

NEWS	SCENE	OPINION	SPORTS
Creighton's fight song celebrates 100 years 2	Local Mexican cuisine brings flavor to Omaha 4	Ditch the phone at dinner for conversations 6	Men's Tennis opens spring season with win 7
Rising campus student meal plan costs 3	New season of Bridgerton excites 4	Can we normalize reminiscing the past? 6	Annual Pinkout means more for MBB 8

Highlander brings CU to North O



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Free bicycle helmets and a safety poster at Creighton at Highlander's child safety center.

ELIZABETH JONES
News Reporter

Creighton at Highlander, led by the university's Institute for Population Health, is a space created in collaboration with Seventy-Five North, a nonprofit dedicated to bettering the Highlander neighborhood of North Omaha, to help the university engage with the Omaha community and promote health and well-being. Following a period of closure from July through October for renovations, the Highlander hosted an open house for Creighton University students, staff and faculty to learn more about the center's community-oriented mission and new spaces.

"Creighton's here in this space, and we're here for the community," April Dixon, the director of the Highlander, said. "I think that connection to the community is always missed and maybe even misunderstood, but [we're] able to be here for families [and] to provide that connection with students, faculty and staff so that they get experience working with the community and then have those touch points, those community connections. ... Anything that we do is basically community driven."

At last Friday's open house, this was shown to Creighton students, staff and faculty. Dixon said the event was intended to educate people about the space and introduce them to the upgrades that debuted in October, as well as get people thinking about how they can use it to get involved in community outreach.

"I was here quite a bit in its previous set-up, and I wanted to see how the updates went, which I really like, and it makes a lot of sense to me," Andrew Baruth, Ph.D., the director of the Office of Sustainability Programs, said about attending the event. "I also try to find ways to partner with this team, with the Institute for Population Health, with the Highlander team as often as I can, because part of sustainability is really trying to figure out how to be integrated into the community, and they're already tapped into the community."

Baruth added that having this space in North Omaha is important.

"Some of the work that we're doing with students, faculty, staff also engages the North Omaha community in particular ... In the sustainability

TURN TO "CU" PAGE 3

Bluejay with a badge

LILIAN GARDNER
News Editor

It sounds like a scene from "Men in Black:" strange men in suits offering a chance to join them and protect the nation from threats. Harry Trombitas said yes — minus the memory wipe.

The decision would take Trombitas, a 1982 graduate of Creighton University, from Creighton University's Department of Public Safety to a nearly three-decade career with the FBI, where he worked in some of its most violent cases. Long before the badge and the suits, Trombitas credits both Creighton's campus and its emphasis on service, faith and people that set him on that path.

"Creighton was just a wonderful environment," Trombitas said. "It had a great reputation, incredible faculty and staff, and it focused on the whole person — not just academics."

While attending Creighton, Trombitas worked as a supervisor in what would become the university's Department of Public Safety. At the time, campus security relied on an external guard system that left many dissatisfied. Trombitas and his colleagues were tasked with building something new and personal.

"We started the public safety department from the ground up," he said. "We hired officers, trained them, bought vehicles and met with faculty and staff, so they knew we weren't an outside company. We were their people."

The department emphasized prevention and student support, offering escort services, vehicle assistance, self-defense education, and crime-prevention initiatives. One such effort included "gotcha cards," light-hearted reminders placed on unattended valuables to encourage awareness.

"The goal was to keep students safe, not to intimidate them," Trombitas said. "That kind of approach really mattered on a college campus."

Trombitas remembers Creighton not just as a workplace or academic institution,



PHOTO COURTESY OF HARRY TROMBITAS
Harry Trombitas stands outside an FBI office door in Columbus, Ohio, in April 2012.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
In October 1983, Harry Trombitas receives his Federal Bureau of Investigation credentials during a graduation ceremony, marking the beginning of his service with the FBI.

but as a tight-knit community, something reflected even in everyday friendships. One of his favorite memories involves helping a close friend at Creighton's dental school.

The friend, Bill, eager to complete a required cavity-filling prerequisite, discovered Trombitas had a small cavity and volunteered to fix it. But after administering Novocain, Trombitas quickly realized something was wrong.

"He numbed the wrong side of my mouth," Trombitas recalled, laughing. "I said, 'I think the cavity's over here.' And [Bill] goes, 'Oh, shit ... It's just a small one.' [Bill] said, 'If you can tolerate the pain, you know, please do because otherwise I got to go report up to the desk and that's not going to look good for me.'"

Trombitas endured the procedure without anesthesia simply to help his friend succeed.

"Stuff happens, right? That's what friends are for," he said. "Those are the memories that stick with you."

Despite his growing role in campus safety, Trombitas had never seriously considered a career with the FBI. That changed when agents began visiting Creighton.

"I kept seeing these guys show up at our [public safety] office ... dressed in suits and found out they were FBI agents trying to recruit students on campus, especially the law school."

Those encounters planted the seed.

"I struck up conversations with them and realized my background actually fit," he said. "Once they learned I had a master's degree, it really helped."

His time in Omaha proved formative. Trombitas' first FBI assignment exposed him to Nebraska's most notorious crime of the century: the abduction and murder of three young boys by serial killer John J. Joubert. Assigned to support the victim's family, Trombitas spent long days with grieving parents while also assisting the investigation.

"It was every parent's worst nightmare," he said, "but it taught me compassion and perspective. You see what crime really does to families."

The experience also revealed the importance of collaboration.

"I saw how federal agents, local law enforcement and the media all worked together," Trombitas said. "That teamwork stuck with me for the rest of my career."

Over nearly three decades, Trombitas served in FBI offices across the country, including Omaha, St. Louis, New York City and Columbus. His work ranged from violent crime and bank robberies to organized crime, kidnappings, crimes against children and counterterrorism.

Trombitas found that it was difficult to identify which crime tips from the public belonged to because of the significant num-

TURN TO "From" PAGE 3

A century of Creighton’s fight song



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

On Jan. 31, Creighton University’s pep band performs “The White and the Blue” fight song during the annual men’s basketball Pinkout game against the University of Connecticut, energizing the crowd and showing school spirit in support of breast cancer awareness. The iconic song was written and composed by Class of 2026 alumni Gordon X. Richmond in 1926 on his banjo.

PARKER LUND
News Reporter

Maybe you’ve heard it only through the loud, brassy sound of Creighton’s pep band right before a game starts, or maybe it’s always just out of reach in your mind, trapped in the faint memory of some student orientation of freshman year. Either way, 2026 marks the 100th year since Creighton’s fight song. “The White and the Blue” was written by Class of 1926 alumni Gordon X. Richmond, changing the sound of Creighton’s school spirit

ever since. Trevor Snetsinger, a junior who plays trumpet for the pep band, knows the fight song a little bit more than most students at Creighton. During an interview, he talked about how he plays it before and after every game, and that every year he’s part of the group that teaches it to incoming students. And yet, even though he knows the song so well through his trumpet-playing, even he doesn’t fully know the lyrics. He imagined he wasn’t alone in that predicament. “I think that not a lot of people know about it ... because you’re taught the words

freshman year, but no one really remembers it,” Snetsinger said. But even though the fight song is most well-known through the sounds of the triumphant, proud band, the original song was performed on a banjo, according to Richmond’s own account when he talked to the Omaha World-Herald. It may have gone through some instrumental changes, but the Creighton fight song’s core has remained the same. “I think that it’s crazy that we’ve had it for that long and it hasn’t been changed at all. Creighton has a long history, and “The White

and the Blue’ song is part of that,” Snetsinger remarked. And just as “The White and the Blue” has remained the same for 100 years, its impact on school spirit has remained similarly undiminished. In 2011, Creighton celebrated the 107th birthday for alumni Will Clark, in a video published on YouTube by Creighton. He sang the song that had burned in him since he graduated in 1929. 100 years have passed, but Creighton’s fight song continues to color the school spirit. As Snetsinger put it, “It gets people together and reminds them that we are Creighton.”



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

January 28 - 9:33 a.m.
Staff member reported damage to his vehicle while it was parked near 17th and Mike Fahey St.
- 2

January 31 - 2:03 a.m.
Public Safety assisted Res Life with an intoxicated student in Swanson Hall. The student was transported to CHI CUMC - University Campus for entry into the TRACC Program.
- 3

January 31 - 3:31 a.m.
A Swanson Hall RA confiscated a vape and turned it over to Public Safety.
- 4

February 1 - 3:44 p.m.
A student reported a burglary after discovering three non-affiliates in their Kenefick Hall room. All three occupants of the room reported money missing. (Not Pictured)

Rising dining costs reduce plan value

CADEN VILLARREAL & WALTER LOVELY
News Reporter & News Reporter

Creighton University students are paying more for meal plans this fall, and some say their money does not go as far when buying food on campus.

The standard All Access meal plan cost \$2,920 per semester in the 2023-2024 academic year and increased to \$3,080 per semester in 2025-2026. The plan includes \$150 Dining Dollars and five guest passes, giving students access to a variety of dining options across campus, according to Creighton’s undergraduate tuition and fees website.

“It just does not balance out,” said David Williams, a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences. “The prices went up, and the money we get to actually spend feels smaller. I know food costs change, but it feels like we are losing value overall.”

Williams said he noticed the difference around mid-semester, when his dining balance began shrinking faster than usual.

“I used to grab a coffee or sandwich between classes without thinking twice,” he said. “Now I check my balance every week.”

Creighton Dining Services said meal plan rates are adjusted to reflect rising food and labor costs. Menu prices at the Skutt Student Center have also increased slightly due to inflation and ingredient costs. The price increases for 2023-2024 were outlined in a letter from Scott Bierman, assistant vice provost for student records and financial services.

Students said the impact may seem small at first but adds up over the semester.

“A plan that costs over \$3,000 a semester hits hard when you’re budgeting carefully,” Williams said.

The university has not indicated whether meal plan prices will change in the spring, but students hope that future adjustments reflect a fair balance between cost and value.

“We just want it to feel fair,” he said. “If we’re paying more, the plan should reflect that.”

Bierman’s letter has this to say about how this change to the dining plan came about.

“The majority of the University’s expenses are subject to inflation and range from personnel (salaries and benefits for faculty and staff) to facilities (utilities, insurance, maintenance). The Consumer Price Index, the most widely followed inflation gauge, increased 9% from June 2021 to June 2022, its highest rate in nearly 40 years,” the letter reads.

This goes to show that this change is not without reason but is still affecting the student body of Creighton University as a whole.

From Creighton to FBI

Continued from Page 1

ber of robberies.

“I started naming the bank robbers based on information that we gathered during our interviews at the bank after the robbery,” Trombitas said. “One teller told me, ‘Oh my god, this woman had the worst breath I’d ever smelled in my life,’ so she became the Bad Breath Bandit.”

Other nicknames followed, including the “Grandpa Bandit,” an elderly man who robbed a bank using a walker and was arrested before he reached the door.

In St. Louis, Trombitas worked undercover on a task force targeting auto-theft rings and illegal chop shops. In New York City, he was assigned to an organized crime surveillance squad, tracking figures associated with the Mob like John Gotti.

Later, in Columbus, Trombitas handled some of the most serious cases of his career, including serial murder investigations. Throughout it all, he emphasized the importance of balance.

“You have to compartmentalize,” he said. “You still have to be a husband and a father. If you can’t separate the job from your personal life, it can really affect you.”

Despite frequent exposure to violence, Trombitas rejects the idea that his work made him cynical.

“There are far more good people in the world than bad ones,” he said. “That’s what I saw throughout my career.”

That belief was reinforced not only through cases, but also through the unlikely experiences the job afforded him — from crossing paths with country music group The Judds to sitting beside baseball legend Stan “the Man”

Musial at a World Series game.

After retiring from the FBI in 2012, Trombitas continued working in security leadership, serving as a system vice president for OhioHealth hospitals and later directing the Police Executive Leadership College of Ohio. He also lectured at The Ohio State University and now works as a consultant on security and threat assessment.

“I’d still be [in the FBI] today if they didn’t have that age restriction,” Trombitas said. “I had so much fun and worked so many interesting things.”

He has since authored four true-crime books detailing notable cases from his career, aiming to educate readers while honoring victims and investigators alike.

“I never planned to write books,” he said, “but people kept telling me these stories mattered.”

Looking back, Trombitas believes Creighton played a central role in preparing him for a career he never anticipated.

“Follow your passion, but don’t shut doors,” he advised students. “Try new things. You might discover a path you never expected.”

He also emphasized perspective.

“Don’t panic if you don’t have it all figured out,” Trombitas said. “Go make things happen — don’t wait for life to come to you.”

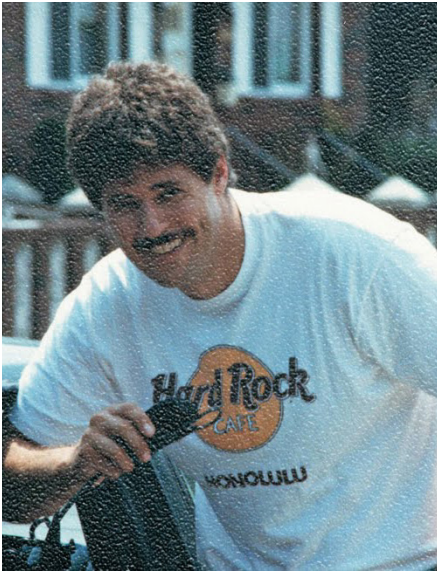
For Trombitas, Creighton’s value extends far beyond a diploma.

“Don’t overlook your time here,” he said. “The friendships, the values, they stay with you for the rest of your life. Take what Creighton gives you and carry it out into the world.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HARRY TROMBITAS

Harry Trombitas, his wife Barb, and their dog Daisy, around 1980. Trombitas was then working in Creighton University’s Public Safety Department.



Harry Trombitas in 1982 during his work on the Ferdinand Marcos case in Hawaii.

CU Highlander reopens

Continued from Page 1

realm, it’s around environmental justice. What better way to make sure we’re doing it in a useful way for the North Omaha community than actually being embedded in the North Omaha community and working with staff who know the people, know the players, know the connections?” Baruth said, pointing to issues like the North Omaha Station coal plant and lead to contamination.

One of the recent renovations to the Highlander includes a new child safety center, according to Dixon. This center provides free resources on safe infant sleep practices, injury prevention and other information parents may need. They can also learn about how to properly use baby gates and car seats. Most of this education is often only available in hospitals after a baby is born.

The safety center is working to overcome language barriers, Dixon said, by translating resources into multiple languages and having models of things like windows and baby gates so they can show people how to use them rather than trying to tell them.

The child safety center also provides families with free or reduced-cost necessities for keeping their children safe. Families can get window locks, gun locks, cabinet locks, bicycle helmets, prescription lock boxes and oth-

er safety equipment for free. More expensive items, like car seats, are available at wholesale cost. Any money that the Highlander gets from these goes back into purchasing more resources to provide families with.

This child safety center was modeled after the Doernbecher Children’s Safety Center in Portland, Ore.. Highlander staff visited the center in Portland to learn about how they got started and what they did, according to Dixon.

In addition to the child safety center, the Highlander now has multiple meeting rooms and a classroom. The meeting rooms, which can be reserved via 25Live, are available to anyone from Creighton for community-driven purposes. Additionally, they’ve already been used by groups like the North Omaha Community Care Council and the Refugee Task Force.

Baruth said that he is excited to use the meeting room. He thinks they will be more convenient spaces for conversations with community partners than the main campus due to the ease of parking and available rooms.

Other initiatives at the Highlander include programs like the Juvenile Justice Law Clinic, which provides legal services to youth with cases open in the Douglas County Juvenile Court, and educational programs. The center

staff are looking for more ways to engage with the community, and they said strengthening the community is an important part of the Highlander.

“One of the things that I like the most is learning about myself through community and listening to their experiences, because some of those experiences, I’ve lived myself,” Alejandra Rebolledo-Gomez, the Highlander’s community engagement coordinator, said. “We can create more communities. Not just the word ‘community,’ but community means strength, knowledge, collaboration ...We can continue building that.”

The reopened, renovated Highlander at Creighton aims to be a space in North Omaha, serving the community in as many ways as possible.



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Car seats, along with other safety items, are available to families at free or reduced cost at Creighton University at Highlander.

Flora Cafe spices up Old Market

Chloe Carrillo
Scene Editor

Flora Cafe, located along Farnam Street in the Old Market Historic District, is home to a locally owned authentic Mexican restaurant and cafe.

The restaurant itself is homey, with aesthetic florals and greenery as decor and low-lit tables for customers. Being a cafe, there is both a barista station as well as tables for customers who choose to dine in.

As for the options in the cafe, there is an extremely wide array of both meals and drinks. The cafe has an extensive coffee menu, offering seasonal flavors, matcha and other specialty items. And, for dining, there are specialty options like Mexican sodas and horchata. Having tried the horchata myself, I recommend it for anyone who enjoys cinnamon or sweeter drinks. It almost tastes like cinnamon toast crunch cereal, without the cereal.

The menu is extensive, and, with the cafe being open from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. during the week, there is something for each meal, or a quick bite or coffee on the go. And, for any-

one who is a breakfast-for-dinner enthusiast, anything is available when dining.

Being an authentic Mexican restaurant, there is a wide array of authentic Mexican dishes to choose from, including a variety of street tacos, tortas, birria, fajitas and many more. For breakfast, there are some more basic options, like French toast, avocado toast or Flora Cafe’s version of an acai bowl.

As for my recommendation, I tried the quesadilla-birria tacos. This featured a corn tortilla lined with fresh cheese, beef cooked in chili broth, and consommé, which is extra broth, to dip the tacos in. They were perfect for savory enjoyers, and it comes with three, so you might leave the restaurant with leftovers. And, if you’re looking for an appetizer, the chips and salsa offer a spicy take on the classic Mexican restaurant flavor.

Overall, I recommend Flora Cafe to anyone who enjoys brunch, an expertly made coffee, authentic Mexican flavor or just wanting to try something new. The restaurant immerses you in the experience with the ambience, and anyone who needs their next matcha – or taco – fix, Flora Cafe is for you.



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Flora Cafe’s french toast and quesadilla-birria tacos can be enjoyed together, even at 7 p.m.

Bridgerton Season 4: a perfect fit?

Brooke VanderWal
Scene Reporter

Dearest Gentle Reader, be warned: this article contains details of the new Bridgerton season that one may desire to watch for themselves.

Expectations for Bridgerton’s fourth season were not high, as many of its devoted fans were disappointed by the quality of the third. The writing was somewhat sloppy, did not do justice for Colin and Penelope’s love story and various other elements much to be desired.

As every seasoned observer of the ton expected, Bridgerton’s fourth season features the same breathtaking set, sound and costume design as its earlier installments. With its cast of colorful characters and Cinderella-esque female lead, this season is shaping up

to be interesting, to say the least.

To begin the social season, the Bridgertons put on their yearly masquerade ball, as Lady Danbury no longer hosts the first ball of the season. Franchesca, Lord Kilmartin and Eloise return from Scotland. Colin and Penelope Bridgerton, the stars of season three, welcomed a new baby into the family, the future Lord Featherington. In addition to being a new mother, Penelope is continuing to publish her Lady Whistledown column, but no longer under a pen name. She has taken public ownership of her salacious, extremely popular column.

Unsurprisingly, Benedict, the male lead of the season, is still a passionate, rakish, artistic gentleman, who believes he could never settle down with one person – until the masquerade, that is. Across a crowded ballroom, he sees a striking young lady in a slivery white gown looking out of place. It is love at first

sight. That night, they dance, they make gratuitously prolonged eye contact, they kiss and then the stranger leaves Benedict in the garden, holding a little white glove.

The most unique part of this season is its focus on working class characters. There is a side story about Lady Featherington’s maid, the Bridgerton family’s staff is pictured, and the audience hears from many characters who previously skirted the spotlight. The female lead, Sophie, is the illegitimate daughter of Lord Penwood. She serves as a maid at the Penwood estate, for her father, who does not acknowledge her, and his wife, Lady Araminta Gun. Following the Cinderella trope, she is a traditional wicked stepmother. Her two daughters, however, are unexpectedly dynamic characters. Upon figuring out that Sophie snuck into a society ball, Lady Gun threw Sophie out of the house, leaving her with nothing.

The rest of the season follows Sophie and Benedict from the ton to a country estate outside of London, where Sophie has gone to work after she was cast out. They spent time together at the country estate, and in one scene fly a kite together out in the garden. Even as the pair grow closer, Benedict does not realize that Sophie is the masked woman from the ball. She hesitates to tell him, thinking the difference in their status is insurmountable.

Sophie and Benedict return to the city – both to the same house – one as a lord and one as a servant. However, Sophie may not be in her position for long. To finish off the season, Benedict offered her a job opportunity as his mistress, a job that this author believes is less than palatable.

For now, all that is left to do is wait in giddy anticipation for part two, coming to a dormitory television near you, on Feb. 26.

68th Grammys brings historical wins

Chloe Carrillo
Scene Editor

The 68th annual Grammys aired Sunday, Feb. 1. The night was filled with exciting performances, heartfelt speeches and, as always, record-breaking moments.

The night opened with an electric – literally, an electric guitar version – performance of “APT” by Rosé and Bruno Mars. They welcomed everyone in and set the tone for an energetic night.

Trevor Noah was the host for the sixth year in a row, and he was sure not to disappoint, as he announced this was his final year hosting. He was sure to make his shocking call outs and funny quips to the nominees – and even getting a small impromptu performance from Bad Bunny.

Performances of the night were not to be missed – each of the Best New Artist nominees displayed their talents, Sabrina Carpenter delivered a pop-perfection performance of “Manchild,” Tyler the Creator’s real-time

transition from his “Chromakopia” persona to his “Don’t Tap the Glass” persona, and countless other renditions and emotional tributes to late artists. Lady Gaga was sure not to disappoint with her “Abracadabra” performance, Bruno Mars made a second appearance performing his new single “I Just Might” and Justin Bieber’s stripped-down version of “YUKON” brought a new take on the song.

Records broke with Kendrick Lamar early in the night, as he became the highest-Grammy-awarded rapper, passing Jay-Z. He received Grammys for Best Rap Album, Record of the Year and Best Melodic Rap Performance for his single “Luther” featuring SZA, as well as Best Rap Song for “tv off.”

The largest snubs of the night included Sabrina Carpenter, who walked away empty-handed, and Tyler, the Creator, who left with 1 Grammy – for Best Album Cover. Some other big pop names left with no wins, including Addison Rae, PinkPantheress, Zara Larsson, The Marías and many others.

Snubs of the night were not the only

talking points from the Grammys – the presenters left their impact on pop culture, as they often do. From Cher forgetting what she was doing and who she was awarding, to Chappell Roan’s presentation of Best New Artist, to Harry Styles’ return to the Grammys stage, presenters were definitely not ignored this year.

Notable wins of the night included Olivia Dean for Best New Artist, “WILDFLOWER” by Billie Eilish for Song of the Year, “MAYHEM” by Lady Gaga for Best Pop Vocal Album, “A Matter of Time” by Laufey for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album, “Defying Gravity” by Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo for Best Pop Duo/Group Performance and “Messy” by Lola Young for Best Pop Solo Performance. The Grammys largely didn’t disappoint, with a wide array of winners for the night. In other genres, “Folded” by Kehlani won best R&B performance, “Bitin’ List” by Tyler Childers won best country song, and “Golden” from the movie “KPop Demon Hunters” won best song written for visual media – the first Grammy awarded to a

KPop song.

Arguably the biggest award for the night – Album of the Year – made history on Sunday as well. The award went to “DeBÍ TiRAR Más FOToS” by Bad Bunny, becoming the first all-Spanish-language album to receive the award. This was Bad Bunny’s second win of the night, with his earlier Best Música Urbana Grammy win for the same album. He seemed overwhelmed with gratitude for the award and showed it in his speech.

Speeches of the night were not without their impact, with many artists speaking on what is important to them. Olivia Dean, Billie Eilish and Bad Bunny were amongst the most notable, speaking passionately about social issues, with SZA and Jelly Roll getting spiritual. For any viewer, it was clear that every winner came with gratitude and heartfelt acceptances.

Overall, this year’s Grammys were shocking, emotional, exciting, and full of art that unites people. If you are a fan of any kind of music, fun performances or even comedic hosting, this year’s Grammys are for you.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES PRESENTS

Career Week:
Unlimited Opportunities!

Monday, February 9 - Friday, February 20, 2026

Explore your future at this multi-night event with the College of Arts and Sciences and the Career Center, where alumni share their career journeys and the lasting value of a liberal arts education.

Biology

Feb. 10, 4:30–5:30 p.m., HLSB 404

Chad Wetzel, Supervisor of Communicable Disease Epidemiology, Douglas Country Health Department
Elena Strunk, MD, Corporate Vice President, Medical Director, New York Life Insurance Company & Volunteer Assistant Professor/Emergency Physician, University of Nebraska Medical Center
Anna Boatman, Genetic Counselor, Assistant Professor, SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital
Shawn Magrum, Assistant Professor, Exercise Science, Creighton University
Angela Bergman, Earth Space Science Team Leader, Westside High School

Communication Studies

Feb. 17, 5:30–6:30 p.m., Skutt 104

Angie Baber, Special Project Director, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Laura Blenkush, Data Science Consultant, CATCH Intelligence
Reghan Kort, Associate, Mooney, Lenaghan, Westberg Dorn, L.L.C.
Mike Nihsen, Director, Generative AI, First National Bank
Valerie Pederson, Day Treatment Therapist, Washburn Center for Children

Computer Science, Design and Journalism

Feb. 9, 5–6 p.m., Skutt 105

Emily McKenna, Alumnae Director, Marian High School
Angela Hutchings, Social Marketing Coordinator, Omaha MECA
Molly Rogers, Senior Designer, ConAgra Brands
Maddie Bendorf, Director of Events, Applied Underwriters
Dominic Galuppo, Client Services Specialist, General Dynamics Information Tech

Cultural & Social Studies

HAP, Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, Justice and Peace Studies

Feb. 17, 4–5 p.m., Skutt 105

Cat Henning, Development Manager, National Audubon Society
Amal Barre, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, Just Space Collective
Meaghan Hill, ROI Specialist, Sharecare, and MPH Student, Creighton School of Medicine
Rasika Mukkamala, Clinic Transitions Strategist, CommonSpirit Health

Public Health, Medical Anthropology, Social Work

Feb. 17, 5–6 p.m., Skutt 105

Anaja Arthur, Director of Training and Evaluation, Dignity Health Collective
Alexis Poling, Health Educator, Pottawattamie County Public Health Department
Jessica Johnson, Staff Therapist, Lifespan Counseling

English

Feb. 12, 6–7 p.m., Old Gym, 231

Lorna Monaghan, Physician Assistant, Methodist Hospital
Elias Pritza, Policy Fellow, OpenSky Policy Institute
Caleb Jones, Music Instructor, School of Rock
Frank Lonie, Dental Student, University of Nebraska Medical College of Dentistry
Ashanti Washington, Elementary School Teacher, St. Pius X/St. Leo Catholic School

Exercise Science and Pre-Health Professions

Feb. 10, 5–6 p.m., Criss Auditorium, 452

Mae Grahek, PA-C, Creighton University
Scott Radniecki, DDS, Interim Chair, Oral Surgery & Emergency Services, Associate Professor and Director of Emergency Services, Creighton University
Tom Peltz, BS, Medical Student, Creighton University
Arthur Deseck, BS, Physical Therapy Student, Creighton University

Fine and Performing Arts

Feb. 10, 3:30–4:30 p.m., Lied Education Center for the Arts, Mainstage

Kathleen Hustead, Director of Education, Omaha Performing Arts
Emily Fisher, Director of Marketing, NAI NP Dodge, commercial real estate division

Mathematics

Feb. 20, 4–5 p.m., HLSB 522

Riley Link, PhD Applied Math Student, Cornell
Jackie Austin, PhD Medical Physics Student, Wisconsin
Molly McLaughlin, Supply Chain Analyst, Target
Nick Forbes, Math Masters Degree Student, Wake Forest
Jack Rausch, Medical Student, Creighton University

Military Science

Feb. 12, 5–6 p.m., Labaj Building, 104

COL(R) Pete Schneider, Chief, Information Operations Division, United States Strategic Command, U.S. Army
COL(R) Erica Iverson, Director of Strategy, Innovation & Data for AEMO (Army Enterprise Marketing Organization), U.S. Army
COL Anthony Kazor, Garrison Commander, US Army Garrison-Fort Gordon, GA, U.S. Army
COL Deanna Sheets, DNP, FNP-C, WHNP-BC, and Assistant Professor, Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, U.S. Army
LTC Sean O'Neill, NEARNG Officer of Talent Management and 128th Engineer Battalion Commander, Nebraska National Guard, U.S. Army
CPT Mikaela Maguire, Medical Operations Officer, U.S. Army

Modern Languages and Literatures

Feb. 17, 5:30–6:30 p.m., Hitchcock 108

John Dewald, JD, Attorney at Roth Weinstein Attorneys at Law, Omaha
Jessica Garduño, 2nd year, Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF), Villa Albertine
Kyle Niemann, OD, Optometrist, Visual Eyes, Omaha
Alexandrea Swanson, Fulbright Alumni, Communications Strategist, Managing Director, Federation of German Industries (BDI)
Mary Kate Volken, Fulbright Alumni, Ph.D. Candidate, Program in History, Technology and Medicine at the University of Minnesota

Philosophy

Feb. 9, 6–7 p.m., Harper 2057/2058

Haziq Akhter, MD Candidate, University of Nebraska Medical Center
Marin Coughlin, Employment Attorney, Koley Jessen, PC, LLO
Joe Thibodeau, Intensive Services Program Coordinator, Omaha Housing Authority
Kevin Turgeon, Principal Consultant and Owner, True Owl
Katherine Wenman, Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Appeals, Iowa Attorney General

Political Science and International Relations

Feb. 10, 6–7 p.m., HLSB G04

Elijah Chadioun, Research Analyst, Colorado Legislative Council
John McCoy, Associate Economist-Regional Affairs, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
Hannah Mooney Mack, Owner and Principal, Mooney Mack Consulting
Katie Pitts, State Policy Director, Nebraska Appleseed

Psychological Science

Feb. 19, 5–6 p.m., HLSB 361

Sarah Hoff, Deputy Warden, Nebraska Department of Correctional Services
Ronette Bruner, Director of Assessment, Creighton University
Terry Moore, Clinical Social Worker, Associated Counseling Professionals
Tim McDermott, Dean's Postdoctoral Scholar, Florida State University
Erin Woolman, Mental Health Therapist, The Attachment and Trauma Center of Nebraska

Sustainability Studies

Feb. 10, 4–5 p.m., Eppley 112C

Ben Blickhan, Project Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Donovan Mann, Post Construction Stormwater Management, TD2 Engineering and Owner MannMade Skills Training and Athletics
Clara Hasemeier, Garden Support Specialist, Serendipity Center, Jesuit Volunteer Corp Northwest
Kate Williams, Graduate Student, Masters of the Environment-Urban Resilience Track, University of Colorado



See the schedule online.

Being unplugged is not the answer

CECE SLADOVNIK
Assistant Opinion Editor

Ever since 2026 began, I cannot get a break from the word “analog.” For those who have not had their social media feeds ambushed with “2026 is the year of analog,” “Here is a list of my favorite analog hobbies” and other content related to this adjective, the word analog, in this context, generally refers to activities and lifestyles that are meant to exclude modern technology. Some examples of this include journaling, puzzles, reading and listening to “physical media” such as CDs and record players. While I will be the first to say that I think social media is one of the worst things to happen to our generation, I think this notion of being “unplugged,” or without technology, is misguided.

There is nothing wrong, in my eyes, with being advantaged by modern technology. I recently had some struggles with my car connecting to Bluetooth and decided to switch over to the radio. For about two days, I was excited about this shift and all of the positive implications I thought this phone-free behavior would have in my life. Instead, I was disappointed. What I thought would be an era of exposure to new music and ideas turned into me grumbling while avoiding traffic, switching between listening to people talk about nonsense or the same three pop songs I was already sick of. This experience made me realize how much I like getting to choose my own music in the car. It is such a gift to have access to any kind of music I want to hear, at any time of the day, and not have to listen to advertisements every two songs. I strongly contend that we could all survive without modern technology, but I don’t think it’s a crime to use technology when it makes our lives easier.

Lately I have noticed a trend among my friends that I like to call the “DND Epidemic.” Many of my friends have their phones constantly on Do Not Disturb, never receiving any notifications. Their aim is to be on their phones less, but I have never seen it work this way. These friends afflicted by the DND Epidemic are the ones I see on their phones the most, yet they end up missing important emails and unintentionally ignoring their friends. Your texts and emails are most likely not the thing harming your mental health. I think it may have more to do with the three hours of scrolling you do a day.

Do I think we should put down our screens more? YES! But the way we are going about it is wrong (If we were really going analog in 2026, I would not be hearing about it so much on the internet). If you want to be on your phone less, the answer is not to get rid of it or completely ignore it because, whether we like it or not, technology is ingrained in almost everything we do. Instead, we can take steps to make our phones less attractive. Delete social media and only use it on your laptop. Stop having long, drawn-out conversations over text and just call someone or talk to them in person. Stop sending pointless pictures of yourself on Snapchat. Technology is a great tool that social media companies have used to turn us into products. We need to learn to live our lives better with it, because when your hour of analog hobby is over and you have to pick up your phone again, you need to know how to use this tool without it consuming you.



Lessons from a phone-free table

MOLLY STARKLE
Opinion Writer

I was raised in a no-phones-at-the-dinner-table family. Every night at 6 p.m., my sisters and I would squeeze around the kitchen table, rattle off the events of our day between bites and get each other up to speed. If I had a ballet class during dinner time, my mom would always sit with me when I got home to eat. When my sisters had volleyball practice, I would return to the table when they got home as they ate. I’m not sure my parents were even conscious of it, but nobody ever ate alone. That’s just how it always was.

I think the simple concept of “no phones at the dinner table” represents something much bigger, which I never understood until recently. It really doesn’t pertain to the dinner table at all. It is about showing up for those around us, being present and showing respect to the people in our close community.

It worries me to think this is becoming a lost art. I value connectivity, eye contact and engaged conversation. More and more, people are on their phones while sitting with friends, checking texts and messages in the company of others. They mindlessly scroll instead of connecting with the people around them.

I have even found myself guilty of this lately. I’ll see a message come up on my phone when I’m eating dinner with friends. It seems harmless to send back a quick response, but when I look back up to resume the conversation, I have almost always lost my train of thought. It completely disrupts the conversation, and, frankly, it’s rude.

It is not hard to go on do-not-disturb mode when you’re with people. It’s time for us to bring this back. It’s time we give the people we are engaging with our undivided attention. This week, I put intentional effort towards being more present this week, and I feel more connected to those around me than I have in a while. My conversations have been deeper and more meaningful. I feel less distracted and more ready to show up fully to the other things going on in my life.

As we begin to settle into this new year, I challenge you to implement a no phones at the dinner table policy during your meals. Ditch the screens when you’re eating with others. Become fully present in all your interactions. The results may surprise you.



Stop shaming high school nostalgia

MIA CASTRO
Opinion Writer

The blue light of my phone glares down at me, and I glance at the time. It’s 1:34 a.m., and I have a 9 a.m. class tomorrow. I know I should go to bed, but I can’t seem to put my phone down. I’m sifting through old high school photos, moving in and out of my Photos app and my Snapchat memories, grinning to myself. An old prom photo appears on my screen, and I laugh aloud, remembering how fun that night was and what meaningful memories

were made, while scrolling to see the next picture.

Bringing this up to some friends, they tell me to “close the yearbook,” explaining that high school has passed and we’re all in new places and times in our lives. While I recognize that sentiment, and I do agree that talking about high school too much is, well, too much, I propose a new way to think about our high school years.

I propose we normalize still talking about and reminiscing on our pasts. It seems like high school continues to become such a taboo subject as you get older, but I personally don’t understand why we can’t look fondly

on the good times that we had then, while simultaneously growing into new people and moving toward bigger and better things. Two things can be true at the same time.

If anything, looking back on my aspirations and goals from then only makes me notice the growth and changes we’ve all undergone. For me, this fosters a strong sense of accomplishment and pride in what I’ve accomplished since becoming an alumna. After all, our high school selves are still semi-current versions of ourselves; they are who we were just a few short years ago.

High school is such a pivotal time in our lives, with many emotions, milestone mo-

ments and instances of self-discovery. Lord knows we all have more than enough lore to go around from those years, so why should we disregard that just because we’re in college now? Leaving high school behind is not such a black-and-white issue. I have laughed the hardest I ever have, met some of my best friends and made some core memories during those four years. Why leave them completely in the dust?

Let’s normalize high school nostalgia. Not only does it help us fortify our own sense of self and accomplishment, but it also keeps us grounded and focused on our future.

The paradox of living in the moment

MOLLY STARKLE
Opinion Writer

Picture this: you’re sitting around the fireplace of your college house’s living room. You’re plopped on the couch in your comfies, a blanket lying across your lap. Each of your roommates is balancing a plate of makeshift dinner on their lap and giggling between bites. Olivia Dean is flooding the room from a speaker left playing in the kitchen. The fire is illuminating the familiar faces of your friends. One of them references an inside joke, and everyone bursts out in

laughter. You’re laughing so hard that your stomach hurts. You think about how perfect the moment is. Then, you can’t help but notice that next year, none of it will be the same. Suddenly, the overwhelming love and comfort you were feeling is accompanied by a bitter aftertaste.

Why is it that the moments which bring us the most joy are the ones we can’t help but get distracted from? They are a gateway for anxiety and worry to creep in. It feels like acknowledging just how good something feels cannot happen without also acknowledging that it can’t last forever. The two coexist.

I like to think I live in the moment. I focus

on the people in front of me, am spontaneous with what life gives me and am as present as I can be. What I am coming to realize, however, is the moments when I feel the most present are the same moments that make me long for time to freeze. They bring with them a bit of heartache and frustration. Life progresses, and there’s nothing we can do about it.

The more we try to live in the moment, the more aware we become of how quickly time moves. Enjoying experiences comes at a cost. The more conscious we are of the moment we exist in, the more aware we are that it won’t last forever.

It’s rather ironic. As I have come to recog-

nize this phenomenon, I have attempted to make peace with it.

Change is scary. The recognition of how quickly time flies is scarier. These emotions increase as we live in the moment, but they should not stop us from doing so. Rather, it is more important to live in the moment and enjoy every day we get. The only way to relieve the discomfort that fleeting moments bring us is to live them as vividly as we can.

I challenge you to be more present this week. Find moments and interactions you will miss when your days at Creighton are over. Recognize them, express gratitude for them and do not let them pass you by.

Creighton tops Air Force, 4-3

LAUREN GAEDING
Sports Reporter

Creighton men's tennis (3-0) came up victorious against Air Force Academy (1-1) on Jan. 30 after a night of rewarding and long matches at the Hanscom Tennis Center.

The Jays headed into the first match of the spring 2-0 record from fall play. They fought against adversity over the course of the hours-long matches and exerted themselves as a team. Creighton ended with a tight 4-3 victory against the Falcons, gathering momentum into a highly competitive stretch of the season.

"It was a really well-earned, hard-fought win. I was super impressed with how the freshman handled everything [as] it's their first career match," assistant coach Matthew Lanahan said. "So I think they played really resilient. The guys brought a lot of energy,



and I was super impressed with how everybody came to play right from the very first point."

Freshman Mathis Dahler dominated the courts. Not only did he clutch the doubles point, but he also determined the win in his singles match, both going into a tie breaker and third set. Dahler and senior Zachary Kuo squeezed out a 13-11 win in the tiebreaker in doubles, which gave the team a 1-0 advantage heading into singles play. Following this, Dahler ended with a 6-4 victory in the third set of his doubles match after splitting victories between his first two sets. This point ensured that the Falcons would not catch up and solidified a match victory.

"Unbelievable today," Dahler said, almost in disbelief. "Great team effort and just my first college match ever...so happy now."

Lanahan spoke with pride about Mathis's mental and physical toughness.

"I know he was tired. He was fighting physically and mentally," the assistant coach said. "[But] he stayed calm. He wasn't afraid to go for shots when there were big moments, and he just played really tough."

Lanahan emphasized the importance of Mathis and Kuo's win in maintaining the team's edge, noting that even a single point can decide a competitive match. Creighton's eventual victory was only decided by one point.

But Mathias' win was not the only factor. No. 1 singles player and senior Yuma Dajima continued to show up for his team and lead by example as an upperclassman.

"He has played lights-out ever since he's gotten to the starting lineup and has played nothing but good tennis," Lanahan said. "I mean, there aren't many matches that I see



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Senior Zach Kuo and freshman Mathis Dahler celebrate their 13-11 tiebreak win against Air Force, a win that proved the difference maker in the Bluejays' 4-3 win on the day.

him lose. He is always out there playing really hard and finding a way to win."

There was exceptional play across the Bluejay lineup. Sophomore Rocky McKenzie and freshman Jack McMahon took a 6-4 victory in doubles. Dajima cruised through singles with 6-4, 6-1 victory. McMahon also secured a 6-2, 6-4 win in his singles match.

Lanahan noted the team seeks to continue their calm and driven approach throughout the season. He spoke highly of head coach

Posch Gerhard's preparation of the team, focusing on their "pressure points" and "making sure they can handle these pressure situations" in practice.

Following this, the Jays split a double-header on Sunday, Feb 1, sweeping Gustavus Adolphus at home before falling 3-4 to Drake in Des Moines. They head south to face Oklahoma State today. First serve is set for 6 p.m.

Jays flip the script in crucial battle

AIDAN FLAIRTY
Sports Reporter

After a dominant 81-51 victory over St. John's on Wednesday, the Creighton women's basketball team looked to earn their second consecutive win as they traveled to South Orange to take on the Seton Hall Pirates. The Bluejays went into Sunday's game with a 5-7 record in the Big East. Seton Hall was ranked four spots above Creighton, with a solid 9-3 Big East record.

This game marked the second matchup between these two teams. Creighton lost to Seton Hall at home on Dec. 22, with a final score of 88-79. The Bluejays looked to earn some revenge on Sunday.

Neither team was able to build a strong lead early in the context, and Seton Hall was up 7-5 in with 6:44 left in the first quarter. Senior guard Kennedy Townsend would then tie things up at 7 with a layup. Freshman guard Neleigh Gessert then went on a 5-0 run with a driving layup and a 3-pointer, pushing the Bluejays ahead 12-7. Freshman guard Ava Zeidecker added a layup less than two minutes of gameplay later, and Creighton doubled up Seton Hall 14-7 with 3:31 remaining in the first quarter.

Pirates guard Savannah Catalon made a 3-pointer to end Creighton's scoring streak, but freshman guard Kendall McGee answered with a 3-pointer of her own. Creighton held its 7-point lead with about three minutes to go in the first quarter.

Seton Hall senior Jordana Codio made a

basket while fouled and took advantage of the and-one opportunity by successfully putting in the free throw. This trimmed Creighton's lead to 17-13. However, graduate student forward Grace Boffeli went on a 4-0 run with two made layups and Creighton was up 21-13 with 1:43 remaining. Sophomore guard Ja'Kahla Craft scored the last points of the quarter when she made a two-point basket for the Pirates. The score was 21-15 in favor of the Bluejays going into the second period.

Pirates senior forward Shailyn Pinkney scored the first with a layup. Creighton would then go on a 6-0 run with 3-pointers from Townsend and Gessert. The Bluejays held a double-digit lead, 27-17.

The Pirates would show some fight and go on a 7-1 run, and the game was a two-possession contest at 28-24, but sophomore guard Allison Heathcock made a put the Bluejays up 30-24 with two free throws. Both teams would battle throughout the remainder of the second quarter, and the Bluejays held a lead at 45-39 going into halftime.

The third quarter unfolded as a tightly contested battle. The Bluejays maintained a slim two-possession lead for most of the period, but a 3-pointer by Gessert pushed the lead to three possessions. The Pirates responded with 4 unanswered points to make the score 58-55, and it was a one-possession game for the first time since the first half. Still, Boffeli made a layup with less than a minute left in the third, sending Creighton into the final quarter with a 60-55 lead.

The Bluejays started the fourth quarter

with a 7-0 run, giving them a solid 67-55 lead with 5:36 remaining in the ball game. Seton Hall chose to take a timeout with 5:14 left in the fourth. The Pirates seem to have used that timeout productively as they went on a 9-0 run immediately afterwards. The game was a nail-biter with the Bluejays up 67-64 at 1:25 to go.

The Pirates fouled McGee, stopping the clock with only 32 seconds left. She answered with two clutch free throws, making the game 69-64.

The Bluejays held on and won the road game by a final score of 72-66. Gessert led the Bluejays in scoring with 16 points. Two other Bluejays scored double figures: Townsend with 14 points and Heathcock with 11 points. Heathcock also had 10 rebounds, which gave her the first double-double of her career. The victory improved Creighton's record to 10-12 overall and 6-7 in the Big East. Seton Hall dropped to 15-7 and 9-4 in the conference. Every conference win is pivotal as the Bluejays seek a favorable seed in the Big East tournament.

Here are three takeaways from the game:

#1 - Bluejays showed mental toughness at the end.

When Seton Hall went on a 9-0 run to make it a one-possession game at 67-64 late in the fourth quarter, the Bluejays could have lost their composure and dropped the game, especially on the road against a quality opponent like Seton Hall. But the Bluejays were

able to stay focused in the hostile environment and earn the win.

#2 - Creighton flips the physical battle.

When Creighton took on Seton Hall in December, the Pirates out-rebounded the Bluejays 36-26 and outscored Creighton in the paint 34-22. Creighton was able to flip that script on Sunday by outrebounding Seton Hall and tying the Pirates in the paint at 30. This improvement in physical performance played a large role in the Bluejays road victory.

#3 - Creighton is winning at an important time.

When the Bluejays lost at DePaul on Jan. 25, they had an underwhelming record of 8-12 and were 4-7 in Big East play. At that time, it was looking unlikely for the Bluejays to earn a decent seed for the Big East Tournament in March. However, Creighton is now on a two-game win streak and sits at 10-12 overall with a Big East record of 6-7. The Bluejays have a realistic path to finish with a winning record in conference play as they have seven regular season games remaining.

After a matchup with Georgetown Wednesday night, Creighton hosts Marquette on Sunday at D.J. Sokol Arena. Tipoff is set for 12 p.m.



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

The crowd at a sold out CHI Health Center stands up for loved ones who have battled with cancer. The arena was filled with a shared support as the Bluejays faced off against No. 2 Connecticut.

Jays stand together in pink

ABBIE GALLANT
Sports Reporter

From an outside perspective, the 85-58 loss to No. 2 UConn at CHI Health Center on Jan. 31 was an unsurprising but nonetheless frustrating defeat for the now 12-10 Creighton men’s basketball team. For many, it was yet another example in the ever-circulating narrative that this Bluejay team is “not the same without Ryan Kalkbrenner,” “not talented enough,” and “not like it used to be.”

But to those 18,650 decked out in pink for the 16th annual Pink Out game, who raised \$43,535.25 for Hope Lodge Nebraska — a place for cancer patients and their caregivers to stay during treatment — Jan. 31 was bigger than those 40 minutes of basketball on the court, bigger than the Bluejays’ struggles this season.

And as CHI Health Center turned pink in the stands, the weight of the night settled quietly inside the Creighton locker room.

“This event is always a little bigger than the game. Obviously, we’re playing a game and it’s important to a lot of people — it’s important to me, it’s important to the guys — [but] tonight was a little different because of the personal impact that cancer’s had on our locker room,” head coach Greg McDermott said.

The cause meant a lot to everyone there that night but hit especially close to home for many of the 16 players in the locker room, hearts heavy in pink. Senior guard Josh Dix wore the name of his mother, Kelly Harper, across his back in bright pink, a homage to her ongoing battle with cancer.

Across the room, sophomore guard Blake Harper dedicated the game to his mom, Linda Harper, who lost her battle with cancer in May 2023. He wore her name proudly on his back. In the quiet of the locker room before tipoff, the meaning of the game settled in for Harper, and the emotions tied to his family washed over him.

“I was just thinking about my pops and how he be handling it, this whole situation,” Harper said, getting choked up. “I wear my emotions on my sleeves, good and bad, so it was a lot but at the same time I was grateful for representing her, the son she made and raised. That’s my birth giver, that’s my mother, [and] there’s not no other bond like that. I was blessed to have her for 18 years.”

Harper’s emotions ran deep, but the support of his teammates helped him channel those feelings into something meaningful before tipoff.

“The guys helped me ... Coach Mac picked my head up ... [and] that’s what I came [to Creighton] for: the guys that picked me up, the brotherhood,” Harper said. “Like coach said in the locker room, ‘We’ve got to stick together.’ So I felt like before the game, that’s

the definition of what happened ... Really never in my life [have] I had teammates that I just met in June talking to me like we’ve known each other our whole lives. That’s really what I took from tonight and for our team.”

From the perspective of tenured head coach McDermott, in his 16th Pink Out, this one felt different — and it shaped how he spoke to his team before tipoff.

“The last thing you would want to do is not talk about Blake’s mom or not talk about Josh’s mom. So, I made the decision that we were going to talk about it and talk about how Blake’s mom — how proud she would be — and Josh’s mom — how proud she is — of what they’re doing that someone their age shouldn’t have to deal with,” he said.

It was that feeling — both heartbreaking and uplifting — that followed the Bluejays out of the tunnel and onto the court where the No. 2 team in the country awaited them.

Wrapped in what felt like a loving embrace on all sides by the eighth-largest crowd in Bluejay basketball history, Creighton began the uphill climb to dethroning the UConn Huskies.

The game’s first 15 minutes didn’t disappoint. Even then, the implications of the game could not help but seep into every possession on the floor.

Fittingly, Harper opened scoring with a layup to put the Bluejays on the board 2-0 to begin the game in his first start since Dec. 7. After that, the Huskies came firing back, and the push-and-pull battle began.

Over the first 10 minutes, UConn never led by more than four. Creighton kept the score so close that, with 10:36 remaining, the Bluejays reclaimed the lead, 18-17 — for the first time since 2-0 — on a bouncing triple from junior forward Isaac Traudt.

Senior guard Nik Graves also had his hand in the fight to keep up with the second-best team in the nation, coming up with 13 points on five-of-six shooting from the field in the first half. The points he put up, though, meant more than a number on a stat sheet.

“Obviously, this game means a lot for a lot of people, just all the families coming here to support us, and the whole community coming to the game to support one message,” Graves said. “Honestly, I was able to hit a few shots, but really just trying to play hard and trying to play for something bigger today.”

Graves and the rest of the Bluejays rallied to try and make every possession count, but by the five-minute mark, UConn began to heat up from the field in a way that Creighton couldn’t counter.

From a tie at 27 apiece with 4:41 left in the half, UConn eclipsed a 14-3 run to end the half, using eight second-chance points to bolster a 41-30 lead at halftime.

“I thought for 15 [or] 17 minutes we played the way we wanted to play [and] the

game was kind of where we needed it to be in terms of the pace of it,” McDermott said. “That run at the end of the first half obviously hurt us and then they came out of the locker room and were able to extend it right away. There’s a reason they’re ranked number two in the country. That’s a heck of a basketball team.”

Creighton ended the first half shooting 40.9% from the field and 50% from three. The Bluejay offense was led by Graves (13 points) and Harper (7 points). Meanwhile, UConn shot a combined 50% from the field and made eight threes for a 53.3% success rate from beyond the arc.

But the opening minutes of the second half quickly made it clear that nothing could stop the visitors from taking control of the game.

After two points from Harper to open Creighton’s second-half scoring, UConn took advantage of another 14-2 run, giving the Huskies a 62-40 advantage with 12:48 to play. On the other end of the floor, the UConn completely stifled Creighton’s three-point offense, holding the home team scoreless on 11 attempts throughout the half.

Graves’s double-digit first half was followed up with four free throws in. Over the entirety of the second 20 minutes, sophomore guard Austin Swartz scored just two points, and Dix couldn’t find a bucket. Junior forward Owen Freeman led scorers in the second half with seven points.

But more than scoring woes, the Bluejays couldn’t control the boards, losing the rebounding battle 37-24, which further hindered any chance of the score differential getting back within reach.

“I think we had some decent looks [from the field], but the defensive end of the backboards, that’s where the game was decided. We weren’t good enough there,” McDermott said.

With better rebounding or not, the Bluejays couldn’t deny that the Huskies shot the lights out of the ball, scoring on 58.1% of their 31 attempts from the field in the second half and managing to sink eight more 3-pointers by game’s end.

As the night came to a close, the score reached an insurmountable deficit, and Creighton accepted an 85-58 defeat.

When all was said and done, the Bluejays may not have won the game — improvements can certainly be made — however, they did something far more important: they never lost sight of what this night meant, for their community and their teammates.

“We have our warts, we certainly do, and we’re still growing, we’re still developing, but what transpired in that locker room [with Harper] before the game was pretty special,” McDermott said. “It speaks to the people that raised those 16 guys in our locker room. They came from a pretty good place, because

the way they rallied around their teammate in there — that’s what you want Creighton to stand for.”

The entire Creighton community stood for that message that night, spreading awareness for cancer and showing why every effort, every dollar, every gesture, and every pink shirt mattered.

“One person, if they get screened and it gets caught, and they can be cured because it was caught early ... that makes this all worth it,” McDermott said.

The game against UConn might not have transpired the way the team hoped, but Harper is convinced that this team is not done yet.

“It’s a long season still. We’ve still got some life and we not going to quit, we not going to back down, so we got to go back to the drawing board and fix up those mistakes, that’s all,” he said.

After a trip to the nation’s capital to face Georgetown Wednesday night, Creighton returns home tomorrow night to host Seton Hall.. Tipoff is set for 5 p.m.



THOMAS ZIEGLER/THE CREIGHTONIAN

