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Feds cap nursing loans

Proposed federal loan classification raises many questions for graduate nursing students

LILIAN GARDNER
News Editor

A proposed change by the U.S. Department of Education has prompted responses from national nursing organizations and university officials after the department updated its guidance in 2025 on which graduate programs qualify as “professional degree” programs for higher federal student loan limits.

The department’s Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment final regulations, published in 2023, established transparency standards requiring colleges to report program-level data on student debt and earnings. According to the Federal Register, the rule was created to address programs that leave students with “unaffordable amounts of student loan debt in relation to their earnings, or with no gain in earnings compared to others with no more than a high school education.” These 2023 regulations do not change federal aid eligibility for undergraduate majors.

“Future DNP students admitted on or after July 2026 will be affected by this new cap on loan amounts for graduate degrees at \$100,000 down from \$200,000 for professional degrees.”

-Joseph Tariman
Associate Dean of Graduate Nursing Programs

The current controversy arises from a 2025 proposed rule concerning the Graduate PLUS Loan program and professional degree classifications. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the department’s proposal would place post-baccalaureate nursing students under lower federal loan limits of \$20,500 annually and \$100,000 aggregate lifetime. This contrasts with the \$50,000 annual and \$200,000 aggregate lifetime limits available to federally recognized professional degree programs, including medicine, dentistry, law, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, optometry, podiatry and chiropractic.

Graduate nursing programs, including Doctor of Nursing Practice, Ph.D. in Nursing and post-baccalaureate MSN programs, are not included in the department’s proposed professional degree classification.

Amanda Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., associate

dean for research in Creighton’s College of Nursing, shared a National League for Nursing press release with the Creightonian, highlighting that the issue largely impacts nurses pursuing graduate degrees.

Joseph Tariman, Ph.D., associate dean of graduate nursing programs at Creighton, said in an email, “Future DNP students admitted on or after July 2026 will be affected by this new cap on student loan amounts for graduate degrees at \$100,000, down from \$200,000 for professional degrees. ... Doctoral education takes 3–5 years to complete, meaning students will need to seek other funding sources such as scholarships, employer benefits and private loans to ensure they complete their degree before reaching their student loan cap.”

University Provost Mardell Wilson responded by email regarding the potential impact of the proposal on Creighton students.

“These federal requirements should not have a significant impact on current Creighton students given our history of very strong student outcomes and graduation and retention rates,” Wilson said in an email.

Wilson said that the university will likely not need to make any adjustments to communication about program information despite the changes.

“Creighton currently provides cost of attendance information in full transparency to our students according to federal guidelines. As far as majors and our graduation outcomes, we do not anticipate the need to make any adjustments at this time.”

Wilson also commented more broadly on federal shifts toward value and transparency measures in higher education.

“We are very proud of our students’ achievements and the contributions they are making to their disciplines and society. Our consistently strong outcomes data speaks volumes to the value of our Catholic, Jesuit education,” she said in an email. “Creighton University will continue to actively monitor federal regulations and provide information to prospective students in accordance with the standards.”

The National League for Nursing (NLN) has voiced opposition to the proposed classification. According to the NLN, excluding graduate nursing “would deny nursing students the opportunity to obtain higher graduate student loan amounts they may need to complete their education” and could negatively affect the nation’s supply of advanced practice nurses.

The NLN also criticized the department’s assertion that “95% of nursing students need less than an aggregate total of \$100,000 for their tuition,” noting that the data source was unclear and may not reflect doctoral-level

programs.

According to the AACN, more than 200,000 individuals have signed a petition urging the department to revise the proposed definition to include nursing. Federal lawmakers, including Rep. Jen Kiggans, have submitted letters requesting reconsideration, and the National Academy of Medicine issued a statement emphasizing the importance of graduate-prepared nurses to health-care access and quality.

“These federal requirements should not have a significant impact on current Creighton students given our history of very strong student outcomes and graduation outcomes and retention rates.”

-Mardell Wilson
University Provost

Creighton’s undergraduate programs remain unaffected by this proposal. Students in bachelor’s programs, including BSN students, continue to have full access to federal financial aid under current rules.

Adrian Martinez, a sophomore in Creighton’s College of Nursing and a Harper nursing scholar, said he is one of eight students in his cohort. He described how the proposed federal loan changes could affect his plans for graduate education.

“It’s kind of an uncertain certainty factor of how I’m going to be able to afford such high tuition rates without certain federal funding,” Martinez said.

Martinez also said that the rigor of the nursing education makes it difficult to have other sources of income, like another job, at the same time.

“During these programs, you’re not able to work because they’re at such a high level of education that you’re going to be unemployed for two years while getting this degree. So, not only are you missing out on pay, you’re gaining more debt along with the other things that you have to pay for in life,” he said.

The department is expected to publish the proposed rule and open a formal comment period in the coming weeks, providing an opportunity for universities, professional organizations and students to provide feedback before any final rule is implemented.

CU shines at annual Christmas lighting



JONAH LAGRANGE/
THE CREIGHTONIAN

The Rev. Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., speaks to students before beginning the countdown to light campus up with blue and white lights.

ELIZABETH JONES
Editor in Chief

Every year, Creighton University’s Omaha campus lights up and embraces the holiday spirit with Christmas lights up and down the California Street Pedestrian Mall — and it all starts during the lighting ceremony at Christmas at Creighton, an annual event where the lights are turned on and students celebrate with a meal in the Skutt Student Center.

Students and staff, joined by Santa Claus, crowded together in front of St. John’s for the lighting ceremony on Tuesday, hosted by the inter-residence hall government (IRHG). Before the lights were turned on, students heard from IRHG’s director of traditional programming, Judith Owusu Sekyere, and IRHG’s president, Enzo Cavaleri. This year’s theme for the event was “Christmas in the Cinema,” which Cavaleri emphasized in his speech when he said that he hopes everyone has a chance to enjoy Christmas movies during the upcoming winter break.

Following the talks from IRHG officers, the Rev. Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., the president of the university, gave a speech. He thanked all of the workers who helped set up the lights and decorate campus. He also said that each of the lights remind him of Creighton students, because he thinks they all have a light inside of them and will make the world a brighter place. He concluded his speech by highlighting the importance of the Jesuit value “men and women for and with others,” and then he said a prayer and offered a blessing over those in attendance.

Then, with a pull of a blue and white candy cane lever, Hendrickson turned on the lights.

The crowd appreciated the beauty, and students said they could feel the holiday spirit.

TURN TO “Creighton” PAGE 2

Creighton Bluejays deck the halls



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Students gather around as they await the lighting of campus Christmas lights, holding cups of hot coco given at the event. They're joined by Santa as he walks around taking group photos, spreading holiday joy.



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

St. John's Parish Catholic Church is illuminated with snowflakes. The Rev. Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., stood outside the church when he ceremoniously turned on the lights.

Continued from Page 1

“It’s cool to have the holiday spirit unite everyone together,” Charlotte Crawford, a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, said. “And it’s just fun that everyone can eat together and celebrate, you know, the wonderful times despite finals coming up.”

With the Mall and St. John’s now lit up,

the crowd got to go inside Skutt for a festive meal free to students. The main line included halal chicken skewers, Christmas enchiladas, ratatouille, vegetables, potatoes, smoked cheddar mac and cheese, a Christmas salad and dinner rolls. They also had starters, two action stations and a dessert bar that included cookies, cakes and chocolates.

“The food was really good, like better than normal dining hall food, not to hate on them

[Creighton Dining], but it was really good,” Marissa Williams, a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, said. “[I like] the whole aspect of it [Christmas at Creighton] being a buffet [with] Thanksgiving-style food. It was really nice to get everyone together and have good food at a night like this.”

Now that the lighting ceremony has taken place, it’s officially Christmastime at Creighton. The ongoing tradition to light up cam-

pus is one students appreciate year after year. “I honestly really like this event,” Norah Wagoner, a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, said. “I think it’s a way to bring community to Creighton. ... And I think that it’s really unique and something most universities don’t do.”

The holiday lights will be on every night, continuing into next semester.



Weekly Campus Safety Report

This is a selection of incidents chosen by the Editor in Chief and is not a comprehensive weekly report. The full report is compiled in the Daily Crime Log which anyone can access in the Public Safety office located at 2222 Burt St.

1

November 18 - 8:12 a.m.

A non-affiliate who has been running in and out of traffic at 24th and Cuming St. was later found sitting in the middle of parking lot 48. Public Safety issued a Ban and Bar notice.

2

November 21 - 8:45 a.m.

A faculty member reported a theft from his office in the Hixon Lied building.

3

November 22 - 6:45 a.m.

Public Safety responded to Kenefick residence hall after a custodian reported an unconscious party in the second floor men's restroom. A fake ID was confiscated during the encounter. (Not Pictured)

4

November 29 - 2:31 p.m.

A student reported that someone entered his unlocked vehicle, parked along 19th St., near the McDermott Center, and took his wife's purse.

Janna Lopez uses poetry to help make sense of the world around her. Her poems “I, Magis Keeper” and “Unspoken Bird” express how she views the Jesuit value “Magis” and her feelings of grief.

Nutcracker sparks wonders



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JL WILLIAMS

The weekend before Thanksgiving. Creighton's Dance Company (CDC) kicked off the holiday classic "The Nutcracker" in the Lied Education Center for the Arts and enchanted audience members.

EMMA O'DWYER
Scene Reporter

In partnership with the Creighton University Department of Fine and Performing Arts, Creighton's Dance Company (CDC) closed its annual production of "The Nutcracker," drawing full audiences and showcasing months of intense preparation, creative collaboration and emotional investment from dancers and faculty alike. For many performers, this year's production represented not only a beloved campus tradition, but a deeply personal milestone.

For College of Arts and Sciences sophomore and dancer Kathryn Maciolek, who stepped into the role of Clara, the preparation demanded the same intensity as an athletic season.

"The process of preparing for 'The Nutcracker' is like preparing for a state tournament," Maciolek said in an email. "It's known as 'Nutcracker Season,' and it's a huge deal to get any role. 'Nutcracker Season' is the busiest time of the year for most dancers, and most of us spend around eight hours every Saturday and Sunday getting ready for the shows. Rehearsals are long and tiring, but I wouldn't trade them for the world!"

Her favorite moment in the production has been the same since she first danced the ballet more than a decade ago.

"My favorite scene from 'The Nutcracker' was the party scene. ... It's one of the most en-

terrifying scenes to watch. I say that because not only did I get to dance, but all of my friends and I got to act our goofiest onstage,” she said via email. “The last time I did [‘The Nutcracker’ (about 13 years ago), it was my favorite scene because, as a party girl, I looked up to the girl who got to play Clara, watching from the wings. This time, not only was I Clara, but I was able to spend so much time ... bringing [that character] to life in my own way. It was a full-circle moment. ... It was like little me was watching from the wings.”

That sense of community and continuity defines the CDC's culture.

"There's honestly so much camaraderie, support and love," Maciolek said in an email. "Whether it's ... goofy moves in the wings to calm nerves or people silently jumping up and down to celebrate someone hitting their fouetté turns ... the CDC is a company that feels like home, whether on or offstage."

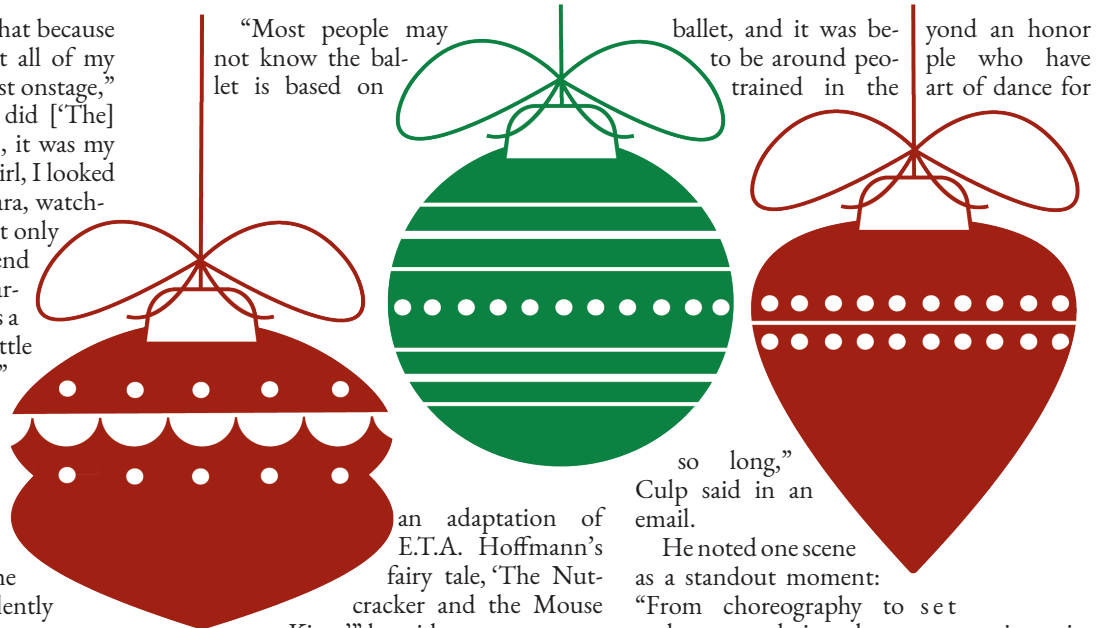
Dance Program Director Patrick Roddy, who staged and directed "The Nutcracker," has been part of "The Nutcracker" tradition since childhood.

"My greatest reward is to see the students excel in their dancing roles and have a good time while in rehearsals and performances," Roddy said over email.

He also reminded audiences that the familiar holiday classic has deep artistic roots.

“Most people may not know the ballet is based on

ballet, and it was be-
to be around peo-
trained in the
yond an honor
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art of dance for



Roddy's connection to Omaha's ballet history also adds meaning to the production.

"The early Omaha productions were staged by my childhood instructor and mentor, Valerie Roche," he said. "She also formed the dance program here at Creighton in the late 1960s!"

For College of Arts and Sciences senior and performer Brady Culp, joining the CDC for such an iconic piece was both humbling and inspiring.

“‘The Nutcracker’ is such an institution of

so long," Culp said in an email.

He noted one scene as a standout moment: "From choreography to set and costume design, the snow scene is particularly beautiful."

Even after four performances, he added, "There is so much talent on stage and behind the scenes that ... I still think there's more to appreciate."

As the curtain closes on this year's production, the dancers return to classes, rehearsals and the rhythm of campus life. But for the performers, directors and audience members alike, "The Nutcracker" continues to be a powerful reminder of tradition, dedication and the magic possible when a community comes together.

Tannenbaum: Omaha's holiday gem

MIA CASTRO
Scene Reporter

I shiver against the brisk air, and it feels crisp against my cheek. I exhale, watching my breath create white swirls into the pitch-black night, which is illuminated only by the glistening yellow Old Market lights. I need to seek refuge from this cold. But where to go? Ahead, a comforting sight illuminates my view: the Tannenbaum Christmas Shop.

I gingerly twist the frosted metal door-knob, not fully knowing what to expect. Immediately, I'm greeted with what seems to

be the essence of Christmas spirit itself: the warm twinkle of intricate hand-painted ornaments and a sweet smell of cinnamon and eggnog draw me deeper into the store, as a gentle Christmas tune fills my ears.

The aisles offer everything from colorful, fuzzy elf socks and tall wooden nutcrackers to adorable, kid-friendly Christmas toys and deep green festive garlands, just perfect for a cozy fireplace.

This quaint little shop had everything for my Christmas needs. Not only did I find a personalized penguin ornament for a friend, but other precious animal figurines perfect

for my little cousin. In Tannenbaum, I could easily find a thoughtful gift for everyone this Christmas season. For an individual who's into sports, the Husker-themed merchandise is perfect, and for the global scholar, the ornaments and decorations in varying languages are the clear selection. Not to mention, the shop makes your gift search much easier by separating the items by theme. For example, one of the walls lining the store separates ornaments into sections like "Sports," "Occupation," "Family and Baby" and more, so you can rest assured you're finding the most personalized gift for your loved ones.

For myself, of course, I found the perfect holiday mug, which I know will be a staple for my hot cocoa endeavors this season. I simply can't wait to use it while snuggled up on my bean bag chair and my space heater on full blast in these chilly upcoming weeks.

The Old Market Tannenbaum Christmas Shop is arguably the most holiday-spirited spot in Omaha this season. You never know what you could find within the charming, red-bricked walls of this magical joint. I know I found a place to return to for the upcoming Christmas seasons to come.

No one mourns a sequel

LILAH OTTEN
Scene Reporter

It’s very rare that I am equally as enamored for a sequel as I am for a first installment. “Wicked: For Good” was one of those times. As a fan of the Broadway show, I knew how this story was going to end. I knew all the songs, and I knew where the characters’ lives were headed. I was nervous that it wouldn’t translate well to the screen, just as I was for the first movie, especially because of how much bigger the narrative gets in the second act. I was nervous that they would mess it up. However, I was beyond blown away by this enchanting film.

Though we are not told exactly how long has passed between the two films, it seems to

have been a while as everyone is out of school, and both protagonists have settled into their new ways of life. Compared to the first film, I think it starts out a little slow as it takes a moment for us to get into the first major musical number whereas in the first movie, it starts almost immediately.

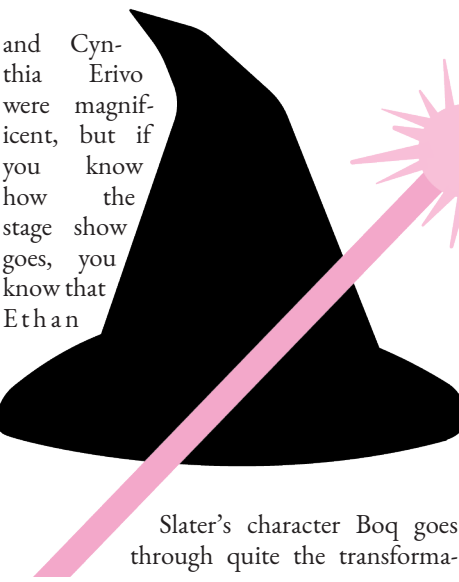
This rocky pacing was my only big issue with the film. It starts off a little slow then as the characters start to find their footing about halfway through, it starts moving really fast. I must give the writers some grace though, as they did what they could with act two’s material.

Of course, most of the performances were fantastic, with few exceptions, and I was specifically impressed with the male leads this time around. Obviously, Ariana Grande

and Cynthia Erivo were magnificent, but if you know how the stage show goes, you know that Ethan Slater’s character Boq goes through quite the transforma-

tion, which affects him quite deeply. Slater went above and beyond what I expected, and he genuinely had me forgetting how dorky he acted in the first film. “As Long as You’re Mine” is one of my favorite tracks in the second act, and as big of a fan as I am of Jonathan Bailey, I was a little worried that he would have a hard time keeping up with a powerhouse like Cynthia Erivo. However, I was so wrong. He really stepped it up and made me an even bigger fan than I already was. He was incredible.

I knew going into the movie that I would be walking out devastated, but I don’t think I have ever sobbed quite that hard in a public space before. If you are planning on seeing this movie, bring tissues.



Serving up holiday goodies

BEHLA SCHMIDT
Scene Reporter

As the semester winds down and finals are just around the corner, students across campus are gearing up to head home for the holidays. However, before we can all kick back and fully embrace the winter season, there are assignments to be submitted, papers to be written and exams to be taken. Through all this hustle and bustle, it will be important to stay properly fueled and well-rested to execute matters successfully and end the year on a high note.

Amidst the chaos, it can be difficult to find the time to meal prep, leading many to grab whatever is available or skip meals altogether. To avoid such things, it can be helpful to apply simple techniques and use what is on hand to create a quick, but delicious meal. Whether you’re in need of a quick snack or a sweet treat, the following recipes are sure to satisfy.

For all the pizza enthusiasts, the first dish is a triumph: Christmas Tree Pull-Apart Bread. To begin, cut store-bought pizza dough into around 22 bite-sized pieces, and place a mozzarella cheese cube in the middle of each. Then roll the bundles into a ball and brush with an egg wash composed of water and one large egg.

Once assembled into the shape of a Christmas tree, bake the dough until golden brown, and garnish with Italian seasoning, fresh parsley and melted butter. The final product can be served with marinara sauce.

Although this savory appetizer was quite

tasty, it was lacking some flavor and a particular je ne sais quoi. Adding a protein source, like pepperoni or ham, or using multiple cheeses in the dough balls would be a great solution. It may also be worthwhile to add other seasonings prior to baking to create a more prominent flavor.

The next winter-inspired dish is a festive charcuterie board, fitting for the average lazy college student. Because this recipe requires minimal preparation, it can be altered to the preferences of the chef, enabling a variety of ingredients to be used.

Assemble the plate using various fruits, namely oranges, strawberries and blueberries, mozzarella cheese, cashews, salami and ham. A strawberry jalapeño jam can also be added along with some pita crackers, to be paired with the other ingredients.

This recipe has the perfect ratio of each ingredient and enables one to mix and match things to their liking. Overall, the simplicity of this dish is ultimately what makes it so versatile and easy to create, which secures its success as a nutritious study snack.

The final recipe, known as Reindeer Chow, combines puppy chow, M&M’s, peanut butter cups and pretzels for a sweet treat that’s sure to be loved by all. Although it’s slightly messy, it can be prepared in little time, yielding a dessert that’s minimal effort and high reward.

To make the Reindeer Chow, melt together puppy chow, peanut butter, chocolate chips and butter until smooth, and then add a dash of vanilla extract. This chocolatey liquid is poured over Chex rice cereal and mixed thoroughly.



BEHLA SCHMIDT/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Students can make festive puppy chow like Reindeer Chow to prepare for the holiday season.

Next, add powdered sugar and mix all the contents, so the cereal is completely coated. Finally, pretzels, M&M’s and the peanut butter cups were combined with the cereal mixture to result in the final product, a sugary sweet goodness.

This Reindeer Chow is the ultimate balance between salty and sweet; the pretzels offset the chocolatiness of the other ingredients

and compliment the peanut butter beautifully. The items in this recipe are interchangeable and can be swapped to fulfill one’s personal desires as well, which creates much flexibility.

Overall, these recipes are a great and efficient way to satisfy your stomach as we head into finals. They are also sure to provide a sense of holiday cheer and increase excitement for the upcoming holiday season!

Signing off as scene editor

CAMERON ELIAS
Scene Editor

It’s hard to say goodbye to journalism. A part of me has been shaped by my experiences with journalism, and I thank journalism for changing me in ways I never expected. I’ve written for two separate student newspapers over the course of five years, and ever since I first joined a student newspaper, it’s been an adventure.

Five years ago, journalism was new to me, and I didn’t know what to expect. I never expected I would lead my high school newspaper. I never expected I would teach Watergate and journalism to a classroom of amateur reporters. I certainly never expected to join a college newspaper after high school, but I did.

Everything that came along with journalism, at least for me, came unexpectedly, and I am grateful for all of it. I sometimes wonder how my life would be different if I hadn’t ever gotten involved with journalism.

Looking back, getting involved with journalism helped me grow as a person. My experiences in student newspapers challenged me to become more resilient, more courageous and more merciful.

Being a good journalist, as I have discovered, requires the ability to empathize with others even when you don’t always see eye-to-eye with another person. Being involved with a newspaper taught me how to be tough and how to lead others in ways I didn’t anticipate.

I’ve written many stories over the years. Stories of healing. Stories of heartbreak. Stories of joy. I’m constantly amazed by how powerful a story can be for others. The power

of stories kept me involved with newspapers over the years.

Journalism made me realize how powerful words are. When someone comes up to you and tells you how a story you’ve written impacted people they knew for the better, it makes you feel you’ve made a difference in someone’s life. Knowing something you’ve written has made a difference in someone’s life is one of the best feelings a writer can have.

When I unexpectedly became the scene editor at the Creightonian, I did not know how it would work. Thankfully, the Creightonian was filled with passionate individuals that were willing to help each other, and I’m grateful for their support over the years. Learning is a constant in life, and with every article I’ve written, I’ve learned something new.

With journalism, I learned not to be afraid of a different perspective, not to be afraid to

voice a different perspective, and not to be afraid to try something new. Thankfully, I got involved with journalism and stayed involved with my community. I met so many people with my newspaper experiences that it’s hard for me to comprehend how I would have developed friendships without journalism.

Journalism can be tough at times, but the way it changes other people’s lives, as well as yours, makes it worthwhile. However, I’ll miss the last-minute scramble to get the stories altogether, I’ll miss reading the stories I get to edit every Monday night, I’ll miss the nights where the staff gathers together to create the newspaper spreads, and I’ll miss the people I’ve met thanks to the Creightonian.

Now, it’s time to try something new. While it’s bittersweet to leave journalism behind, I leave with the comfort that trying something new is what led me to this.

Farewell from an editor

ELIZABETH JONES
Editor in Chief

My entire Creighton experience is interlaced with the Creightonian. Coming off a two-year run as editor in chief of my high school paper, I sought out the Creightonian at my first Skutt Shutdown. I still remember the joyful gleam in the eyes of our then-copy chief, Ava Monte, as she listened to me talk about why I love journalism and my experience with it. She grabbed Charlie Harrington, the then-editor in chief, and exclaimed, “you need to talk to this girl!” Before I knew it, Charlie was recruiting me as the paper’s news editor — a position that had just recently become vacant.

So, first semester of my freshman year, I was launched into an editor position. My Monday evenings became filled with staff-wide meetings and my Tuesday nights were spent with the other editors in the newsroom, staring at computers on the second floor of Hitchcock and laughing over pizza as we all did our best to finish putting together that week’s issue by midnight. I served as the news editor for four semesters.

One of my favorite parts of being the news editor was getting to work with Abbie Gallant, who is now my co-editor in chief. Abbie was the sports editor, and, for the better part of our underclassman careers, she and I would bounce ideas off each other for our respective pages.

Of course, we were (and are) more than just coworkers. In that newsroom, throughout journalism classes we took together and during Starbucks runs for pink drinks, Abbie and I became close friends. So, when our sophomore year was coming to a close and the editor in chief was graduating, it only made sense for Abbie and I to step up. We had already been collaborating on the Creightonian for multiple semesters; of course we could be editors together. She’s the reporter yin to my reporter yang.

With this issue, we’ve completed our third semester as co-editors in chief.

I’m beyond thankful for the time I have spent with the Creightonian. I have grown as a leader, a journalist and a person. From this experience, I can probably navigate Adobe InDesign with my eyes closed, I can rattle off AP Style facts in my sleep and I can write a simple news article in the inverted pyramid structure without really thinking. But, more than that, I now see the world differently — better. I see stories all around me.

This paper has also made me a much better journalist than I was a few years ago. The most valuable journalism lesson I’ve learned since starting at Creighton came from Carol Zuegner, Ph.D. She retired a couple years ago but was both my academic advisor and the advisor of the paper when I first started as news editor. She taught me that it’s important to be a human first and a journalist second. When I had to write an obituary for the first time, she reminded me of that important mantra, and that was one of the only ways I was able to write such a heavy piece — my heaviest Creightonian piece to date. I now carry that lesson — “I’m a human first, journalist second” — into every single story I write and every single interview I conduct.

Next semester, Abbie and I won’t be editors in chief. We decided it’s best to finish our senior year with more time for our friends, job applications and focusing on writing the articles we love. We’ll be reporters and stick around to help when it’s needed, so don’t think you’re going to stop seeing our bylines just yet, but we won’t be editors anymore. I know our successor is going to do a phenomenal job. And so, to the Creightonian and every staff member we’ve had since the fall of 2022, thank you for all of the laughs and all of the learning. Even though sometimes it’s been stressful, the Creightonian has been one of my very favorite parts of being a Creighton student. I wouldn’t trade my time as co-editor in chief for anything.

Time to stop sports bets

AINSLEY SMITH
Opinion Writer

On May 28, in the 9th inning of a mostly unremarkable baseball game between the Cleveland Guardians and the Los Angeles Dodgers, Guardians closer Emmanuel Clase threw his first pitch so low it almost landed in the dirt. Dodgers batter Andy Pages, notorious for his horrific plate discipline, swung through it anyway. As was later revealed in the grand jury indictment that charged Clase with fraud, bribery and conspiracy, Pages ruined a “prop bet” Clase had arranged with bettors prior to the game. Prop bets are made on highly specific outcomes within a game, allowing bettors to wager on certain pitch locations, speeds and sequences. Clase’s agreement with the bettors meant he was required to throw a first pitch ball, but Pages’ swing caused both Clase and the bettors to lose out on all \$4,000 dollars of their wager.

Clase’s involvement in illegal gambling rings was just one of the latest in a very long

string of controversies within American sports — a trend that doesn’t require much detective work to unravel.

When the Supreme Court legalized online sports betting in 2018, companies like FanDuel, Underdog and DraftKings quickly optimized their platforms for digital use. This meant curating sports betting to a younger generation already wrapped up in the dopamine addictions of social media, promoting prop bets and parlays that would allow users to receive results almost instantly. Bets can be completed with the tap of a button. It’s a slot machine you keep in your pocket.

This new method has been ridiculously successful in terms of both revenue and marketing, to the point that online gambling companies are now involved in active partnerships with teams, leagues and broadcasting organizations. Kansas City Royals games are run on “FanDuel Network.” Odds are displayed before or during almost every major sports game.

When American sports institutions endorse gambling like this, it becomes very difficult to recognize the incentives to stay out

of it. Can you really blame Clase for what he got wrapped up in, when virtually every corner you turn as an athlete directs you to a parlay or when the over/under for your performance may as well be printed on a laminated sheet and stapled to your back before every game?

The acceptance of sports gambling as an economic institution has crippled the very industries it claims to support — if not financially, then morally — encouraging athletes and fans alike to sacrifice their fiscal security for a chance at the jackpot. When Clase joined the scheme that got him arrested and suspended from MLB, he was signed to a five year, 20-million-dollar contract. His successful prop bets earned him an additional \$30,000, on average. If even multimillionaire athletes can be enticed by the brain-rotted, addictive practices of online sports betting, legislators have a responsibility to question how the integrity of American sports is at stake.

Cold take: CU winter is nice



CECE SLADOVNIK
Assistant Opinion Editor

Suddenly, it is December.

The days are shorter, finals are impending and the Omaha wind feels like a million tiny slaps to the face. It is easy to let the cold creep inward and match your mood to the weather, but I find it imperative to consider that winter at Creighton has some aspects to be appreciated. By focusing on the good parts, Creighton in the winter can become a nice place to be.

Walking down the Mall with my head ducking from the wind and hands deep in my pockets, I feel a sort of nostalgia. I think of the times I trekked through the snow to get a Qdoba meal with my friends, scurrying in the cold to 9 p.m. Mass or the frightful freezing days I spent in sorority recruitment. The changing of the seasons reminds me of the history I have with this campus and how much more the weather will change before I leave for good.

Winter at Creighton is cozy. I love my

bundled-up walks to the KFC in the morning and finally wearing the sweaters and fleeces hanging in my closet all year. When the temperature drops, being in class with my friends somehow feels warmer. It is easy to spread cheer when everyone’s cheeks are pink from the cold. To me, Creighton feels most homey during the winter. By this time of the year, your friendship dynamics are most likely established, and you can feel secure and snug with your closest companions. With the heat on and blankets galore, nights-in have never felt so serene.

Finally, the period of November through March is a great time to get serious. The silliness of Halloween weekend has run out, and exams are approaching. Earlier darkness creates a distinct vibe for evening study sessions and invites a better sleep routine. The KFC offers a welcome way to invite endorphins



NATHAN JOBALIA /THE CREIGHTONIAN

and ward off the winter slump. Winter eliminates distractions, allowing you to focus on your goals and become the best student and individual you can be.

Whether you’re embracing the holiday spirit, cozying up with your roommates and a movie or working on your winter arc, I implore you to embrace all that winter at Creighton can bring you. By looking beyond the cold and the dark and finding the wonderful elements winter can offer, you may find this season shines in its own way.

Belonging beyond Greek life

ELIZABETH GRAVELINE
Opinion Editor

As the fall semester winds down, the chatter on the Mall shifts to spring semester and with it, the beginning of recruitment season for Greek life. The thought of getting dressed up, juggling social events and facing the judgement of their peers fills some with excitement and some with fear. All in all, it is a period of uncertainty, anxiety and exhaustion for those who attempt to join Greek life.

Freshman year, during an unusually cold week in January, I joined the swarms of girls trekking down to Harper in dresses and heels. I attended recruitment and discovered an environment where my personality and confidence were judged for what was “suitable” to the sorority. Coming home each

night feeling drained and rejected, I realized recruitment (and sorority life) was not for me. After the third day, I made the decision to walk away from recruitment and the prospect of joining a sorority.

Some have described joining their sorority or fraternity as feeling like ‘coming home’ and I worried that I missed out on that opportunity for community. But in the days afterwards, I realized that life would go on. I found that many of my friends either did not go through recruitment or dropped out after negative experiences like I did.

Now, as a senior, I can confidently say that my social life did not suffer because I refused to join a sorority. I found a group of friends who love and support me. Some are a part of Greek life, some are not. Not joining meant I had more time to build friendships naturally and focus on things I actually enjoy — and I still get invited to date parties.

In fact, by senior year, almost all of my friends have dropped out or seriously considered dropping out of their sorority. They remind me often that I ‘dodged a bullet’ when they’re dealing with sorority drama.

I’m not here to convince you to avoid Greek life altogether. Just remember: social groups do not determine your value. If you decide to attend recruitment, good luck! Try to enjoy the process, keep an open mind and listen to yourself. If you feel like you don’t belong, just know that nobody feels completely at home among strangers. It is OK to say no to Greek life.

Sororities and fraternities can be great for some, but your worth, your community and your college experience won’t disappear if you decide it’s not for you. You will find your people — whether or not they wear Greek letters.



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

ALLY SEEVERS Sports Editor

On the surface, it is easy to look at Ava Martin now — 2025 BIG EAST Player of the Year, AVCA All-American, second-overall pick in the Major League Volleyball draft — and think her path was carved from the start. She stands as one of the most decorated players in Creighton volleyball history, a six-rotation star outside hitter who has rewritten record books and carried on the legacy of what it means to be a Bluejay.

But her journey to where she is today wasn't easy. It begins with a girl who was cut, who was undersized, who played nearly every position just to be out on the court. It begins with a love for the game that demanded she find a way, no matter what.

Growing up in Overland Park, Kan. as the oldest of six children, Martin learned early the drive to succeed. With parents who played collegiate sports and siblings who were equally athletic, her home was filled with equal parts competition and encouragement. Every conversation, every game carried a sense of rivalry. It was in that lively, competitive household that Martin first discovered what it meant to fight for every point.

Ava's earliest love for volleyball grew under the guidance of her mother, who coached Ava's elementary school team. Those early mornings, grabbing Starbucks and Casey's breakfast pizza before games, became the moments that sparked her connection to the sport.

"When I played a volleyball, [my mom] was always a coach," Martin recalled. "I think I fell in love with it because it was something me and my mom had time to do just us. I'm a part of a big family. I have five younger siblings, so I don't get a lot of time alone with my parents. I think that's kind of why I fell in love with it."

That love for the game would soon meet its first real test. When she began club volleyball, Martin faced the sting of being cut from her first team, a challenge that might have ended someone else's ambitions. But Ava responded with a quiet, almost stubborn determination. She didn't sulk or give up. Instead, she showed up early, practiced relentlessly and turned every extra minute into an opportunity to improve.

"Getting cut — that was not a good feel-

ing," Martin said. "My parents actually during that time didn't tell me I got cut. ... I had a teammate [on my new club team]. She was our setter, and we carpooled together. She would go early to do setting reps every practice and since we carpooled, I'd just be there for 30 minutes before practice. Instead of just sitting around, I was like, 'I might as well do something.' So, I would take a ball and go on the wall and just hit. I would pass. I would do everything I could with the wall for 30 minutes. ... Sometimes it kind of felt stupid, but when you put in extra work, it pays off."

Her commitment didn't go unnoticed. As her skills improved, Martin earned the lone freshman varsity spot on her high school team. Even then, the possibility of playing Division I as an undersized hitter felt distant, almost unreal. It was one thing to imagine it, another entirely to feel it becoming tangible.

On June 15, 2020, the idea of playing at the next level suddenly felt within reach. After sending what she felt were long-shot letters to several Division I schools, Ava's phone lit up with messages from coaches as soon as they could get in touch.

"I was bombarded that day," Martin recalled. "At midnight, I had phone calls, emails, texts, and I was just like, 'Whoa, like maybe this is real.'"

Even after the flood of calls, the recruiting process was far from straightforward. COVID-19 made official visits impossible until after she had committed. Creighton hadn't even been on Martin's radar. But after receiving something in the mail, Ava realized Omaha could be a perfect fit.

"I was like, 'Oh, that's perfect. They're like three hours from home,'" Martin said. "I knew I wanted to stay close to my family. ... Some of the schools I was talking to, I just ... didn't feel like that's where I was meant to be. ... After talking to [former Creighton volleyball head coach Kirsten Bernthal] Booth and

For the love of the game

How Ava Martin turned heart and resilience into a legacy

all the coaching staff, I knew this is the place for me."

Martin entered her freshman year at Creighton knowing the odds were stacked against her. The roster was loaded with experiences — fifth-year and even sixth-year players lingering from the COVID era, woman who were 23 or 24 competing directly with a 17-year-old newcomer. She understood from the start that nothing would come easily.

Still, she didn't flinch. She wasn't naïve about how difficult it might be, but she also wasn't wired to back down.

"I knew it was going to be difficult, but I'm also just so competitive that I wanted to find a spot in the court, wherever that could be," Martin shared. "I'd love to play outside, but if there's a potential for me on the right side, then I'm going to work my hardest to find that."

After appearing off the bench to begin the season, Martin earned the opportunity to start at right side in the match against Nebraska at CHI Health Center, notching seven kills. Though it wasn't her natural position, she was willing to do whatever she could if it meant she could play.

By the time Big East play arrived, Martin had found her footing and her role shifted to outside hitter, where she could fully showcase her skills. She finished the season with 254 kills, 71 digs, and a .253 hitting percentage, earning BIG EAST Freshman of the Year honors.

Over the next three seasons, Martin's impact on the court has only grown. She has collected numerous honors along the way, including 2025 BIG EAST Player of the Year, AVCA All-American and AVCA National Player of the Week (11/22), and competed with USA Volleyball's Women's Collegiate National Team. On Nov. 14, 2025, Martin became just the fifth player in program history to surpass 1,500 career kills, a milestone that cements her place as one of the program's all-time greats.

through her entire career. Six-rotation player; really scores for us in the back row. Like a lot of players in her stature, when the games on the line, everyone knows it's going to her and she still finds a way," Rosen added.

While accolades and awards now mark her career, what resonates with Martin the most isn't the stats — it's the friendships she's forged, the bond built through thrilling wins, crushing losses and countless hours spent together. For Martin, those relationships are the most meaningful part of her journey, the moments and connections that will outlast any record or trophy.

"I've met some of my best friends, my bridesmaids," she shared. "We have such a family here."

With the possibility of only three weeks left in a Creighton uniform, Martin is soaking in every moment, aware that each serve, each set could be one of the last in the jersey she's worn with pride the past four years.

"It's been amazing," Martin reflected. "I can't even believe that I could have three weeks left. It's crazy to think about. I love college volleyball, and I love Creighton."

When the final ball drops and her time in the white and the blue comes to a close, Martin hopes people remember her not just for her play, but for the joy she brought to the court.

"I just really hope people can see the joy I have in playing the sport," Ava said. "I'm a very energetic, positive person. ... I just want to give off joy and energy. I hope that, from me playing, people can see that, and it hopefully brings them some joy too."

After graduating in December, Ava will head to the Vibe in Atlanta, Ga. as the second-overall Major League Volleyball draft pick. Once a dream that felt impossible, she

now steps into a professional career that she once could only imagine.

"I would tell people, 'Oh, I want to be a professional volleyball player,' and my parents would laugh. Looking back at the player I was ... I didn't think it was realistic," Martin reflected. "I'm kind of in awe ... I've dreamed of it my whole life ... it's unreal."

Through it all, Martin hopes her story sends a message to young athletes — that with grit, belief and relentless effort, no dream is too big to chase. Ava's story is living proof that dedication, heart and resili-

ence can transform even the most ambitious dreams into reality.

"I just want people to know you don't have to be the most athletic or the best player in the room. It comes down to hard work ... if you put your mind to something, you can achieve it," she said. "Dream big, give everything your all, work hard, and you never know what can happen."



"Watching Ava get better and better every single year has been truly special. She is among the greats to ever play in this program," Creighton volleyball head coach Brian Rosen said.

"She is one of the best all-around players in all of college volleyball. She is one of the best passers in the country. Obviously, offensively, she is dominant. Really good defensive player — she's gotten so much better as a blocker

‘Tis the season for a ‘25 recap

Top five moments from this fall

ABBIE GALLANT
Editor in Chief

Turning ordinary games into extraordinary memories is what Creighton athletics does best, and the fall of 2025 proved it once again. With jaw-dropping plays and record-setting feats, the Bluejays kept fans hooked from start to finish.

In no particular order, here are the five highlights that stole the show.

1. The Run into History

Some moments are memorable. Some moments are legendary. And some moments make history.

That’s exactly what the Creighton cross country program achieved this season, hosting the 2025 Big East Championships for the first time in school history on Oct. 31.

Armed with talent on both the men’s and women’s side of the roster, the men’s cross country team finished sixth for the second season in a row, while the women surpassed a previous best mark five years ago by placing seventh this fall.

Creighton’s cross country and track programs are constantly evolving under the leadership of Chris Gannon — head coach since 2018 — and with the progress of the last eight years culminating in making history this October., it’s safe to say that this is only the beginning of what this program has in store.

2. The Ninth Wonder of Senior Day

Everyone in the crowd was on the edge of their seats as redshirt freshman Nora Wurtz ran toward the baseline, jumped up, threw her right arm back and swung through the serve. The Georgetown defense was no match for Wurtz’s serve.

“It’s another ace,” the PA announcer yelled. Two in a row. Then three in a row. Then two in a row again. Then another. Then the school record-breaking ninth ace that put Creighton ahead 3-0 in the third set.

In only her first year in the white and blue, Wurtz delivered a performance for the record books, putting a bow on the 3-0 sweep that defined Senior Day 2025 and saw Sky McCune, Kiara Reinhardt, Ava Martin and Annalea Maeder play their final moments at D.J. Sokol Arena.

From her first ace to the ninth, Wurtz’s dominance made Senior Day even more unforgettable, a triumph that honored the program’s past and present while celebrating its future.

3. The Sibling Score

A familiar saying goes, ‘You must be related,’ whenever two siblings share the same mannerisms or habits. Little did Creighton fans know that they were about to witness one of the greatest ‘you must be related’ moments in a soccer doubleheader on Nov. 1 between men’s soccer player Brady Bragg and women’s soccer player Anna Bragg.

In the first game of the day against St. John’s — with a berth in the Big East Tournament on the line — Anna Bragg got the sibling scoring off to a solid start in the 31st minute. Rising above defenders, she located a curling corner kick coming to the right side of the box, heading it into the back of the net.

Not even four hours later — against then-No. 23 ranked Seton Hall — Brady Bragg did nearly the same thing. In the 32nd minute of the men’s match that afternoon, he rushed toward goal on the right side, leaping up and changing the course of the pass from his teammate, heading the ball into the back of the goal.

Just one minute apart, on the same side of the goal and in the same fashion, both Bragg

siblings scored for their respective teams. Coincidence? I think not. The only explanation is that they must be related!

4. The Record Roar

It’s no secret that Nebraska is a volleyball state. Fans in Husker Red and Bluejay Blue alike show up and show out for their team. And when both fans are in the same building, it’s bound to be historic.

Creighton volleyball made history indeed, hosting 17,675 people at CHI Health Center on Sept. 16, the largest indoor volleyball-only-regular-season crowd in NCAA history.

With a record crowd packed in CHI and ready for a show, the in-state rival game didn’t disappoint. The match was thrilling, the energy electric, each point more heart-stopping than the last. The in-state volleyball rivals truly put on a show.

While the Bluejays couldn’t clinch the victory, with a 3-2 mark favoring Nebraska, the implications of nearly 18,000 people packed into CHI Health Center to watch women’s volleyball demonstrated something even more important: women’s volleyball is on the rise, people want to see it and Creighton is one of the programs at the helm. How many programs can say that?

5. The Nine-Under Knockout

A shot can win a hole. A round can win a tournament. And a performance can help define a career. So, when senior golfer Grant Feldman took his swing at the Shadow Ridge Country Club for the Bluejay Invitational, he didn’t just emerge better than he was the day before: he emerged as the best on the course.

Playing in a home tournament for the first time in more than 20 years and posting a nine-under par across three rounds for a 207 overall score — one shot better than the runner up — Feldman earned his first individual title and a place among Creighton golf’s all-time best.

The title broke his own 54-hole scoring record by two, the 207-score tied for the fifth-best score in Creighton golf history. Feldman’s effort on the course gave him his seventh finish in the top five of his career.

By the time the final card was signed, Feldman had delivered more than a win — he delivered a benchmark, for himself and for a program that will remember this homecoming performance for years to come.

Honorable mention: The Goal Score That Belonged in the Movies

There are some moments you never see coming, but once you see them, you wish you could go back and watch it for the first time. Creighton men’s soccer player Miguel Arilla, in hostile Butler Bulldog territory, was about to pull off one of those moments.

The score was 1-0 in favor of Creighton, as Creighton’s Omar Ramadan had just scored three minutes before. But now, Ramadan was about to assist in arguably the most highlight-worthy goal of the season. Sending a pass high and arcing just outside the 18-yard box, Arilla located the ball and executed a perfect bicycle kick shot that evaded the Butler goalkeeper and went into the net.

In one breathtaking moment, Arilla turned a simple pass into pure soccer magic.

Overall, the 2025 fall season delivered records, jaw dropping moments and example after example of Creighton athletics at its finest. And if this is what the fall can bring, what’s to come is sure to be bigger and better than fans could ever imagine.

