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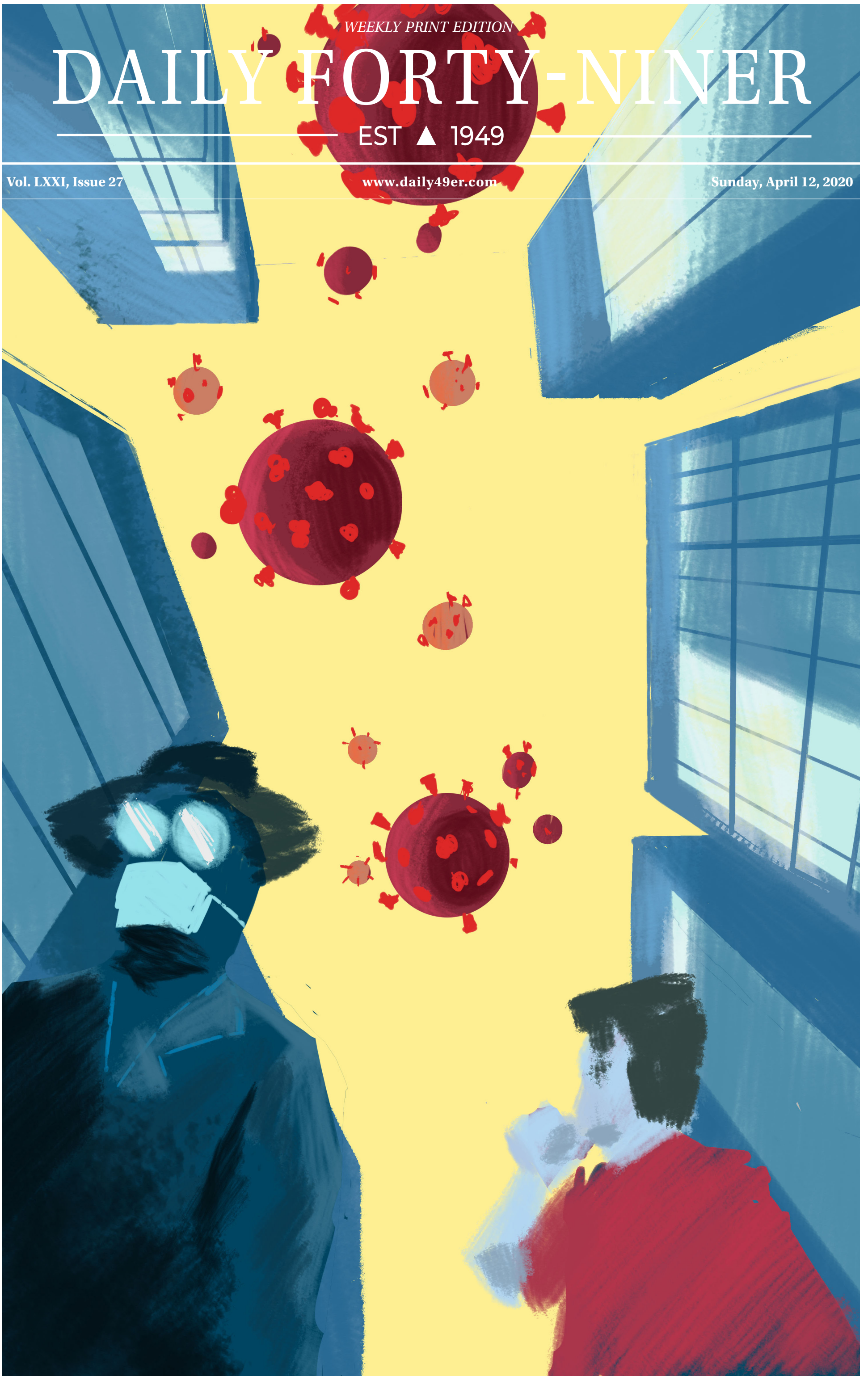
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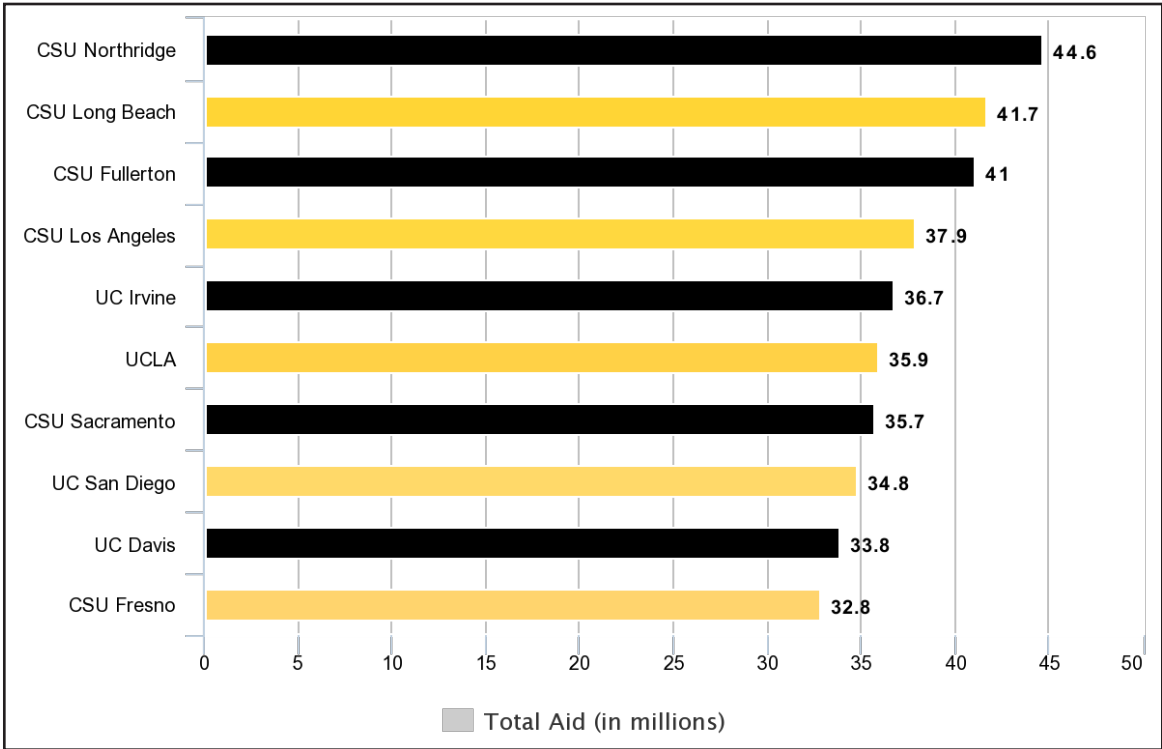
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ON THE COVER

Illustration by RODRIGO GONZALEZ



CSULB is receiving the second most funding of any CSU in federal stimulus funding for COVID-19.

CSULB sees \$41.7 million in federal coronavirus funding

By Hannah Getahun
Staff Writer

Long Beach State is expected to see upwards of \$41.7 million in federal aid out of \$525 million set aside for California State University schools. These funds, released Thursday, will provide emergency grants to students.

Legislators set aside \$6 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stimulus Act to assist students with basic needs expenses such as food and housing.

According to an Ed Source analysis, the total aid per CSULB student is calculated to be around \$1,114.

This is the second-highest allocation of funds to any CSU campus and the ninth highest of any university in the nation.

In total, California will apportion \$1.7 billion in funding for colleges and universities.

University of California schools will obtain \$260 million, while the California Community College system will receive \$577 million. Private institutions will receive around \$327 million.

During an interview conducted Thursday by the Daily Forty-Niner, President Jane Close Conoley expressed concern over university funding.

“We’re trying to figure out who’s going to get that and how it’s going to be distributed,” Conoley said.

Conoley also noted that departments should prepare for the possibility of budget cuts up to 20%.

Colleges and universities nationwide will later see another \$6 billion from the CARES Act that will help to fund university operations affected by COVID-19.

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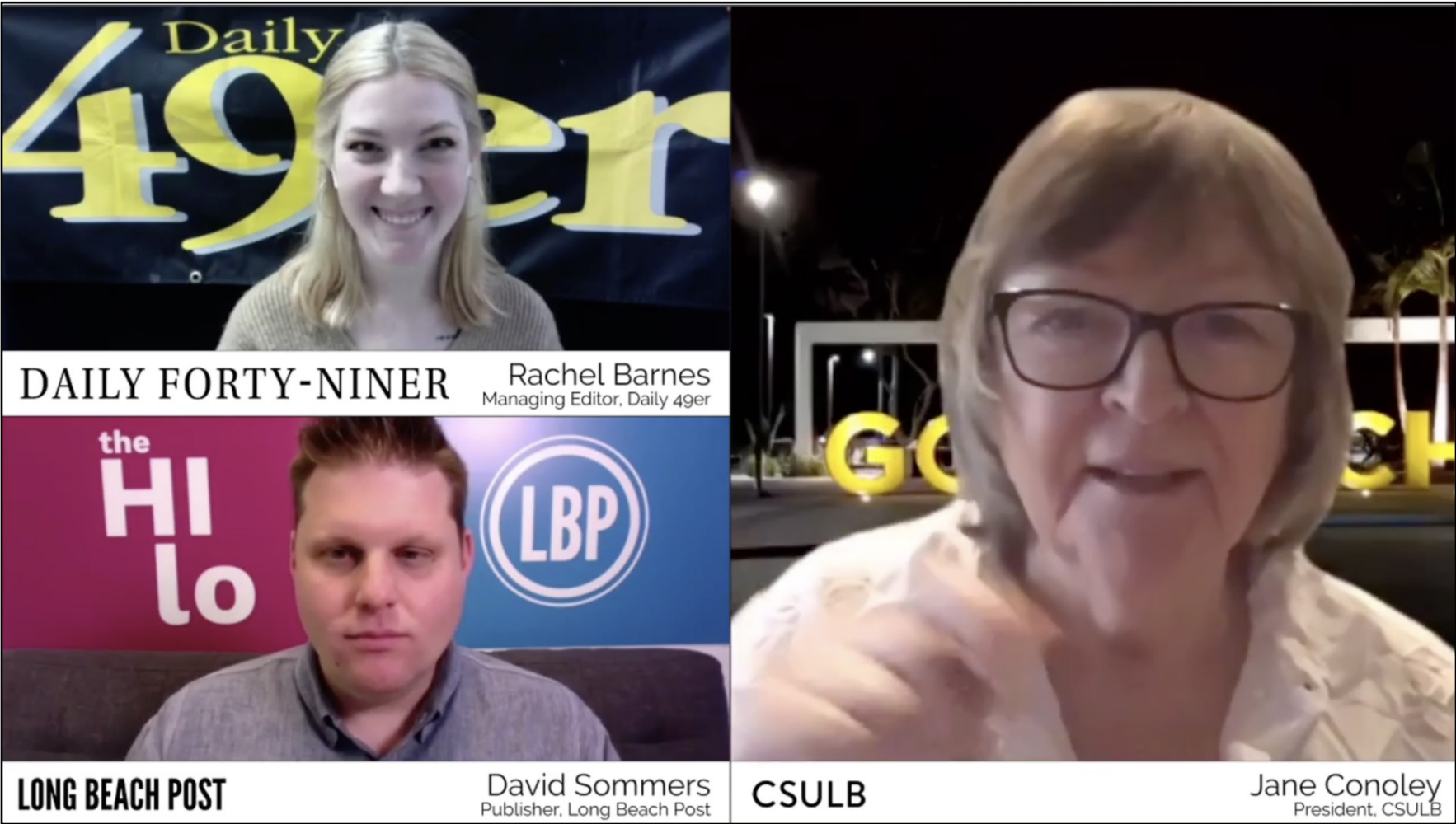
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In a live online interview with the Daily Forty-Niner and Long Beach Post April 9, President Jane Close Conoley answers questions from the community about COVID-19.

‘Bumpy roads ahead’

*President Jane Close Conoley announces potential budget cuts;
3 new CSULB COVID-19 cases*

By Daily Forty-Niner Staff

Long Beach State is anticipating 10% to 20% budget cuts in the wake of COVID-19, President Jane Close Conoley announced Thursday.

“We’ve already gotten strong signals from the state government to expect pretty significant cuts,” Conoley said.

Cuts, she said, would impact the university’s ability to hire new staff and faculty, fund students’ ability to study abroad and host students from other nations.

Other impacted areas, like athletics and employment, may take an even larger hit.

“Really every part of the university is likely to have to shrink a bit,” Conoley said.

Recently, over 400 student employees were laid off from the 49er Shops, something Conoley said was a necessity but would like to avoid doing again in the future.

“I’m hoping that we can get through it by a hiring freeze and not by laying anybody off,” Conoley said.

Academic impacts for this semester due to coronavirus, such as the grading scale, is something Conoley said the Academic Senate is currently debating.

“I think what will happen is that all classes will be available for credit-no credit, but the deadline will be extended,” Conoley said. “So it’s still in the student’s hands whether they get a grade or credit-no credit.”

Students have recently taken to social media demanding more refunds for tuition and student fees, which Conoley said simply can’t be done.

“We have refunded fees for parking, for meal plans and for housing, we’re not planning to do other fees,” Conoley said. “And the reason why, I know this is a little in the weeds and obscure to people, but when you pay for, for example, a fee for the recreation center ... what they’re really doing is paying the mortgage on that building, and that building is really owned by the students. There’s no general fund allowed to be involved in that.”

The university has raised over \$94,000 for the student emergency fund to assist those in need, but Conoley said that the refunds already given may end up having serious consequences.

“So we gave the parking refunds, but that may have things downstream for that,” Conoley said. “Can we still afford to do shuttles? Because we gave back money ... and that money really also pays the mortgages on the parking structures, as well as paving the streets.”

“
I thought I had seen everything, but I had never seen anything like this.
”

President Jane Close Conoley

As of now, funds are being rearranged to accommodate departments and to keep staff members afloat. There is \$6 billion in federal stimulus funding for higher education on the way to aid with struggles stemming from COVID-19.

“We’re using tuition dollars to pay the faculty,” Conoley said. “Although the method has changed, we’re still paying the same number of staff.”

Conoley also announced that a total of five Long Beach State community members have tested positive for COVID-19.

Four students, including the two that were initially announced on March 24, and another two students have tested positive and have all since recovered. One staff member was hospitalized for a brief period of time and has since been released.

Conoley also had news to share regarding the university’s plans for changes relating to admissions and instructional delivery.

Earlier this morning, Tim Moiza, associate dean of the college of professional and international education, sent out an email announcing that the summer 2020 session will be delivered through alternative education methods.

A decision on whether or not the fall semester will be face-to-face has yet to be made.

“We’re hoping, no, that fall will be face-to-face,” Conoley said. “It

really comes down to whether or not public health officials will allow for gathering at all, or of a certain size.”

Along with a resumption of face-to-face instruction, Conoley said the university is hoping to hold commencement in the fall. Thanksgiving weekend is set as a tentative date.

“I know we’ll figure something out,” Conoley said. “The students have been very strong in saying that they really look forward to the face to face, and they don’t want some virtual creation.”

For the 2021 school year, ACT or SAT requirements will be removed, which Conoley said is to help assist incoming students.

“We’re worried about students being able to access the test,” Conoley said. “So it’s likely for one year only, we’ll develop a different strategy to come up with that index number.”

Conoley said that the changes incurred due to COVID-19 will most likely be permanent.

“That’s become a kind of new genre, now everybody’s writing about and in the higher-ed news, how this will change us forever,” Conoley said.

“Stick with us, there’ll be harder times ahead,” she added. “If these actual cuts come to our budget ... the last thing we’d ever cut are student services and classes, but I think there’ll be some bumpy roads ahead.”

By Madalyn Amato
News Editor

Before the spread of COVID-19, The Maker Society operated as a student-run organization that provided 3D-printing resources to students and community members.

It competed in robotics competitions, taught classes about 3D-printing and even created a functional Iron Man suit.

However, once the pandemic began to spread rapidly, Long Beach State students Ambreen Kahn, Danny Curry and alumni Carlos Vergara sat in their workshop in Garden Grove and brainstormed ways they could help make a difference.

“One of the biggest concepts that they kind of ingrained in your head, as both an engineer and industrial designers is creative problem solving,” Curry, a third-year industrial design major said. “How can you get faced with an issue, overcome it through avenues that you didn’t previously consider at all? That idea of being able to have that type of thinking is definitely what got us here.”

After reading stories from overseas of other 3D-printing labs converting into personal protective equipment production companies the team at The Maker Society began printing its own face-shields.

“We started off actually trying to print a face mask,” Kahn, a fourth-year civil engineering major said. “But we couldn’t get a line that had a good enough seal around your face.”

Curry then found a design for face-shields from a company called Prusa, whose design was approved by the Czech Republic Ministry of Health, and the team decided to run with it.

“It was the closest that any design at that time had gotten to getting a thumbs up from the actual medical industry,” Curry said.

The team began making test batches of the masks but found the production rate was lower than expected, so they decided to switch to another version.

“It’s a significantly simpler design,” Curry said. “And while it hasn’t received any sort of official ‘okay’ from a government entity or health organization, we’ve had hundreds of medical personnel around the country requesting those because they’re significantly cheaper and faster to actually produce.”

Simple, but effective is what the team has been striving for. The current design consists of two pieces that are connected together, a head-band like clip and the face-shield itself.

They began to add messages to the headbands in attempts to add levity and hope to the situation. Some say “STAY STRONG,” which Kahn said is meant for encouragement for everyone.

“I think it’s a nice message to remind people, and also just to remind us while we’re working and assembling these masks,” she said. “If we stay strong and build these face shields, we can send them out to hospital workers who can also feel like they can be a little stronger.”

Others say “GO BEACH”, something Vergara, who graduated from Long Beach State in 2019 with a degree in aerospace engineering, said is an homage to their roots.

“We got inspiration from the school because that’s where we all started,” Vergara said.

With all 25 of their printers running, Curry said they can make up to 100 masks per day.

After printing the brackets, acetate sheets are cut in the shape of a face shield. The shields are then hole-punched and attached to the bracket, secured and elastic bands are added to secure the mask to the head.

Throughout the process, the whole team wears their own PPE and all components are sanitized with isopropyl alcohol, dried with a micro-fiber cloth and then dried yet again with a heat gun.

Curry said that the process has been running smoothly, but price-gouging and difficulty accessing supplies has slowed them down.

“Normally, the laws of supply and demand, ‘oh the demand goes up, the price goes up,’” Curry said. “But when it’s something like this, I really don’t think that should be the case.”

The team started a GoFundMe page to help raise money to buy supplies and, as of April 8, has raised over \$3,300 of its \$5,000 goal.



More than a school project

CSULB students and staff 3D-print face masks to help fight COVID-19.



THE MAKER SOCIETY
The Maker Society (top) organizers and Long Beach student Danny Curry, left, and alumni Carlos Vergara pose with the face masks they designed to distribute to COVID-19 first responders. The Maker Society members (above) clean and assemble the masks.

“We weren’t planning on having a GoFundMe more than probably a couple hundred dollars because originally we were planning on producing very little of these,” Curry said. “However, obviously, as demand has gone up, it’s a matter of we can’t afford to produce the number that we can physically produce.”

Each face shield costs approximately \$5 to make and Kahn said that all funds received go directly back into production.

Since beginning its production, the team has entered agreements with St. Mary Hospital in Long Beach, Kaiser Permanente in Downey, a police department in Minnesota, hospitals in Northern California and a non-profit organization called MasksforDocs.

“We were originally to produce 200, maybe 250 of these,” Curry said. “Now we’re at the point where we’re most likely going to end up producing thousands.”

Curry said that the team has begun building 3D printers from scratch to keep up with the demand for its product. Something Vergara said is no problem at all.

“I hope that they’re less concerned about their own well-being and can be more focused on the people they’re helping,” Vergara said. “Hopefully it can take a little bit off of pressure from themselves getting sick and they can give it their all to helping the people.”

The Maker Society isn’t the only group within the Beach community stepping up. Christiane Beyer, associate professor in the engineering department, and her team at the University Library’s Innovation Space have begun producing a similar product.

Like the student-run organization, Beyer was inspired by other’s work that she saw on the news.

The professor then began searching for designs to download but said she wasn’t happy with any of the ones available.

“I tried to imagine that in a hospital as a doctor, you’d have to take it on and off and off and on,” Beyer said. “So I said ‘OK, we need a different design’, we need one with maybe two options. One you can wear like regular glasses, so it sits on your ears, but also, in addition, have the extensions that you can put a rubber or elastic band on it.”

So Beyer sat down and created a conglomerate between an FDA approved design, ones she had seen online and her very own design to create the best face-shield possible.

“We can quickly redesign stuff, just for the purpose of right now,” Beyer said. “It might not be FDA approved, but right now it’s any help and support is better than nothing.”

Staff at Student Health Services have been Beyer’s test group, but she has since made contact with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to further the reach and distribution of the face shields.

Currently, the lab has eight printers which print different volumes of materials. Beyer said with all printers running at capacity, they can expect to make up to 40 frames per day.

However, they have started to face some challenges in getting the materials they need.

“We start one day, and the next day we get all the proper materials in and then we get the shield material in,” Beyer said. “That’s actually the bottleneck right now, we get our next delivery on Friday.”

Beyer and her team are careful to maintain proper sanitation and PPE standards while producing the masks as well, removing any potential for contamination.

Even though the shift was a sudden one, Beyer said she and her team are happy to be doing whatever they can.

“So many people, they have the capacity like us, we said ‘OK, I’m not going home like everybody right now. Let’s pull our expertise in and offer what we can do on our level,’” Beyer said.

Beyer said that they will begin distributing face shields to local hospitals and health care workers soon. By the end of production, they are looking to make more than 1,000 masks.

For now, both The Maker Society and Innovation Space will continue to make a difference in any way that they can.

“If it’s just one life that we make better, it’s better than not doing anything and not helping anyone,” Kahn said.

Life from home

CSULB student balances motherhood and study amid COVID-19 pandemic.

By Cristian Vasquez
Staff Writer

Long Beach State student Fabiola Gutierrez’s morning routines used to consist of getting her three children ready for school, dropping them off and heading to campus. Now, sociology major and first-year transfer student, Gutierrez finds herself distressed amid the transition to online instruction.

“I actually never liked online classes, I remember taking one online class in my community college and I did bad,” Gutierrez said. “I have to be in a classroom to do well. Online is just not for me.”

Gutierrez said her main struggles have been juggling her family duties with her online work.

“Every time I go to a store, I’m over there for two, three hours so once I come back, I have to help them, feed them, cook for them, help them with their homework,” she said. “At the end of the day I’m stressed because I have my school stuff to do, so that’s the issue right now.”

Despite her troubles with online courses, she said her professors have been supportive and attentive to her questions and concerns.

“All my professors have been informative about what they expect from us,” she said. “I’ve contacted all of them because of

my struggle learning from online courses. Most of them have been very lenient about giving extra time.”

Gutierrez said she initially had difficulty adapting to her transfer from Cerritos College, then struggled, even more, her first semester at CSULB and had to take medical leave.

“I did really bad. Transitioning was very hard. I did bad and I fell on academic probation,” Gutierrez said.

She had been looking forward to improving her grades this spring. She went as far as doing extra credit work mentoring students in the Long Beach School District.

She said resources on campus that she previously started using for the first time prior to the outspread of COVID-19 are now no longer available to her in person.

“This semester I was actually taking advantage of all [the campus resources] because of me failing and academic probation,” Gutierrez said. “I wanted to try new things in order for me to succeed, and now, I’ve tried making appointments online but it’s hard. It’s not the same as going in, talking to someone in person, and telling them your struggles.”

At home, Gutierrez said one of the hardest things is to find ways to keep her three children entertained while making sure they are keeping up with their own schoolwork. She said having courses via Zoom has proven to be a struggle as her children innocently interfere.

“I’ve had Zoom classes which I am new



Courtesy of FABIOLA GUTIERREZ
Long Beach State sociology major, and mother of three, Fabiola Gutierrez conducts her coursework online from her home in Paramount. Gutierrez also helps the elderly in her community who have trouble accessing food due to COVID-19 concerns.

to. I didn’t even know how to mute myself from it and how to set up my camera,” she said. “It was frustrating and then my kids walking in when the professor was talking, ‘Oh my god, it was embarrassing, but they have to adapt too.’”

According to Gutierrez, she and her husband have been able to maintain employment by assisting her husband in his business that distributes seafood to restaurants.

Despite all this, Gutierrez has created a positive impact in her Paramount community.

As a member of the Paramount Community Facebook group, she heard about elderly residents in her area having trouble accessing food in grocery stores.

According to Gutierrez, she posted on her group page offering assistance to any elders in the community by giving them rides to supermarkets.

“I did a post telling [the group page] if anyone knew an elder person that needed a

ride or anything to let me know,” Gutierrez said. “I have my own car; I was able to drive people around. That was my first thought, ‘Oh my God them, the elderly people.’”

Gutierrez also said she saw a post on her group page of a young mother that had an autistic child. According to her, the young mother’s post indicated she was having trouble locating black beans because her child only ate black beans.

“So, I had a lot of black beans and I was like I’ll give you some, I’ll spare some with you, my kids eat any type of food, any type of beans so I’ll spare you with some black beans,” Gutierrez said.

As her family begins to slowly adapt to their new way of life, Gutierrez said she wants the coronavirus epidemic to end. But for now, as long as she gets B’s in her classes, she said she will be fine.

“At this point, honestly I’m not expecting A’s in my classes. At this point a B or C is good,” she said.

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Illustration by HANNAH GETAHUN | Daily Forty-Niner

Black people are more vulnerable than ever. They are either more likely to die from COVID-19 due to structural racism or more likely to be criminalized due to structural racism.

By Danielle Broadway
Contributing Writer

The universal impact of COVID-19 is undeniable as death tolls climb and communities isolate.

The World Health Organization and the White House reiterate that this is a priority issue for all and preach solidarity in the effort to rid the world of this virus.

Imagine if society took the same stance on ending racism.

Although COVID-19 is a unique illness that has no known cure, racism is a chronic illness that has been perpetuated by the United States government for hundreds of years.

It is important for people to understand that COVID-19 perpetuates anti-Blackness.

With community members more scared and suspicious than ever, Black and Brown people are more vulnerable than ever. We are either more likely to die from COVID-19 due to structural racism or more likely to be criminalized due to structural racism.

Many preserve the dichotomy of racism and COVID-19 being separate occurrences. However, the overlap of these realities prove to be devastating. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez tweeted that the connection between racism and the COVID-19 death tolls cannot be ignored.

“COVID deaths are disproportionately spiking in Black + Brown communities,” Ocasio-Cortez wrote. “Why? Because the chronic toll of redlining, environmental racism, wealth gap, etc. ARE underlying health conditions. Inequality is a comorbidity.”

Americans now experience trepidation when leaving their homes to buy groceries or even to simply get some fresh air.

Yet, this sort of anxiety isn’t new for marginalized people. The experience of walking out the front door and fearing it will be the last day you make it beyond that threshold is constant for Black and Brown people.

This visceral feeling of fight or flight with every step represents what it means to live in a society that deems you a criminal, always marked for death.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, many went out of their way to avoid contact with Black people. Blackness has been historically met with contempt, fear and violence. Yet, the greatest ills of society are formulated by structural racism.

According to Newsweek, African Americans comprise 70% of coronavirus deaths in Louisiana despite only being 33% of the state’s population. This is a statistic mirrored across America in large cities such as Chicago.

The correlation between health and economic problems in neighborhoods of color and the COVID-19 death tolls is undeniable. Predominately Black residential areas are more likely to be near toxic refineries and surrounded by food deserts, and come from multiple income families that are still living beneath the poverty line.

Environmental racism sets the groundwork for people of color to have higher rates of asthma, diabetes, heart disease, depression, anxiety, etc.

Prior to COVID-19, the federal government refused to take responsibility for the structural violence perpetuated on these communities, and this pandemic only provides more fuel to continue redlining. Thus, relegated communities are made more fungible and socially dead by the pandemic.

Even when Black people try to protect themselves through the use of do-it-yourself face coverings from a virus that has disproportionately affected their communities,

there is still a fear that because of racial bias, they may become targets of police brutality. There seems to be no way to win; Black people run the risk of dying either way.

“I’m a [B]lack man in America,” Aaron Thomas wrote in *The Guardian*. “Entering a shop with a face mask might get me killed—For me, the fear of being mistaken for an armed robber or assailant is greater than the fear of contracting COVID-19.”

The Black community must also come to terms with our own in-group cultural mindset surrounding healthcare. The medical industrial complex has historically been an institution that has practiced bio-political oppression against Black bodies. Because of medical apartheid, there has been an understandable mistrust in the system.

There is a dangerous lack of accessibility to COVID-19 testing within Black and Brown communities. According to Dr. Uché Blackstock, whose work centers on inclusivity in medicine, marginalized people are being denied testing.

“Although the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, passed on March 18, covers all uninsured people, Black people have the highest rates of not being insured,” Blackstock said. “With COVID-19 testing, it becomes painfully obvious who in reality can access testing and who cannot.”

There is also a fear of trusting a medical field that has historically brutalized Black and Brown bodies. How can anyone tell marginalized people to trust the same medical system that has used them for experimentation for decades?

It is plain to see that the government and American society have failed people of color once again.

However, I know one thing is for sure: If marginalized communities can survive slavery, genocides and colonialism, I believe that as a community we will overcome this.

CORONA CLOSES CLUBS

CSULB club sports seniors speak out about their canceled seasons.

By Ramon Alvarado
Staff Writer

Senior club president Emilio Bautista sits at home preparing workouts online for his fellow Jiu-Jitsu Club members.

The highly physically club sport has transitioned from in-person training to Instagram posts amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“What we’ve been doing for the moment is posting stories [on Instagram] of what to do and tagging club members so they can try it, like the push challenges people have been doing,” senior mechanical engineering major Bautista said.

Combat sports like jiu-jitsu require body-to-body contact. The isolation has presented challenges for the club, but it is adapting.

“Our goal is to provide a routine where you wouldn’t need a partner, but would still be useful in combat sports,” Bautista said.

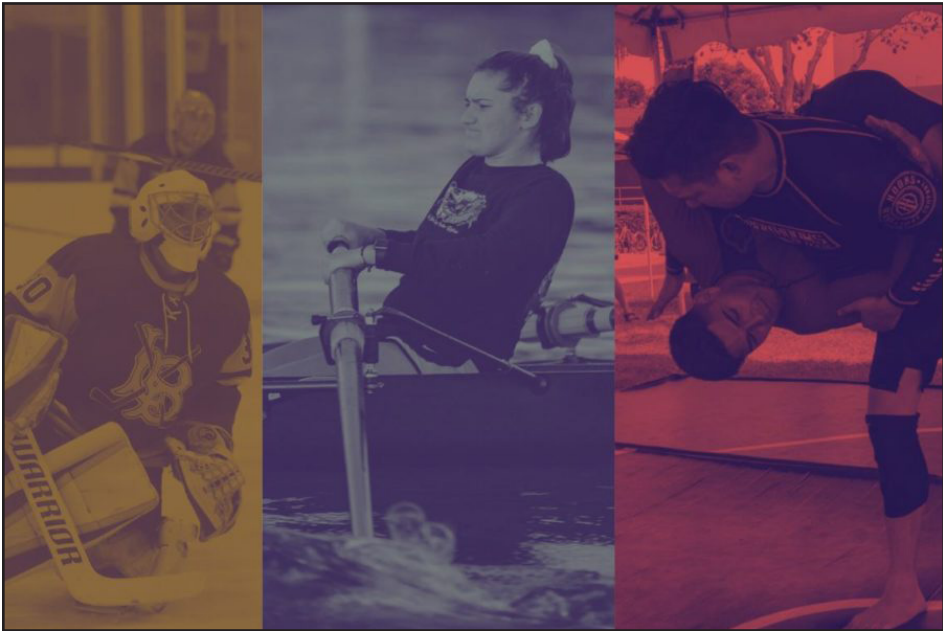
“We may post fundamental jiu-jitsu techniques that can be done alone on our Instagram page. We’ve done this before and called it Technique Tuesdays, so we might bring it back.”

Although Bautista said he will still remain active with Jiu-Jitsu Club members after his time a student is over, senior club president Sydney Carpentier of the Women’s Rowing Club may not have the same opportunity.

Carpentier is graduating this semester and the women’s rowing races for the spring have all been canceled. But that hasn’t stopped Carpentier from staying in touch with her club.

“A couple of us have been Zooming each other to do workouts together,” Carpentier said. “We also have a group chat that we use to share different ways to workout from home without weights.”

Carpentier, a psychology major, has been a member of the Women’s Rowing Club since her freshman year and was looking forward to competing in her final season.



Long Beach State sports clubs members are feeling the effects of canceled seasons due to COVID-19. Many have shifted their clubs online, but for some seniors their last competitive season ended short.

“Along with the other seniors on the team, we are very torn up about losing out on our final season that we had been working towards for years,” Carpentier said. “[But] we are staying positive for the rest of the team.”

Some club members were more fortunate due to sports schedules.

The CSULB Ice Hockey Club was able to finish its season Feb. 7, about a month before the university’s spring sporting events were canceled. Senior captain and starting goalie Adam Moroz was glad he was able to complete his final season.

“Having been through all these seasons with these guys means a lot to me, so if I

didn’t have the chance to finish it out and help them get closure on the year, and closure on some of their careers, that would’ve been upsetting for sure,” Moroz, a senior physics major, said.

The coronavirus was making headlines and causing panic in other countries during the hockey season, but it hadn’t affected the United States as it is now, though, so Moroz thought nothing of it.

“I think we sort of knew about the virus, but it was still in its early stages at that point,” Moroz said. “I don’t think anyone thought it would come to this.”



JOHN FAJARDO

Long Beach State junior tennis player Sadaf Sadeghvaziri, of Tehran, Iran, has been doing her best to remain calm during the pandemic, but a canceled season and travel bans haven’t made it easy.

DEUCES

The Beach tennis player looks to make the best of a short season and a long isolation.

By Eric Watson-Bailey
Staff Writer

Usually lively with the sounds of the Long Beach State tennis team trying to defend its Big West Championship title, the Rhodes Tennis Center is now empty and quiet.

It’s been eerily silent since the last game played March 10, a 5-2 win against the University of Memphis, giving the Beach their eighth win in 12 games this season.

For junior Sadaf Sadeghvaziri, a dominating singles match win over Tigers freshman Monique Woog in three sets (6-3, 6-7, 6-2) would end up being her last on the court this year.

A native of Tehran, Iran, Sadeghvaziri has been doing her best to remain calm during the pandemic. But being over 7,500-miles away from her family hasn’t made that easy.

“Because of the United States’ travel ban for Iran, I was not able to go home,” Sadeghvaziri said. “It’s really sad because obviously, in these kinds of situations, the families want all the members to be together.”

Despite the struggles of social

distancing and a canceled season, Sadeghvaziri said she is doing her best to cope.

“It’s on us to stay in shape and come back next year in the same place we left,” she said. “We won the Big West last year, and we were really excited and motivated to go back there this year and fight for the trophy and defend our place. There is nothing we can do at this point and hopefully, next year will be our year.”

Head coach Jenny Hilt-Costello remains optimistic about the team’s outlook despite the season’s cancellation.

“It is a bummer to lose the season, but it is totally understandable,” Hilt-Costello said via email. “There are far bigger problems involved with the COVID-19 pandemic than spring sports not finishing their season. It’s just one season and we’ll be back on the courts again next year.”

Sadeghvaziri, a third-year international business major, is 18-4 in singles and 6-2 in doubles matches this season.

Trying to find a silver lining in the situation, Sadeghvaziri is looking at the positives that can come from this situation.

“It’s like a call for all the people to wake up and enjoy their lives,” Sadeghvaziri said. “We can lose everything in a blink of an eye.”

By Mark Lindahl
Sports Editor

Standing in line waiting to receive his competition number, out of the corner of his eye, Jason Smith saw head coach Andy Sythe talking on the phone.

Unsure why, Smith continued with his pre-jump warm up. Sythe walked towards Smith with a sullen demeanor about him.

That was when the news broke.

"He told me that the Big West told us we have to go back home," Smith said.

The Long Beach State junior jumper was set to be the first Big West athlete to compete in two separate events in the NCAA national championships March 13, but received a devastating phone call minutes before starting.

After making the almost 800-mile-trip to Albuquerque, New Mexico, Smith and Sythe were told to pack their bags and head home.

"It's not easy to have to tell coach Sythe and Jason Smith that they have to come home," Athletic Director Andy Fee told the 49er on March 12, "one of the worst parts of the job is making that phone call."

Smith knew that this year's championships would be different than usual, with the implementation of no spectators already in effect, but he never thought of the possibility of it being canceled.

"When he told me the news, I was just so hurt and sad that this was actually what it had come to," Smith said. "I didn't really ask for any specifics, I was just upset."

Around the same time Fee delivered the news to Smith and Sythe, the rest of the team back in Long Beach was told as well, who flooded Smith with texts of encouragement and hope.

Smith told his teammates to "stay focused and together," because, "it's not just a me thing, this affects everyone."

Once back home and the "alternative instruction" lifestyle had set in, Smith was doing his best to stay on track, meeting with fellow teammates in small groups on their own time to do light workouts.

"Literally my morning is occupied by me finding out where I'm going to work out, then going out and doing the workout, then I come home, play [Call of Duty] Warzone," Smith said. "Then make a nice little meal and just hang out at the house. It's a slow life."

Smith kept his motivation during this slow period with his goal set for competing to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics.

And then, once again, what he aspired for most was swiftly stolen away.

"I just woke up in the morning to check my phone and I see Tokyo 2020 postponed until 2021," Smith said. "That was the first time ever that the Olympic games had done this before, and I was just like 'Wow, that's crazy.' I was upset when I heard that."

Laying in bed wondering how this could possibly happen, Smith checked his phone again, but this time to a text message from his life-long friend's father.

"I've known him since we were like 8 years old and he was like always a father figure in my life, he texted me and was like, 'Yeah, it's a bummer that the Olympics got canceled, but maybe next year is going to be a better year for you anyway, you know, things work out in mysterious ways,'" Smith said.

"So I took that to heart and I was like maybe this is for a reason. So even though I heard the news and was upset at first, it was just nice knowing I still have my supporters thinking about me and keeping me positive, motivated," he added.

Smith said his family is the biggest influence in his life and he's looking forward to being able to use this extra time given to him to spend with them back home in the Bay Area, whether the circumstances are ideal or not.

"I'm just going to get some R and R with my family, haven't seen them in a while, so it'll be nice to be home and reassess and just get the advice from them," Smith said. "I always talk to them about it, ask them for advice. Just going back home and kind of just developing another plan."

Although the big events are again a dream, he's looking forward to the little things for now.

"[Momma's cooking] absolutely," he said. "That and just their company, you know, there's always jokes when I'm home with the family and we're all together, so that's just my happy time with them, just spending time with them when we're all together, that's what I'm excited for."



JUMPING INTO THE PANDEMIC

The star-athlete was set to compete in 2 NCAA championships, but a devastating phone call dashes his dreams.



Long Beach State junior long jumper Jason Smith kneels in the pit at the NCAA national championships in Albuquerque, New Mexico, after learning that it had been canceled due to threats of coronavirus. He wrote #SOCLOSE on a piece of tape and stuck it to his jacket.