's "The Arabian Nights" and 2019's "A Wrinkle in Time." Theatre was my passion, and seeing the company's strong community make high-quality theatre in a college setting was crucial to my college decision. It made me entertain the thought that maybe I did belong at Calvin. When applying to Calvin only a few months later, I decided to follow in the footsteps of two of my high school directors — both CTC alumni — and pursue the theatre minor.

I walked into my first CTC class only to be told that the theatre minor had been cut.

Fast forward two years, and there's a lot more than just an absent theatre minor and theatre classes that are definite uncertainties in CTC. A new world of performance restrictions that came with the pandemic were messy to handle already — as we readjusted through times that required us to cancel or reschedule shows, including this fall's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "Midsummer" took a full nine months too long to finally bring to a live audience — our first real, full audience in two years. Behind the scenes, as I'm beginning to see through my involvement on CTC's student board, more issues are building up. By the year's end we will lose faculty through Brian Goodman's retirement, leaving big shoes to fill in our scene shop. We're already understaffed — with our total of one, adjunct professor, John Scritchfield, new to CTC after a transition in creative directors last fall. Budgeting is fragile, and our future plans may include mostly public domain shows — limiting us in not only outreach to students as educational theatre, but quality projects to keep new members

joining and audiences captivated. With outdated and breaking equipment, a singular misstep could be disastrous and immensely costly — throughout our facilities, there are plenty of things in need of repair.

Despite three shows scheduled for this year's season, a rare oddity caused by the "Midsummer" setback, we may be more at risk as a company than ever. Watching my program sink while others thrive on increased funding feels like a betrayal.

As a company, we're a passionate group who sees what theatre at Calvin can be, and how we can use an immense range of God-given talents to make this a possibility. But this is rendered impossible when we feel abandoned by the university. Most CTC students I've talked to feel that Calvin isn't doing enough to support us, and that it won't — just because we're a fine arts program.

"Theatre is essential to a Christian university as praise to God, a gift we can't allow to be lost."

We've seen such a positive reaction to "Midsummer" as a production from the Calvin community. And by working CTC and Newfound Narratives One-Act Festival tables at Cokes and Clubs, I'm aware that there is an existing population of students expressing interest in theatre at Calvin. There is a want for live theatre here, and to fully exhibit our potential, we need financial and structural support to make that happen. Theatre is essential to a Christian university as praise to God, a gift we can't allow to be lost. It is something that we as a Christian university should be valuing. The act of creating something should be seen through Christian eyes as what we are called to do as created beings of a Creator God. Unless the larger Calvin community recognizes this and takes action to bring life to the vibrant arts culture here, struggling arts programs could be at risk of rapid decay without repair.

## Super Crossword

**ACROSS**

1. See 23
2. The only U.S. state that has a seal featuring an arm holding a sword
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**WANTED TO FIND A WORD?**

**ACROSS**

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**WANTED TO FIND A WORD?**

**ACROSS**

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**DOWN**

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### PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS?

Chimes encourages healthy discussion of issues within the Calvin community and welcomes opinion pieces from all students, staff and faculty. If you would like to submit, email your article or your ideas to the section editor and we'll help you out.

SEND ALL OPINIONS AND LETTERS TO:  
LIANA HIRNER

leh46@students.calvin.edu



# PHOTO ESSAY

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## CHAPEL AT CALVIN

CHAPEL OFFERS A BREAK FROM THE BUSYNESS OF LIFE AS A STUDENT, FEATURING A VARIETY OF SPEAKERS AND WORSHIP STYLES THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.



PHOTOS BY LAUREN DEVRIES