

IN DEPTH

8-9

In Depth takes a closer look at school culture. Which elements are constructive? Which are detrimental? How can students leave a positive mark on their community?



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION:
Orion Kim

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The pressure of school shouldn't obscure students' willingness to learn.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first *The Rubicon* print issue of the 2022-23 school year. This year is a special one—for me, as a senior and the Editor-in-Chief, but also for the community. It has been more than two years since we've had what could be considered a normal school year, one with in-person learning and relaxed health protocols. Of all the students in the high school, only the current seniors have experienced a relatively normal year, and even then only half. This year is a new start, or as this issue intends to highlight, a year to start over.

Last May, school culture emerged as a topic during our editorial conversation. In my years on staff, alternately writing, reading, and editing each month's editorial, I have never seen a subject produce such invested conversation. Everyone participating had something to say, whether criticism or praise, and eventually the staff decided that we simply had too much to say, and the idea for this issue was the result. Starting with focused coverage this month, and continuing coverage throughout the year, *The Rubicon* staff will report on not only who we are as a school community now, but will continue to answer the question of who we have been and who we want to become.

It's up to you to decide. How will you show up this year? What will you advocate for? It is my hope that you will engage with the same level of passion I saw in that editorial conversation last spring, because it is within your power to reclaim and reshape what a normal day at SPA looks like. We'll be here to tell your story.



MADDY FISHER
EDITOR IN CHIEF



PHOTO: SPA Smugmug

STUDENT LED COMMUNITY. With new administration, USC has led a bigger role in connecting students and admin. USC Co-Presidents Tenzin Bawa and Maryeva Gonzalez lead upper school assemblies, participate in student and faculty discussions, and are working on adapting school policies to better reflect the needs of our student body.

Upper School Council sets sights on higher student input

CLAIRE KIM
THE RUBICON

The Upper School Student Council, an elected student group of representatives across all grades, faces the task of being a liaison between students and a new administration this year. As a major part of the student government, they also have influence over other parts of school life, including school-wide events, planning activities and communicating with other student groups.

USC co-president Tenzin Bawa described the main theme for the year as having a normal year through restoring school spirit and activities.

"Given the general loosening of pandemic restrictions, we think the school community and activity will be much better," he said. "The year has just begun, so we don't

have all our proposals sorted out yet. However, when we do make proposals to change school policy, we will do more to inform everyone through the opinion board and assemblies."

USC co-president Maryeva Gonzalez added that "We are also trying to re-frame the house cup system. Because I mean, as it is now, people don't really know a lot about it...people are engaged in it, but not to the point where it would be ideal. So we're going to try and promote a lot of engagement in that this year."

Additionally, USC is planning this year's Speaker Day as a chance for students to listen to the speakers they are most interested in, promoting student involvement with the greater community.

Another one of the roles of USC is represent-

ing the student body and helping to communicate students' needs to the administration. This can include relaying feedback on recent changes, such as to the dress code and senior speeches, as well as making compromises between past practices and students' wishes. Following increased enforcement of the handbook's dress code and discussion about requiring standing ovations for all speeches, many students have raised objections that go through USC first.

In order to accurately represent student opinions, Gonzalez said, "The most important part is just talking to people and asking what they want from the school and actually listening to people when they have an issue, or if you know, they think something should be changed. Prioritizing student voices."

“STUDENTS ARE OPEN TO COMPROMISES AND BEING RESPECTFUL OF DECISIONS THAT THE SCHOOL HAS MADE AS A WHOLE.”

Violet Pitcher



Freshman Violet Pitcher described her appreciation for USC's role as a mediator. She said, "It's good to have those mediators that can take all sides because then it doesn't kind of feel like the minority group of people who have not as common of an opinion can still be heard."

As a new Dean of Students and, the third prin-

icipal in three years has led to changes in SPA's culture, more and more students have opinions about the appropriate courses of action.

"It's kind of like a world in school where students are open to considering compromises and being respectful of decisions that the school has made as a whole," Pitcher said.

On the other hand, other students believe USC should have a greater influence within the school.

Junior Rowan Hofmann said, "In the years past, I believe they have not had as much leeway to make decisions. But I hope they'll have a larger impact this year."

Ultimately, USC holds a vision for this year to make the changes that should be made.



ABOUT THE COVER

The issue includes a number of stories that examine the power students have to shape school culture. PICTURED: Juniors John Christakos, Max Cooper, and Natalie Vogenthaler, freshman Miles Atkinson, junior Audrey Senaratna, senior Lily Malloy.



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CORRECTIONS POLICY

Corrections are printed at the bottom of News p. 2. Corrections will be published in the month following the error and, if the story is also published online, will update following the online corrections policy.

(FROM THE MAY 2022 ISSUE) NEWS 1: USC co-presidents are Tenzin Bawa and Maryeva Gonzalez, USC secretary is Clea Gaitas Sur, CCC Class of 2025 representatives are Sawyer Bollinger-Danielson and Elliot Cooper.

New admin adjust to SPA culture

GEORGIA ROSS
THE RUBICON

As the school year begins, SPA students have encountered an unexpected but pleasant surprise as they arrive to school. US Principal Ken Jaffe and Dean of Students Stacy Tepp greet students at the Huss entrance every morning. Jaffe and Tepp can also be seen chatting with

students on their way to class, and finding them in the stands at sporting events. In just a short time, Jaffe and Tepp have already become familiar faces around SPA.

Three months ago, freshly retired Jaffe was enjoying life in his home outside of Seattle, when he received a phone call from Head of School, Luis Ottley. He was informed that SPA needed

a new principal and decided to come for a visit. It was meeting the kids and faculty that day, as well as SPA's search of community and visibility that drew him in to the school. From the start, Jaffe felt warmly welcomed by students.

"They are bright, capable, inquisitive, thoughtful students," he said. He's appreciative of the existing culture, and hopes to

mirror it. Jaffe describes himself as a relatable person: "My favorite thing is interacting, particularly with the students," he said, "I like be able to joke and have fun." He recognizes that people are further apart due to COVID, and hopes to build back community. Jaffe is grateful "for the way that the faculty, staff, and students have welcomed [him] to the school."

Students express concerns regarding dress code

ELIZA FARLEY
THE RUBICON

During an assembly on Sept. 1, Dean of Students Stacy Tepp reminded students to be mindful of the dress code that is outlined in the student handbook. Tepp specifically mentioned that she noticed a fair number of students who weren't following the rule that prohibits hats indoors, as well as the one that prohibits shirts that expose the navel area.

After the assembly there was concern that the dress code, which had been loosely enforced in previous years, would start being enforced more rigorously. There was enough student push back that a petition was created, calling for a change to the code that is outlined in the student handbook. The petition was signed and handed to the dean at the end of that school day.

Junior Oliver Zhu, who initiated the petition, said that he received a lot of support for his idea. "For the crop top

signatures, everyone was pretty unanimous... The only reason that people wouldn't sign it is because they wouldn't wear crop tops, so it wouldn't apply to them," Zhu said. There was less solidarity around hats, however. "For the hat signatures, [the people who wouldn't sign] would not sign because they felt that there was an explanation for why hats were banned—for security reasons," Zhu added.

Tepp, who has been in frequent conversation with students is open to potential change. "USC is putting together a committee... and we'd like to get the SILC [Student Intercultural Life Committee] group involved, to make sure we're including different cultural perspectives [in a potentially revised dress code]," she said. "What [the dress code] looks like here at SPA will come out of these committees and, hopefully, having student leaders lead that conversation along with administration."

Q&A with Dean Tepp

Q: "What initially drew you to SPA?"

A: "I was at Breck prior to this and so we have grade level deans. So there's a dean for every grade." Tepp explained, "One [reason] was that this position, dean of students, is just broader." "I love supporting students and things like clubs and councils and like culture and community"

Q: "What aspects of SPA culture do you appreciate?"

A: "I still feel like I'm observing and learning. And I haven't figured out everything. But so far, I've been so impressed with how invested all the students and the faculty are in this place. Like, emotionally, physically. It's clearly really an important place," Tepp said. Adding, "And how respectful and honest and curious and inquisitive everyone's been the questions that people ask how students like as I'm walking through the hallways, just watching how students approach different things."

Q: "Are there any aspects [of SPA culture] that you hope might develop?"

A: "As I've been observed, observing, I've had questions about things and so that's where my like question about dress code came about, just like seeing the disconnect between like what's on paper and once lived, and I also have questions about like, you know, hanging up signs, if we're really trying to promote a culture of belonging and trust and respect our do our policies like match that? And so I've been asking our USC presidents lots of questions. I feel like I've I'm still in the process, but there's like conversations. I kind of want to start just to get a better picture of like, what's the purpose of this? How is it lived out? How do you experience it as a student?" Tepp said, "I want to make sure that the things that we have written down are actually supportive of what we say our mission and what we want to do for our community like those are aligned," adding, "I'm hoping just to like start some of those conversations."



PHOTO: SPA Smugmug

ENGAGEMENT. Tepp, along with other administration members, has shown curiosity and interest in student culture.



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IBID PHOTOS: Sophia Bietz

STUDENT LIFE. With 47 student clubs and affinity groups this year, students work hard to promote their clubs.

Student club life fundamental to SPA culture

JOHANNA PIERACH
THE RUBICON

On Sept. 12, students soaked up the last of the warm weather at the annual Student Organization Fair, which took place in the Lilly Courtyard. The fair is a yearly event where student leaders promote their respective groups to drum up interest for the school year ahead. In the courtyard, students chatted with leaders while they browsed the various booths, enticed by the colorful posters and the candy on the tables. "We had music going and there was a bubble machine, which was super cool," Math Team leader Bridget Keel said.

For the first time, the Student Organization Fair did not focus exclusively on freshmen, who must attend three student organization meetings. Instead, freshmen and juniors participated in the fair from 9:30-10 a.m., while sophomores and seniors went from

9:45-10:15 a.m.

This year marks the return of many beloved student organizations, with a few new additions bringing the total to 47 groups—close to one-fifth of the Upper School student body lead at least one of these organizations. Leaders spent time planning for the fair together during X-Period on Sept. 6 and 8. "The community spirit in the room was really nice," Keel said of the fair preparation.

Such an extensive selection ensures a vast range of focuses, from environmental protection to computer science and community service. One new student organization this year is the pickle ball club, with Cooper Bollinger-Danielson, Anna Nowakowski, Ali Browne and Leni Nowakowski as the student leaders. The faculty advisor is Ben Bollinger-Danielson. Pickleball club strives to be a space where all members can have a fun and relaxing

time playing pickle ball, regardless of skill level.

School organizations can be a source of community for students, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, this crucial piece of student life took a significant hit. Many stayed isolated in their homes and classes went virtual. Senior Becca Richman, a leader of the Jewish affinity group, Mishpacha, recalled what felt like a shift in the excitement around student organizations.

"I remember my freshman year pre-COVID, everyone I knew was in a club and it was the cool thing to do," Richman said. "Now it feels like very few people are involved and it's not as popular of a thing to be involved in, which is dumb," she added. The cause for this change in attitude, Richman suspects, had a lot to do with the strange conditions that accompanied distance learning. "I think because we couldn't gather around food anymore,

“IT FEELS LIKE VERY FEW PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED AND IT'S NOT AS POPULAR OF A THING TO BE INVOLVED IN, WHICH IS DUMB.”

Becca Richman



a major aspect of socialization was gone and people started choosing to do homework or take a much-needed mental health break instead of attending clubs," Richman said.

With the days of distance learning and Plexiglas moving farther into the past, the pre-COVID club experience is returning. This school year, students can take full advantage of all the organizations the Upper School offers. And if the fair was any indication, there are many options.

OUR MISSION

We strive to capture the spirit of the community through its stories while inspiring deeper conversations. Above all, we stand for integrity in our pursuit to inform and engage our readers.

THE RUBICON

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EDITORIAL CARTOON: Annika Kim

ACTIVE AUDIENCE. An increased administrative presence in the community has a clear impact on fostering positive relationships with the student body. While a greater involvement may feel unfamiliar, students should put in the same amount of effort to appreciate and acknowledge the administration's attention to student voices and decisions.

100% of the staff agree

New administration starts the year leading with enthusiasm. We need to match their energy.

EDITORIAL THE RUBICON STAFF

As SPA welcomes a new team of administration, a new culture is established that values student voice more than ever before. While it is easy to feel unsettled with new voices and new ways of thinking about how our SPA culture should be defined, it is crucial to appreciate the excitement they have been displaying.

As students poured onto campus for the first few weeks of school, Dean of Students Stacy Tepp and Interim Principal Ken Jaffe made sure to be outside the Huss entrance welcoming the community back. Principal Jaffe has also made a presence at many sports games, showing interest and participation in our athletic community. In an assembly, the new Head of School Luis Ottley requested from students that they give him a chance to shadow a few individuals for the day, in hopes of learning more about the stories behind our community. Tepp and Jaffe have also been working more closely with the senior class to gain more insight into student life and the overall wishes of the community.

These are just a few examples of how eager our new administration has been to learn about their students and how SPA functions. Students have felt a closer connection to their administration team this year, and while it may be unexpected, their investment in student life should not be dismissed.

Adjusting to new leadership styles is important, and students are encouraged to be open to getting to know the new members and inviting them to continue to feel included in the community.

Tepp and Jaffe have been exceptional in making their ideas for the community clear, while also encouraging feedback and comments directly from the students about the things they feel strongly about.

For example, Tepp, having previous experience with a senior speech tradition at Breck, offered her thoughts in a senior class meeting, regarding shaping how we think about standing ovations. SPA students were quick to share their discomfort about the change; however, Tepp encouraged students to spend time thinking and providing feedback in a form later that day.

Tepp and Jaffe have also emphasized a more student-led community by working with USC to shape how things like senior speeches and all-school assemblies run. This approach is different for SPA students, but again, should not be dismissed. Students should reciprocate the effort that the admin is expressing, in whatever way feels best. That could mean inviting them to sports games, participating in conversations over school policies, or simply knocking on their doors to say hello.

STUDENTS SHOULD RECIPROCATATE THE EFFORT THAT THE ADMIN IS EXPRESSING, IN WHATEVER WAY FEELS BEST.

Mutual engagement is essential for student voice

ORION KIM

CHIEF VISUAL EDITOR

While the administration is the face of decision making at SPA, much of the school's culture is shaped by student-led groups. If the school is truly living the mission, student leadership should be central to shaping school policy, activities, and culture.

The school has six elected and selected student organizations, each holding their own importance. According to the Texas Association of School Councils, student led committees can strengthen culture, relationships and leadership. These values are essential to the foundation of school.

The largest council at SPA in terms of size is the Upper School Council. According to their motto, they serve as the "liaison between students and administrators." This organization receives the harshest criticism as they are responsible for representing student voice.

Students often complain that USC hardly has an impact on their non-academic life. A lot of the work that they do, such as the annual blood drive or the house cup competition, goes unnoticed.

According to a journal article published by the Werklund School of Education, the most successful student councils thrive because of both their own efforts and through the response of the community. A more effective approach should involve mutual engagement. That means that while the council should continue to introduce new activities policies, students need to be more actively involved.

After years of online and hybrid school, speculation around the purpose of elected groups



RUBICON PHOTO: Maddy Fisher

FAIR GAME. Student Activities Committee leaders Mimi Huelster and Autumn Spaulding consult with SAC advisor Mallory Schmidt to make an announcement at the ping-pong tournament Sep. 19. SAC planned a variety of activities for each day of homecoming week. "Organizing ping pong was super fun," Huelster said. "It was a pain to only have one table but it was still really awesome." SAC did a great job of setting a tone of keeping tradition while adding new opportunities for student participation.

has arisen. USC should advocate more for their ambitions and their achievements. They should post more on opinion boards, make more frequent announcements, and reach out to students on a daily basis.

The status quo around USC doesn't have to feel segregated from the student body.

While USC focuses on policies and culture, the Committee for Community Conduct, or C3, enforces the rules. They "meet at the discretion of the Dean of Students and the Principal to hear cases ranging from repeated minor offenses to breaches of major school guidelines and to make recommendations for consequences."

Naturally, C3 gets a bad rep from the student body, even though the work they do is important for the functioning of the school.

According to an article by PowerDMS, one of the most effective ways to enforce policies is to stop breaches at the root. While C3 focuses on hearing cases, they should focus more on informing and reminding students of the rules.

While stopping mistakes before they happen is essential, slip-ups will occur occasionally. According to psychologist Janet Metcalfe, "students learn the most from mistakes that are corrected."

When offenses to the school's policy happen, C3 should make it clear that these actions aren't acceptable by sharing more about expectations and reinforcing good conduct norms in the broader community when infractions arise. This will encourage students to take a more honest, safe approach in the future.

“ MORE STUDENT PARTICIPATION WOULD HELP GENERATE IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS.”



Orion Kim

In terms of equality, there is always more work that can be done to create more equitable community. The Student Intercultural Life Council (SILC) is the bridge between administration and the student body. The council hopes to have students play a larger role in diversity, equity and inclusion based decision making.

Currently, the administration and faculty does the majority of DEI work. Students make up the largest population at the school, but they aren't given a large enough platform to voice their concerns.

According to the University of California, Davis, "interactions [between students] can increase comfort with each other."

Students should be the ones leading discussions surrounding inclusion, and should push to make more announcements or host culture related assemblies and events.

The connections between the administration, the student body and elected councils are in limbo. The current elected groups at school don't do enough to reach out to their intended audience; hence, they are unable to represent their community's demands.

However, students should also actively engage with the organizations that represent them. Students should spend less time hoping for change and invest more energy into advocating for themselves.

Mutual communication is crucial for taking larger steps forward.



HOW DOES STUDENT GOVERNMENT IMPACT YOUR LIFE?

“ I don't think I have ever noticed the student government do anything that has impacted me. - Declan Monahan

“ C3 [can] create a welcoming community for both new and experienced students. - Andy Allen

“ It was nice that I could tell my peers suggestions that I had and they could bring it up. - June Dalton

PUBLICATIONS POLICIES

PUBLICATION INFO The Rubicon is published eight times a year. We distribute 750 copies of each issue to the Upper School which are available for free.

ADVERTISING The Rubicon does not accept advertisements.

ANONYMOUS SOURCES Although it is always preferable to use names when reporting, there are times when it is necessary to protect those we report

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BY LINES credit the individual who conducted interviews, drafted, revised and fact-checked an assigned story. Shared bylines are given to joint effort assignments, with reporters listed alphabetically by last name. Stories that include supplemental materials include a credit at the bottom that states

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EDITORIALS articulate the collective opinion of The Rubicon staff, while mini-editorials, opinions pieces, arts reviews, and columns belong to the author.

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Make the shift from pressure to exploration

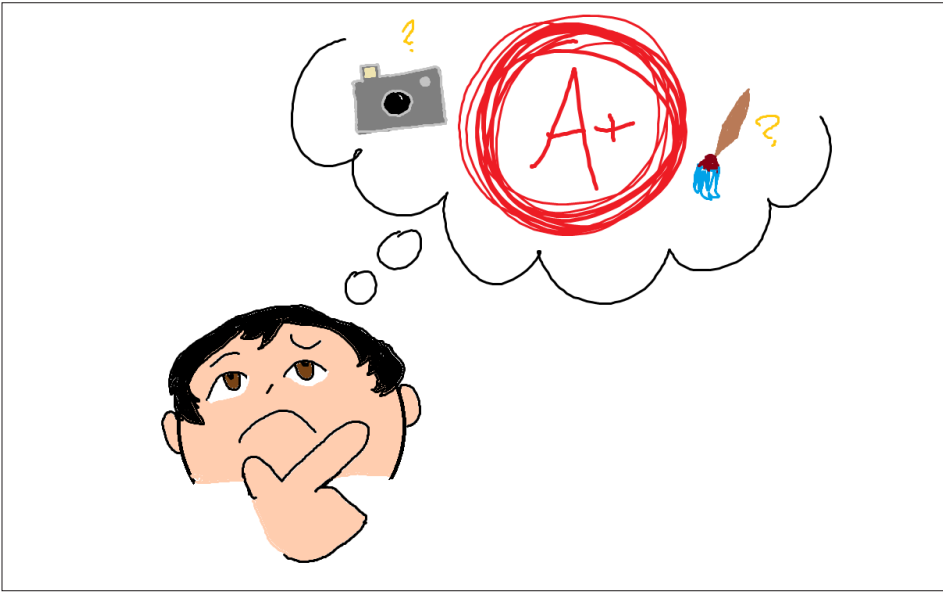


ILLUSTRATION: Eliza Farley

SCHOOL OF LIFE. Rather than choosing classes to perfect a college resume, it would be more beneficial for students to put more thought into exploring their passions and interests. There needs to be a change in how academic pressure is enforced by the community.

ELIZA FARLEY
THE RUBICON

The last thing on any underclassman's mind should be college. Yet more often than not, worries about ninth- or tenth-grade papers seem to rapidly snowball into worries about higher education— "will a bad

grade here define me forever? Can I ever recover my GPA?" Similar concerns can lead other students to take difficult electives not because they enjoy the subject matter but because it looks good on a college application. Even though SPA's curriculum is college-focused, the sheer amount

of anxiety around "getting into a good school" isn't healthy for anyone. There needs to be a shift in how students perceive their high school experience: not just as a time of academic preparation but also as a time of academic exploration.

Most students are stressed about perform-

ing well in school. A 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center reported that 61% of teens aged 13-17 feel "a lot of pressure" to get good grades, which was more than double the percentage of respondents who felt pressure to look good or fit in. Excessive academic pressure can dissuade students from trying new things that could impact their grades, like a high-commitment extracurricular or a class that's completely out of their comfort zone. Missing these opportunities to discover what they like before college is a major loss: later on, it becomes much more difficult to try new things without sacrificing something

else.

Even so, is the pressure worth it? Signs point to a resounding no. Students at "high-achieving schools," which are schools that produce top-scoring students who end up at highly-ranked colleges, were classified as an "at-risk" category for chronic stress which can affect health in a 2019 study. SPA definitely falls under the study's definition of a high-achieving school, and even advertises itself as an institution which will "thoroughly prepare students to excel and lead at the most demanding colleges and universities." Furthermore, pressure isn't indicative of good grades. Students who feel like their

characters are valued just as highly as their academic performance do just as well as those who do not—and fare better emotionally.

So how can students explore different options? For starters, they could try taking a class that's not just a check box for a college application. They could try a photography elective—not because they'll be film majors, but because they want to learn how to compose a shot. They could re-frame their view of the classes they already take as "opportunities" instead of "stepping stones." High school isn't a linear path to a four-year university; it's a unique environment for students to try as many things as they can. Students shouldn't let the possible future change the way they take hold of the tangible present.

“ THE SHEER AMOUNT OF ANXIETY AROUND “GETTING INTO A GOOD SCHOOL” ISN'T HEALTHY FOR ANYONE.



Eliza Farley

Excess number of clubs reduces the overall contributions from each

ANNIE BAI
THE RUBICON

Are clubs too divided? SPA has around 400 students and 47 selected student organizations, which is an excessive amount. When applying to create a new club, there must be a club leader or leaders, a faculty advisor and at least five students who have shown interest and are committed to attending said club. In the past, clubs have had to make some kind of contribution to the SPA community via hosting events, fundraisers and other events. But the problem the community faces is the overwhelming

to be active club members; that's over 50% of the student body that is actively meeting with their clubs. While some may participate in multiple clubs at once, the five-student requirement is just the minimum. Many clubs have only two to three students that meet during their designated time, while others have 20.

That brings up the debate of whether or not certain clubs are necessary. The answer depends on the student organization. Just because a club has very few members doesn't mean that it isn't needed. Some represent smaller genres or uncommon interests, making it unfair to deem those as unnecessary. In the cases where four or fewer students actively attend club meetings, dedication is all they need.

On the other hand, there are some overlapping clubs that are categorized in the same genre yet are split into multiple organizations with different student leaders and names. In that case, it would be much more practical and efficient to have just one club that represents the overarching genre. The current issue at SPA is that the students are aware of the similar clubs yet still con-



ILLUSTRATION: Claire Kim

PICK AND CHOOSE. The sheer amount of student-led organizations can be overwhelming for students, and it can be difficult to ensure that each organization is actively participating in the community. While clubs with fewer members because of a smaller area of interest should be kept in mind, student organizations should maintain some kind of contribution to the school in order to be considered active.

“ IT WOULD BE MUCH MORE PRACTICAL [...] TO HAVE JUST ONE CLUB THAT REPRESENTS THE OVERARCHING GENRE.

Annie Bai



number of clubs for SPA's small student body.

If every club needs at least five regular student attendees, that would mean 235 students need

to form new ones that only have a slight difference compared to the existing ones.

A reason for this is because of the unhealthy academic competition created by fellow peers. Many focus on the leadership aspect in order to perfect their college essays or resumes and founding a club certainly displays that quality. But there comes a point where it becomes meaningless if clubs are created solely for the purpose of impressing college admis-

sion officers. According to College Reality Check, "Starting a club looks good for college. Such high school endeavor demonstrates initiative, leadership and drive, all of which are traits that college admissions officers look for in applicants."

But colleges will not only acknowledge the act of starting a club, but they will also consider the purpose of the club. "Starting a club, first and foremost, should be all about wanting to make

a difference in your high school and its students."

When debating about the necessity of certain clubs, it ultimately comes down to the intention of founding said club. Is it to bring awareness to a niche hobby or to list another leadership title?

CLUBS BY THE NUMBERS

29

clubs at SPA

6

club sports

14

affinity groups and special interest groups

1 in 5

students involved in clubs

How did SPA choose its MISSION STATEMENT?

HAZEL WALTENBAUGH
THE RUBICON

Despite walking past SPA's mission statement everyday, few students give those 14 words any thought. But this mission statement sits at the center of SPA's aspirations for enriching the educational experiences of its students, the effects of which will stay with them long after they graduate.

In 2011, The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) conducted a report on SPA, which included a proposal for the school to redefine its mission statement.

"[ISACS] said, you know, take another look at your mission statement; which seems both plain, uninspiring, and also more descriptive of what you do than inspirational of what you'd like to do or where you want to be. So that gave us the nudge to really go back and give it some more thought," Board of Trustees President Tim O'Brien said.

In 2012, the Head of School and the Board of Trustees began drafting their ideas carefully and intentionally about each aspect they were trying to capture.

"We had easels up across the room, and at various times people would go and just write words or concepts. We would vote on what people thought was best representing SPA," O'Brien said.

After substantial review and a year's worth of brainstorming and discussion, SPA unveiled its current mission statement in 2013.

While everyone has a different interpretation of the mission statement in terms of how it motivates them, the overall goal was to define SPA as an institution while stating its intention of creating an environment that challenges and inspires students.

"In the first half, 'Shap-

ing the minds and the hearts' because, although we are primarily an academic institution, people bring their whole selves to the school, and if you only deal with people's minds, then you are neglecting a huge part of who they are," O'Brien said.

The second half of the mission statement is "... of the people who will change the world." O'Brien explained that each generation is bound to change the world, whether positively or negatively. The statement is trying to capture the idea that students are responsible for their futures.

At the first assembly of the year, the new Head of School, Luis Ottley,

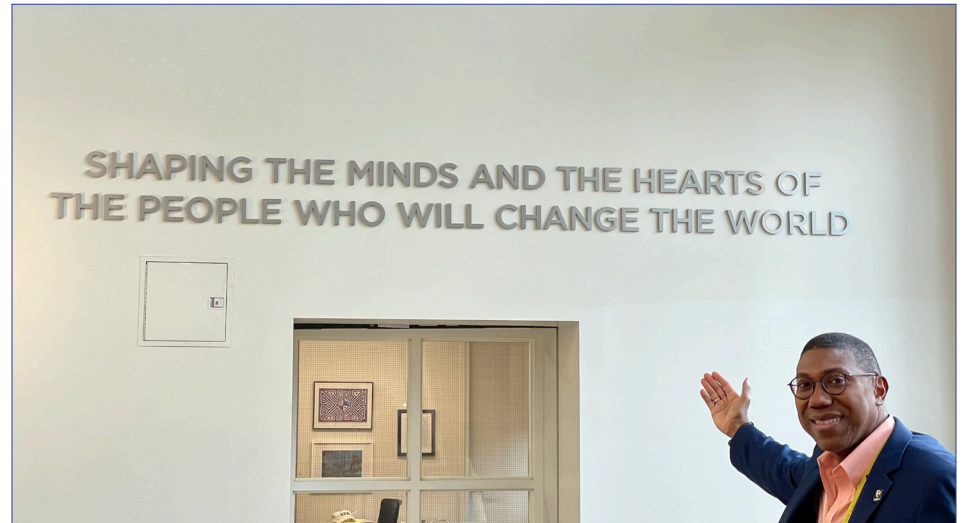
“WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE MISSION STATEMENT THAT IS ABOVE MY WINDOW, THAT'S A HUGE STATEMENT TO MAKE.”



Head of School Luis Ottley

ing the minds and the hearts,' we chose 'shaping' because the school can have a strong influence but doesn't make the final decision on what the life or personality of the

gave an opening speech in which he used the statement to explain to students why he chose to join their community. Ottley's focus on the mission statement was a crit-



RUBICON PHOTO: Maddy Fisher

WRITING ON THE WALL. Every day, dozens of students walk past the mission statement on the wall outside Head of School Luis Ottley's office. Ottley spoke about the significance of the statement at assembly on the first day of school. Ottley said, "...I thought it might be sort of good for people to know why I'm here."

ical reminder to students, faculty, and administration of what life at SPA should be about.

"I chose to talk about [the mission statement] on the first day because I thought it might be sort of good for people to know why I'm here," Ottley said. "What drew me into the Twin Cities ... When you look at the mission statement that is above my window, that's a huge statement to make," he added.

Ottley explained that while the world isn't always inclusive or unified, students at SPA should strive to erase those divisions by learning the skill

sets needed to "change the world."

Ottley said that for SPA students to change the world, they must first understand how it functions, which is a crucial part of the learning students do every day. Another essential piece is existing in an environment that allows and encourages each individual to speak their mind, bringing many unique perspectives to the table.

"You have got to be a critical thinker," Ottley said. "You have to be willing to solve problems, see injustice, and not be comfortable with that... As a student, to be courageous

enough to speak your mind and say, 'That's not how we're going to do it. That's not who I am.' [SPA] is a great place to try it because you're not a large high school; you have an opportunity to be in spaces and places with people with whom you don't always share the same ideas," he added.

The overall goal of the mission statement is to define SPA as a community and to proclaim the school's intention of helping its students pave the way to a future of change.

THE OLD MISSION STATEMENT

Written in the mid-1990s, it read "In pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning, St. Paul Academy and Summit School educates a diverse and motivated group of young people for leadership and service, inspires in them an enduring love of learning, and helps them lead productive, ethical and joyful lives."

THE CURRENT MISSION STATEMENT

Debuted in 2013, it reads "Shaping the minds and the hearts of the people who will change the world."

SPA Q&A

WHAT DOES THE MISSION STATEMENT MEAN TO YOU?



TRYING TO BE A GOOD PERSON AND TRYING YOUR BEST TO HELP PEOPLE
Nadia Degnan, junior



THE TEACHERS AND FACULTY AT OUR SCHOOL ARE DOING THEIR ROLE IN SHAPING HOW TO FUTURE WORLD WILL LOOK LIKE, WITH THE STUDENTS AS LEADERS

Johnna Melk-Johnson, senior



BEING CAPABLE OF CONTRIBUTING TO THINGS THAT WILL COLLECTIVELY MAKE US THE PEOPLE WHO INITIATE CHANGE IN THIS WORLD

Cooper Olson, junior



WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON SPA CULTURE?

“ Especially relating to like teacher-student relationships, the school culture here at SPA is very, very tight knit. It's because you can go to you teachers for help, you can talk to them, you can ask them for extra stuff if you need it, you can ask them for extra time. SPA is really unlike other schools in the sense that the students and the teachers are closer.”
- Theo Su



“ I believe that it takes a lot of courage to break from your friend group to talk to new people, however, I have noticed that talking to new people only extends my friend group. I think that SPA is blessed in this aspect in which we all have the possibility to get to know most of the students in our grade level and I believe that if we all tried to greet more people, then our community will improve.”
- Yash Kshirsagar



“ SPA culture can be defined as “[the] community and how we interact with each other and how we shape the culture and minds and hearts of people in our grade and grades above and below us.”
- Deling Chen



“ The administration can be very sensitive about minor issues. They address things pretty well, actually, except sometimes it's a little too much.”
- Maik Nguyen



FEELING THE PRESSURE. Senior Julia Colbert said, “I think competitiveness is built into SPA culture... and sometimes it... just creates more unnecessary stress.”



WHAT MAKES OR BREAKS

What is school culture

ANNIE ZHANG
CLAIRE KIM
THE RUBICON

“ I REALLY LIKE HOW MOST PEOPLE ARE CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE LEARNING ABOUT AND WANT TO KNOW MORE. I ALSO REALLY LIKE HOW OPEN THE COMMUNITY IS.”

Hannah Brass



While many students may come into high school with images in their mind portraying it as a place of fun and joy 24/7, this is not the case. In reality, an average day of high school is quite similar to a work day. Attending classes, receiving homework, procrastinating on said homework at 11 p.m., all while balancing out their lives at home. Many still regard high school as the prime time of life and an experience they will never be able to relive again. What makes high school, in particular, so great? The answer is being in an environment they can thrive and have a good time in, which is all thanks to school culture.

Leah Shafer of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, states that “Culture is core beliefs and behaviors. [...] A good culture arises from messages that promote traits like collaboration, honesty and hard work.” But according to freshman Clare Ryan-Bradley, SPA culture can be defined as “[...] having a sense of belonging and connections with the students around you.” School culture can be defined in many ways and each and every school has its own values that shine through in its unique environments. It serves as a deal breaker and can either elevate school spirit or drive many away to a different school. Strong school culture may benefit and challenge students to be the best version of themselves as well as raise school spirit and encourage participation in school events. On the other hand, a hurtful, toxic school culture may bring isolation among students and cause difficulty for students to grow and develop.

At SPA, many students believe positive aspects of school culture include a competitive environment where students push each other to work hard and do their best work. SPA only grants admission to a few students every year; this small number of students creates a close community and allows students to form tight bonds and connections with each other.

“[There's a] kind of friendly pressure that goes amongst students. I see other people really excelling in school and outside of school. And that really pushes me to want to make myself better and to do better. I think this is a double-edged sword because it can be really motivational and inspiring, but it can also put a lot of pressure on an individual,” sophomore Deling Chen said.

In addition to friendly competition, sophomore Adele Gjerde, who transferred to SPA this year, mainly appreciated a learning environment where teachers actively paid attention to students. “I think [teachers] actually know the kids and they take time to know their names and their pronouns versus the other school I went to. They knew my name, but did they know anything about me? No, they didn't know my learning style or anything like that, whereas these teachers have surveys and they're like, is there anything else you want me to know?” she said.

Furthermore, the encouragement of exploration through clubs, affinity groups, student organizations and other extracurriculars actively supports the pur-

SCHOOL CULTURE?

ure? Why does it matter?



ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

Sophomore Adele Gjerde appreciates the level of engagement and care that teachers show students in all her classes, citing this as a contributor to SPA's positive learning environment: "Teachers ask us 'is there anything you want me to know?'"



suit of students' passions and interests. Senior Hannah Brass said, "I really like how most people are curious about what they're learning about and want to know more. I also really like how open the community is, even if it still needs work to become a more inclusive space."

However, positive student engagement doesn't mean there aren't issues within the community. Because SPA is a tight-knit community, students are more aware of each other's personal goals and achievements, which in turn, drives each other to work harder. However, this may sometimes lead to burnout and poor mental health.

"I think competitiveness is very built into SPA culture. I think there can be some positives in motivating others to work harder, but overall it is very toxic. I think it can be discouraging and just creates more unnecessary stress in an already stressful environment," senior Julia Colbert said.

Additionally, the lack of attention to inappropriate behavior within the community can create cycles where harmed students are unable to achieve a proper resolution. "The thing that I don't like about SPA's culture is just how different incidents go unnoticed and don't really get addressed," Brass said. "Sometimes students will make harmful jokes or comments, but

when they are reported, not much happens, or what goes on is very hush-hush and the behavior isn't corrected."

Brass also described the fear that students may have of being judged for calling out harmful behavior. "If we changed, I think the people that make those kinds of comments would realize that they're not okay and the behavior would be less normalized, so the culture might become more accepting," she said.

Overall, many students feel that SPA's culture, including school traditions, academics, extracurriculars and student relationships, is heavily focused on pushing its members to strive to achieve great things. However, that also comes with downsides that require them to adapt and learn to push through any additional stress that may be added to their daily lives. To summarize, sophomore Milan Mishra said, "I would say there's aspects to culture that could be bad, but I don't think that school culture, like inherently, is a negative topic."

HOW TO SHAPE SPA CULTURE

GRACE MEDRANO
THE RUBICON

Changes in school culture can start with the students. Student councils can have the largest effect, as they hold positions where they can make changes in the way the school hosts functions, deals with punishment and how student life works. But everyone can make a difference in day-to-day life at SPA.

“ I'D WANT OUR SCHOOL TO BE MORE UNIFIED...GETTING TO KNOW PEOPLE YOU DON'T USUALLY TALK TO, EITHER IN CLASSES OR AT SCHOOL FUNCTIONS.



Naysa Kalugdan

Senior Naysa Kalugdan said there's one thing she'd really like to see change: "I'd want our school to be more unified... getting to know people you don't usually talk to, either in classes or at school functions."

On a similar note, senior Ali Browne expressed a desire to see students mingling throughout the day and utilizing x-period and tutorial to interact with other students, in and out of their own grade level. Browne believes students should be "Taking all the moments that we have to re-engage with each other and put yourself outside of your comfort zone."

However, re-establishing a sense of community is not the only thing that has room for improvement, according to sophomore Raven Glaser. They explained that despite the effort to integrate pronoun sharing, they still feel isolated from the community. "After the first go-around of pronouns, a lot of cis kids don't share their pronouns because they know people will assume... but then it makes me feel like I'm forcing my pronouns on people," they said. Glaser also stated that they are commonly misgendered because, in actuality, pronoun go-arounds don't happen often enough. They expressed a desire for fellow students to speak up when they notice students being misgendered and make an effort to confirm pronouns instead of assuming.

Although school culture constantly changes with administration and school leaders, students have expressed ways that members of SPA's community can take small steps in order to have a positive effect on the school's culture. Establishing what needs to change and what needs to stay the same is the first step in beginning to change school culture for the better.

Spartan spirit sprouts

MADDY FISHER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Every year, a member of the senior class is selected by the Student Activities Council to be the face of SPA's mascot and embody school spirit.

This year's Spartans are seniors Tommy Verhey and Leo Sampsell-Jones, though Sampsell-Jones will take on more of a supporting role.

The Spartan selection process commenced last spring. In May, interested students filled out an application, answering questions ranging from why they want to be the Spartan to whether they can be trusted with a light-up sword. "I think really the biggest factor is how excited they are about [being the Spartan]. How passionate are they about it? Are they going to get other people pumped up?" Mallory Schmidt, US Science teacher and SAC faculty advisor said. "We want someone that will go all out."

Though the mascot itself hasn't changed, the role of the Spartan will be different from past years. Previously, the Spartan's appearances were mostly relegated to Homecoming and the annual Pep Fest. SAC, with the assistance of Verhey and Sampsell-Jones, plan to increase the Spartan's involvement in the community. "The goal for the Spartan this year is to elaborate and expand on its role from the past," Verhey said. "SAC's goal is to incorporate the Spartan at more random assemblies and sporting events that either are not going on during homecoming week (hockey, basketball, baseball, etc), or that are commonly unrepresented by fans and spirit like tennis, cross country, track, ultimate frisbee, etc." Both Verhey and Sampsell-Jones met with Schmidt following their selection to discuss and clarify their role in the community.

For Verhey, the position comes with a lot of responsibility. "Being the Spartan is a super



FAB FLEXING.
Senior Spartan, Tommy Verhey flexes to show off his Spartan pride.

RUBICON PHOTO:
Catherine Hooley



RUBICONLINE PHOTO: Kathryn Campbell

SPARTAN SPIRIT. Tommy Verhey leads the Spartan Beat during the homecoming kickoff assembly. "Clap your hands and stomp your feet, let's all do the Spartan Beat!" he said.

“ THERE'S THESE MOMENTS LIKE WHEN THE ENTIRE SCHOOL IS CHEERING AND RALLYING AROUND EACH OTHER AND LIFTING EACH OTHER UP.



Leo Sampsell-Jones

important role for the school and I am honored to be chosen," he said. "The mascot helps lead our school in athletics and overall spirit and is an embodiment of our culture as an institution."

Verhey also found inspiration in the example of past Spartans. "I also wanted to be the Spartan because my brother, Bobby Verhey, was also the Spartan during his senior year," he said. "I decided it would be funny and kind of cool to follow that path."

For Sampsell-Jones, the appeal of the Spartan was tied to school unity. "There's these moments like when the entire school is cheering and rallying around each other and lifting each other up. I wanted to be as present in those moments as I could be," he said.

Sampsell-Jones believes the school spirit represent-

ed by the Spartan can be something to look up to. "[The Spartan] shows the school, the underclassmen especially, that you are allowed to be involved in the community and you're allowed to be loud and take up space. It shows that you can be exuberant without fear of being ridiculed," he said. "It was definitely cool for me to see as a freshman."

Both Verhey and Sampsell-Jones are looking forward to their time as the Spartan. "It's gonna be a party," Sampsell-Jones said. Verhey ended his interview with a cheerful "go Spartans."

SPA through the GENERATIONS

ORION KIM
CHIEF VISUAL EDITOR

For over 50 years, Saint Paul Academy and Summit School has been shaping student's lives from an academic and social standpoint for generations. Naturally, some students have family members that have undergone both similar and different aspects of school life.

Senior Heidi Deuel has had multiple family members receive a diploma from the school, including her father in 1984, her aunt in 1976, and her uncle in 1971. Four decades have passed between Deuel and her father's attendance, which has inevitably led to many notable shifts in the school's culture.

Major differences have transpired from an athletic standpoint. The value the community built around sports has decreased significantly. "[My dad] said that... everyone went to every different game and they were a huge deal," Deuel said. "If you played on a sports team, and were on varsity it was a big deal as well."

In terms of academics, the school used to distribute less homework. "[My dad] had way less homework than I did but they had a lot more tests and exams," Deuel said.

School policies have also seen notable change. In some ways, aspects of school life have become less restrictive. "[My dad's class] had uniforms and they could never do dress

ups for sports games and homecoming week," she said. Many more students received harsher punishments; "He knew a lot of people got expelled. So I thought that was interesting because I've only known like one person to get expelled."

On the other hand, students today have much less freedom when they're not in class. "The campus was way more open. No one would ever be on campus for lunch. [...] People would also do a lot of pranks and stuff and they wouldn't really get in trouble for it," Deuel said.

A staple of school culture—homecoming—has changed significantly. Aside from the introduction of dress up week, many other homecom-

ing traditions have been introduced. In the eighties, the school didn't host a ping pong tournament or dodgeball; however, Deuel's father's class was the first year to do a lip sync battle.

While the school has undergone many changes over the course of a generation, some things haven't changed. "The small class size at SPA has really given students a chance to get to know their teachers and their peers and get a lot of extra help," Deuel said. According to Deuel and her relatives, the sense of community within such a small school has remained persistent.



SUBMITTED PHOTO: Heidi Deuel

DOUBLE DEUEL. On the left, Dan Deuel (1984) poses in his letterman jacket for his senior photo while his daughter, Heidi (2023), poses for hers.

Harkness tables: necessary, or no big deal?

CATHERINE HOOLEY
THE RUBICON

Harkness tables have been a selling point in the past for SPA, representing the discussion-heavy curriculum of classes such as English and history. This specific brand of oval, wooden tables was in the majority of humanities classrooms at SPA and was representative of encouraging discourse. The usage of the tables was brought to a halt when COVID-19 interrupted school. When students returned to school from being online, the oval tables had been replaced with individual desks lined up and spaced six feet away from each other.

The Harkness method was such a staple in the humanities classes that the change was shocking to not only students but also faculty. It was hard to say whether the absence of the tables would cause a difference in the learning style of SPA. Now that most other safety precau-

tions like masks, sanitary wipes and plexiglass have been removed, community members have had time to reflect on the absence of the infamous

“SINCE WE’VE BEEN BACK IN THE CLASSROOM... THE LEVEL OF DISCUSSION HASN’T CHANGED.”

Simon Assefa



Harkness tables.

History teachers have arguably felt the loss of these lecture tables the most. “I have noticed a difference since SPA lost the Harkness tables. I’m not sure if it is because of the tables or because of COVID, but it is harder to get kids to talk and participate,” history teacher Mollie Ward said.

The curriculum of history classes at SPA is dependent on student participation, so the decrease in participation has been hard for teachers to work around.

It is hard to isolate the cause of less participation considering the jump from online school to in-person learning, but students seem to have their own opinions. “I haven’t noticed a difference in learning. It was definitely a lot harder to be discussion-based when we were online, but ever since we’ve been back in the classroom, it feels like the level of discussion hasn’t changed,” senior Simon Assefa said. As a senior, Assefa spent half a semester with the Harkness tables pre-pandemic. The comparison to discussion with the tables versus with the individual desks does not seem to have impacted his experience.

All other grades besides the seniors, however, were never able to



PHOTO: SPA SmugMug

TABLE TALK. Students from the class of 2019 sit around a Harkness table during their World History II class. Nowadays, history classes arrange single desks in a circle.

experience class with the tables. “I don’t mind the desks; they are usually assembled in an oval shape anyways. As someone who never experienced the Harkness tables, I don’t see how they’d be that different. I still think that SPA is accomplishing its learning style without the Harkness tables,” junior Natalie Vogenthaler said.

Students seem to be-

lieve that even without the specialty tables, SPA is still heavily discussion-based and is still accomplishing what it has promoted. That being said, faculty members are wondering why the tables have yet to return. “There has been discussion among the history department about wanting them back and wondering when they will return,” Ward said.

It is unsure when or if the Harkness tables will make a return, but even in their absence, discussion-based learning persists and students don’t seem to be harmed by their departure.

Shifting technology in education shapes learning experience

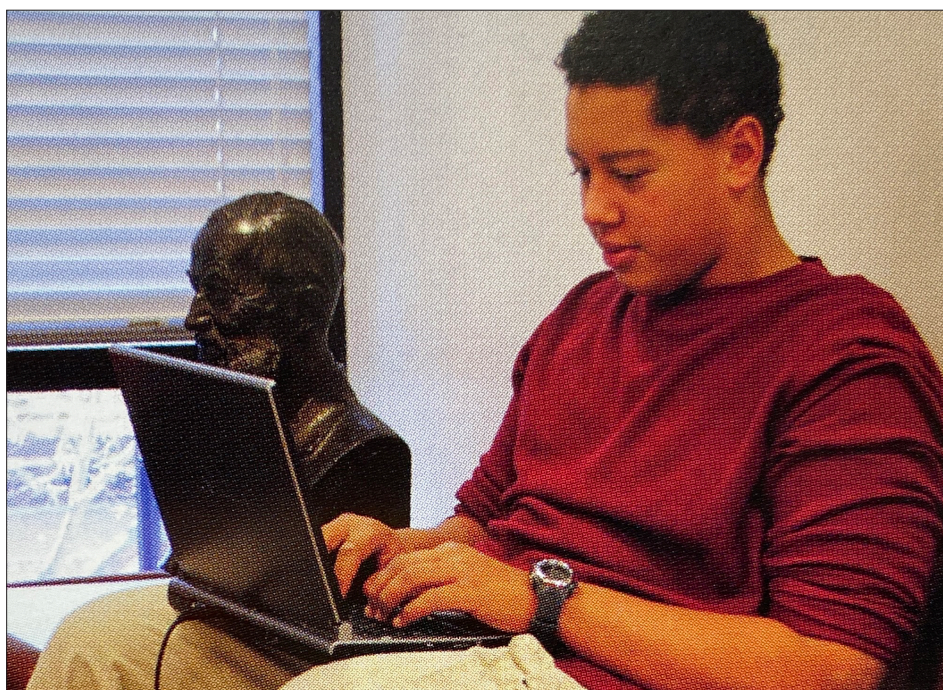
GRACE MEDRANO
THE RUBICON

Technology has become a fundamental part of education. It’s used in every class, from creating slideshows to watching videos to using the design lab for physical projects.

As technology changes, so does the way it’s used in schools. For example, senior Evan McCarthy said, “When I came to SPA, all assignments were done in Veracross. You didn’t have to-do lists and everything was turned in physically.” Nowadays, Veracross is simply used as a calendar and a way of seeing one’s grades. Instead, SPA has transitioned to using Google Classroom as a way to monitor upcoming assignments, a change that occurred at the end of McCarthy’s freshman year.

Senior Hannah Brass approves of such changes, but they still see room to improve. “I think it’s really good that we use so much technology... [but] we can still use more,” she said.

The past few years have seen a dramatic change in technology



IBID ARCHIVES: 2012

COMPUTER CULTURE. A student from 2012 types on his computer in the library. Back then, instead of the Lenovo ThinkPads in use today, students used the Toshiba Portege.

usage at SPA. During the pandemic, SPA went from fully in-person to fully distanced over Zoom and Google Classroom to hybrid with the OWL cameras and now fully in-person. But even now that school has returned to how it was pre-pandemic, the way we use technology has still drastically changed. While articles were once handed out in class, they are now linked in Google

Classroom. Projects have become much more digitized and advancements have been made with the use of the design lab. “It’s all through Google Classroom now. It’s a lot more unified,” McCarthy said.

Director of Technology Angie Kritta said that she looks forward to seeing where the school’s use of technology goes. She, similarly to Brass and Mc-

Carthy, thinks that SPA’s use of technology has significantly improved. Kritta said that although she knows some teachers are tired of adapting to new technology, she hopes “people are picking and choosing what works for them in their classroom.” She also hopes that as a relatively normal school year begins, the advancements in technology will stay, but excessive usage will go down.

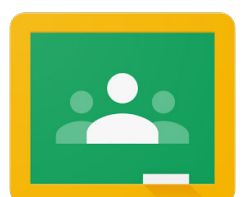
The relationship between education and technology has always been evolving. Computers and the internet changed how students wrote papers, projectors and SmartBoards changed how teachers presented information

“I THINK IT’S REALLY GOOD THAT WE USE SO MUCH TECHNOLOGY... [BUT] WE CAN STILL USE MORE.”

Hannah Brass



and distance learning options changed how students attended school. Technology has become a fundamental part of education and it will remain that way even as its use continues to change and evolve.





IBID Photo: Freya Brokken

SPA Archive 1963

FOE, NOW FRIEND: On the right half, SPA's football team battles it out against longtime rival Blake in the last game of the 1963 season, winning 7-0. On the left half, SMB Wolfpack, a co-op formed between SPA, Minnehaha Academy and previous rival Blake, takes on North Saint Paul on Homecoming night in 2021.

Rivalry Evolution: 1900-Today

CATHERINE HOOLEY
MANAGING EDITOR

Although Saint Paul Academy was founded in 1900 and Summit School in 1917, the schools were not combined until the 1970s, yet both were still athletically competitive. In a century, things are bound to change, but how have sports rivalries shifted throughout the history of SPA?

In the 1900s, Saint Paul Academy's football program was highly competitive with Blake. In a 1911 game that SPA won, Blake forfeited their school colors of blue and gold to SPA. From that point on, a fiery rivalry was born.

During earlier years at the Summit School, girls' athletics were lim-

ited because Title IX was not yet in place. In 1920, the girls basketball team flourished and won victories against the Backus and Northrop schools. During the late 1920s, the team saw continued victories against St. Mary's Hall. St. Mary's was also a big matchup for the girls field hockey team as they had an annual match playing one another.

These rivalries stayed fairly consistent until the merger between the two schools in 1969 shifted athletics. In 1974, SPA joined the MSHSL, heightening and broadening athletic competition. In 1976, the girls tennis program became a powerhouse, winning seven out of eight upcoming state championships. Competing

mostly with larger public schools, Blake was still the team's closest rival in the 70s.

In the 1980s, girls swimming became a popular and competitive program, finding rivals in Breck and Blake. In the 1990s, however, the team became a co-op with Highland Park, shifting rivalries. To this day, the rivalries for swimming are not the same. "Since the swimming team has been co-oped with Highland Park, our biggest rival is definitely Central [High School]," senior Linnea Cooley said.

Through the 90s, the boys and girls soccer teams struck success. The boys team won state in 1986, 1987, 1991 and again in 1994. Also, in 1994, the girls

soccer team won their section championship

“OUR BIGGEST RIVAL IS DEFINITELY CENTRAL [HIGH SCHOOL].”

Linnea Cooley



and moved on to place second in the state tournament. Through these triumphant times, however, competition did not die down and Breck and Blake were still the teams' biggest section rivals.

Flashing forward to 2015, another co-op formed: the SMB Wolf-

pack. This co-op consisted of SPA, Minnehaha Academy, Blake and a more recent addition, Hope Academy. "SMB's biggest rival is probably Providence or Academy of Holy Angels," senior Joey Stolpestad said.

This co-op forced schools that in the past had been SPA's biggest football rivals, like Blake, to now work together. David Kansas, a SPA board member who graduated in 1985, was the quarterback for the SPA football team. "Blake was always a big rival, especially in football. Mayer Lutheran was also a big rival in football. Many of the old rivals, like Mayer, no longer play as much against our teams. But Blake and Breck are still teams I want to see us beat when-

ever we face them and I hope the [current] teams feel the same way," he said. Even with the SMB co-op, Minnehaha and Blake are still some of SPA's most intense rivals in other sports.

Although a century has passed, not everything has changed. Some rivalries like St. Mary's Hall have died out, but many are here to stay, like Breck and Blake. New competitors are still popping up. As a small private school, rivalries with similar institutions are meant to last.

SPA Q&A

Why do you think school rivalries are important?



"SCHOOL RIVALRIES BRING A HIGHER POSITIVE INTENSITY AND COMPETITION TO THE COURT."

Anna Nowakowski



"I THINK SPORTS RIVALRIES CAN BE A GOOD THING BECAUSE THEY ARE FUN AND CAN MOTIVATE A TEAM TO DO BETTER."

Julia Taylor



RIVALRIES CREATE MORE UNDER-PRESSURE SITUATIONS WITH MORE AT STAKE."

Baasit Mahmood



"I THINK RIVALRIES ARE MORE IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT MAKES A SENSE OF COMMUNITY THEY YOU MIGHT NOT FEEL IF IT WERE ANY TEAM."

Sawyer Bollinger-Danielson

Beach day and bonding: how sports teams stay connected

JOHANNA PIERACH
THE RUBICON

Being on a sports team is about more than the game for many athletes. A team can be an opportunity to meet new people who may eventually become close friends. It can be an outlet for energy outside of academics. It can also be a chance to bond with teammates over the trials and triumphs of your sport. It's a way to find community through a shared passion, one you wouldn't get anywhere else, that enriches your life for the better.

Unfortunately, that feeling of community was dampened with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, as school closures and quarantine protocols forced many teams to terminate their seasons. Even as sports began to resume with tighter restrictions, COVID-19 altered traditions and activities vital to building community

and team spirit took a hit. "I feel like we didn't have as much of a chance to become like, tight-knit as a group during distance

“ YOU GET TO KNOW PEOPLE THAT YOU DEFINITELY WOULD NOT GET TO KNOW.

Liza Thomas



learning," girls varsity tennis captain Leni Nowakowski said, recalling the start of the pandemic.

However, not all was lost. "There were still some things that we could do," Nowakowski said. "I know our group chat is usually pretty active, whether somebody has a question about their homework, or somebody

has a question about match logistics, or somebody's just excited about something," she said.

Girls varsity soccer also found ways to adjust to pandemic life. "To stay connected during COVID-19, we still did team gatherings but would just make sure to do them outside," captain Lindsay Browne said.

And though the distance that came with COVID-19 restrictions shifted team dynamics, things seem to be returning to normal. "I think the culture is pretty much back to what it was like before COVID," Browne said. "Our whole Girls Soccer program is really unified this year and practices together every day, which I think has helped us a lot," she added.

Both teams grow closer outside of game time with bonding activities and traditions. "We do dress-up days for every game day as well as team

dinner on Friday nights when we have a Saturday game," Browne said. "I think this year we are hoping to do even more fun activities as a team like movie nights," she added. Additionally, GVS makes an effort to support other SPA teams, such as boy's varsity soccer.

Similarly, girls' varsity tennis grows community through pre-practice coffee runs and team dress-up days, which can foster new connections for the athletes. "You get to know people that you definitely would not get to know. And it's fun to be on a team," girls varsity tennis player Liza Thomas said.

Whether hosting a team sleepover or sharing a smile in the hallways, post-COVID-19 has been crucial to creating a fun and supportive environment for many of the SPA sports teams.



SUBMITTED PHOTO: Liza Thomas

TEAM SPIRIT. Tennis players Audrey Senaratna and Anna Nowakowski show team spirit by dressing up in tropical button-down on the day of their match.

Is there a decrease in sports attendance? Athletes weigh in

ANNIE ZHANG
THE RUBICON

High school sports play a vital role in cultivating school spirit, facilitating a social scene and giving students a mental break after a long day. Attending any SPA sporting event guarantees a stimulating experience with lasting memories.

Sophomore Sam Peterson values the social aspect of games. "I like the environment of [sports games]. The fans and the food are great; the game isn't as important when I'm having a fun time with friends."

Game attendance has inexplicably shrunk over the past few years. Though there are a variety of different factors that can affect game attendance, the safety restrictions imposed during the pandemic have proven particularly challenging. Many limits were put on SPA sports, leaving sports fans with few events to enjoy. During this time, many student sports fans filled in this empty time with more focus on aca-



RUBICON PHOTO: Annie Zhang

THUMBS UP. Soccer players Clare Ryan-Bradley, Sonia Kharbanda, and Evy Sachs sit on the bench, waiting for the tennis match to start.

demics.

"The last Wolfpack game had like four peo-

“ I PERSONALLY LOVE IT WHEN PEOPLE STOP BY TO WATCH EVEN IF IT'S JUST FOR A FEW POINTS.

Autumn Spaulding



ple show up and compared to my freshman year at SPA, that's a huge difference. I feel like COVID definitely had some impact there and now no one is watching Wolfpack games," senior Soren Miller said.

However, various sports captains disagree that COVID was the paramount reason for surging sports attendance.

"[...] everyone has so much stuff with school and life out[side] of school, so watching a match for hours is a big

time commitment. This is one of the personal reasons why I can't attend many other sporting events because there is a big workload," senior soccer captain Yash Kshirsagar said. As a senior, Kshirsagar has been through the highs and the lows of SPA throughout the pandemic.

Senior tennis captain Autumn Spaulding has similar thoughts. "We've never had a huge turnout at tennis matches, so COVID didn't have a huge impact, but I

would say that more parents were showing up to matches during COVID because it was outside social time," she said.

Although COVID may not be SPA's sports game's greatest foe, it is still apparent that sports game attendances are not the highest.

"[...] having fans does make each game better because having a crowd that has your support makes a big deal on the field. Though it adds pressure, it's a good kind of pressure that creates excitement and a high level of focus and concentration," Kshirsagar said.

Spaulding also emphasized the importance of fans. "I personally love it when people stop by to watch even if it's just for a few points, [...]. Tennis can easily get very stuffy and quiet, so having people cheer is really helpful," she said.

The importance of having fans at any sporting event is evident when talking to any team member. Competition schedules can be found on team pages located on the SPA website.



RUBICON PHOTO: Annie Zhang

THREE CHEERS FOR TENNIS. The JV tennis players start off their game by clapping for their teammates.

UPCOMING GIRLS TENNIS MATCHES:

Varsity vs. Visitation 9/28 4 p.m. @Visitation

JV vs. Visitation 9/28 4:30 p.m. @SPA

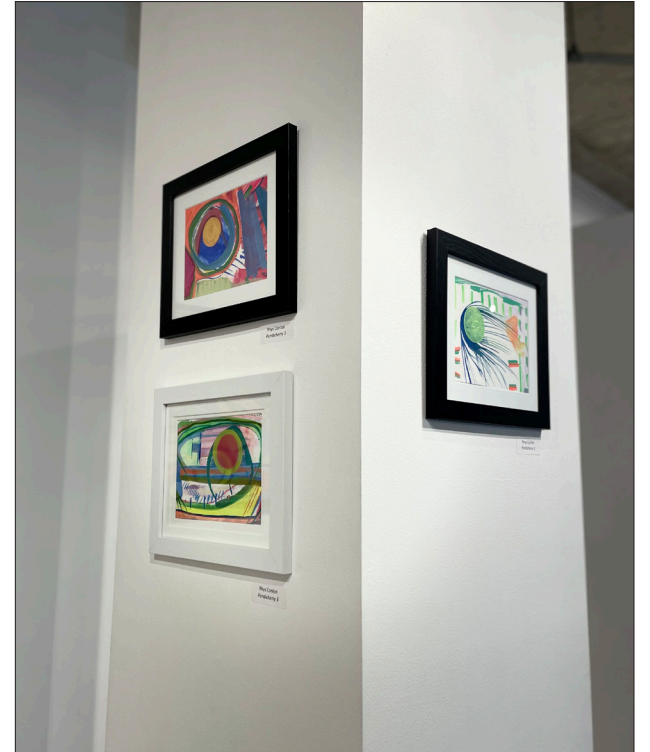
Varsity vs. Breck 9/29 4 p.m. @Breck

HARRY M. DRAKE GALLERY

Show brings alumni artistry back to Randolph campus



VIOLET VIEWS. Mystie Brackett's *Ocean Enso*, acrylic on canvas, is a result of the relationships she's made throughout her artistic career. "I feel very graced to have discovered this creative outlet and the wonderful friends I create with," she said.



SEEING TRIPLE. Rhys Conlon's series of three *Pondicherry* paintings, oil on canvas, hangs on a column. "Nature—in the broadest sense—is the driving force behind this body of work," she said.

RUBICON PHOTOS: Annie Bai



ALUMNI ARTISTRY. This year's annual alumni exhibit displays works from Patton Blackwell ('67), Mystie Brackett ('72), Rhys Conlon ('97) and Dutton Foster ('57). The exhibit will be open until Oct. 28.



COLOR CORE. Patton Blackwell's *PB Paraty*, like any painting, is the result of a tangled, multi-step process. "All these steps combine to resonate to the core of each painting..." Blackwell said.



CHUGGING ON. Dutton Foster's *Locomotive Lullaby* is one of many of his works inspired by transportation. "I'm drawn toward human artifacts and their relationship to the natural landscape," he said.

GEORGIA ROSS THE RUBICON

Every year as school begins, the Harry M. Drake gallery displays art of the returning alumni in town for Reunion Weekend. This year, four members of classes who graduated in years ending in "2" or "7" have artwork exhibited: Patton Blackwell ('67), Mystie Brackett ('72), Rhys Conlon ('97) and Dutton Foster ('57).

Once a student A&E editor herself, Ms. Rhys Conlon rounded the circle. She found herself back at SPA in an interview with the newest A&E writer; this time, however, she is the subject of the article as she presents her artwork at the opening in the Drake Gallery.

“ THOSE LITTLE THINGS SUDDENLY ELEVATE THE PRESENCE OF THE ARTWORK AND YOU START TO SEE IT IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT.



Fine Arts Department Chair
Daryn Lowman

Intended to surprise the audience and create movement, Conlon intertwines muted tones with bright colors overlapping the canvas. Conlon views painting as more of a practice, rather than a reaction to inspiration. "In the beginning, it's kind of free," she says as she describes the process of her work, "then it gets a little harder because I might edit out something regretted", adding, "Sometimes, I've overworked something." Conlon finds that the viewers reaction to her artwork is often rewarding: "The person looking at the painting sees thing I didn't necessarily see or encounter." Conlon loves art because it helps people empathize, it's analytical, and you can learn a lot by just looking at it. "I just really need to make art, that's just part of who I am," she says.

Not only an alum but a retired SPA teacher as well, Mr. Dutton Foster returns to SPA to present his paintings alongside Conlon. The first thing that pops out in Foster's work is undoubtedly the heavy influence of na-

ture, trains, and boats, and how they coexist. He has a specific interest in early twentieth-century buildings: "I like buildings whose design is dictated by their design rather than by the imagination of an architect... so that they're built in every visible detail." In sixth grade, Foster discovered his fascination with building models of trains, continuing this hobby all of his life. Two summers after graduating from SPA, Foster encountered his first opportunity to operate physically on the railroad. Assigned to a crew, he worked on repairing railroads.

Though his art viewers can clearly identify his interest in trains, they can't see every nut and bolt of how the machine functions: "If I were painting strictly for people who are into trains in a deep way, they [the art] would be a little less impressionistic and a little more hard-edged detail, like a super sharp photograph with more formal realism." The most challenging part of the painting process Foster encounters is how to begin- either selecting a photograph he took himself, or one he found off the internet and trying to replicate it. Not only does Foster hope that his viewers take away a shared love of nature, but also an appreciation of what humans can do. "I paint to create something that I will enjoy looking at and hope that somebody else will share that feeling," he says.

Fine Arts Teacher and Department Chair Daryn Lowman finds that galleries are able to act as an extension to the classroom: "a gallery space... the process of preparing work for an exhibition, where does it go, arranging the work, lighting the work... all of those little things suddenly elevate the presence of the work, and you start to see it in a different light," Lowman said. When alumni showcase their work, it shows students the impact and careers SPA alum has created past their time at SPA. "It's a way to show that it [art] can continue [past their high school career]," Lowman said. Continuing until October 28th, students, parents, faculty, and visitors stroll through the alumni gallery and appreciate the art.

Violinists please apply: musicians sought for the pit

MILKII TIGRO
THE RUBICON

The actors. The lights. The sets, props, and costumes... all tied together with music from performers rarely seen but always heard.

Director of Choirs Tim Kraack started the year in search of musicians interested in participating in pit orchestra.

"If you want to play in a pit orchestra, you have to be really self-sufficient," Kraack said.

The musicians typically rehearse the week before the show.

Pit orchestras are different from regular orchestras because, compared to playing in a concert, there are fewer musicians involved in pit orchestras and more songs to play over the course of the two-ish hour productions.

“IT IS SUPER FUN AND A GREAT DAY TO GAIN EXPERIENCE PLAYING IN AN ENSEMBLE.”

Clea
Gaïtas Sur



It is every musician's responsibility to learn to play all the songs they are performing, listening to actors and director so songs come in on cue.

Senior Clea Gaïtas Sur has been playing the piano and keyboard and has performed in concerts for seven years. It wasn't until last year that she started performing in a pit orchestra and has found enjoyment in it.

"It is super fun and a great way to gain experience playing in an ensemble," Gaïtas Sur said.

Junior Theo Bonin has been a cello player for nine years and started playing in the pit orchestra last year.

When he began playing in the pit, Bonin instantly noticed that there was a huge difference between performing in a pit and playing in a concert.

"One stand-out moment from the pit orchestra was last year during the high school play *Peter and the StarCatcher*" he said. "The pit orchestra was hidden behind a large set piece instead of in the orchestra pit below the stage."

Senior Sila Liljedahl has played both auxiliary percussion and bass on electric keyboards for the middle school musical *Shrek: the Musical* and the



SUBMITTED PHOTO: Sila Liljedahl

AFTER THE SHOW The pit orchestra gathers for a group photo to celebrate the show. Senior Sila Liljedahl said "They were both very fun experiences, and I am hoping to do them again next year."

upper school musical *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

"They were both very fun experiences, and I am hoping to do it again this year," Liljedahl said.

As the musicians have pointed out, pit orchestra is a great way to try

something new, and it challenges them to open new doors.

Kraack is still looking for new and past musicians to be involved.



Students logged into school e-mail can scan here to express interest in joining Pit Orchestra.

BOOK REVIEW

In *Two Nurses, Smoking: Stories*, Means touches the heart

PEOPLE WHO LIKE THIS BOOK ALSO READ:

Instructions for a Funeral: Stories by David Means

Bliss Montage: Stories by Ling Ma

Strangers to Ourselves: Unsettled Minds and the Stories That Make Us by Rachel Aviv

Lucy by the Sea: A Novel by Elizabeth Strout

Like a Rolling Stone: A Memoir by Jann S. Wenner

Liberation Day: Stories by George Saunders

INFORMATION:
Goodreads

MADDY FISHER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

David Means' newest short story collection, *Two Nurses, Smoking*, explores themes like grief, humanity, and what it's like to be a dog. In wonderfully circular prose, Means has created an unforgettable set of stories.

What is perhaps most notable about Means' work is his willingness to experiment, break literary rules, and surprise the reader.

He messes with perspective, tense, and style, making each story seem entirely unique.

The first story of the collection, "Clementine, Carmelita, Dog," explores the adventures of a dachshund. Halfway through, the narrator muses about the difficulty of using words to explain some-

thing as unfathomable as the inner workings of a dog's sensory and thought processes.

The titular story is similarly interrupted; organized entirely under headers, "Two Nurses, Smoking" is suddenly suspended with "NO," and the story is rewound (and then rewound again) to a new starting place.

Though the collection spends pages exploring the mechanics of storytelling, Means' talent manages to make both the constant experimentation and inconsistency not only welcome, but also powerful.

In areas where other writers might be unable to keep the reader engaged, Means prevails. Every broken rule and upended convention has a purpose—always serving to make the story more

moving.

The temporal creativity in "Two Nurses, Smoking" brings the story to a conclusion of incredible potency, leaving the reader with questions about the nature of love and connection.

The choppy rambling of "Vows" brings meaning to recollection and reflection, the employment of writing prompts in the "The Depletion Prompts" creates simultaneous distance and intimacy—in fewer words, Means' has mastered the intricacies of narrative.

Another distinctive aspect of Means' writing is the precision with which he approaches emotion. The stories in the collection each invoke intense and specific feelings, but in a way that feels spontaneous and unintentional.

His prose winds

around the core of the narrative, alternately detailed and vague.

Emotions are treated with careful consideration, and it is often the final sentence or paragraph of the story that cuts to the quick, encouraging the reader to step back and reevaluate the meaning of the tale.

In short, Means has found a way to capture essential elements of the human experience with brutal honesty and beautiful prose.

Two Nurses, Smoking is Means' sixth collection, and although the collection is ten stories, all ten are well worth the read.

RATING: 5/5



PHOTO: Beowulf Sheean



FAIR USE: Macmillan

MEANS TO AN END. David Means has released his newest collection of short stories, entitled *Two Nurses, Smoking Stories*.

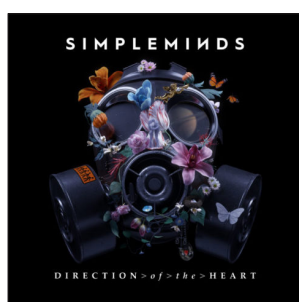
LISTEN UP

Stream or buy new albums from tried and true artists releasing in October.

FAIR USE: Red Hot Chili Peppers.com, Simple Minds.com, Arctic Monkeys.com, Taylor Swift.com, Backstreet Boys.com



RETURN OF THE DREAM CANTEEN. Red Hot Chili Peppers release their 13th album on Oct. 14.



DIRECTION OF THE HEART. Scottish rock band Simple Minds releases their 19th album Oct. 21.



THE CAR. English rock band Arctic Monkeys release their seventh studio album Oct. 21.



MIDNIGHTS. Swifties can choose from four cover designs on her 10th album of new songs Oct. 21.



A VERY BACKSTREET CHRISTMAS. The Backstreet Boys celebrate their 10th album on Oct. 14



read more about homecoming at:
RUBICON |online

HOMECOMING THROUGH THE YEARS

MADDY FISHER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Homecoming court? Football games? Camouflage Day? See how homecoming at SPA has changed with this blast from the past.

'85

OLD-SCHOOL ROYALTY. King Peter and Queen Susan parade past their fans. SPA used to appoint a homecoming court.

SCHOOL SPIRIT. SPA students dress up in preparation for the homecoming football game.



IBID ARCHIVES: 1985



IBID ARCHIVES: 1990

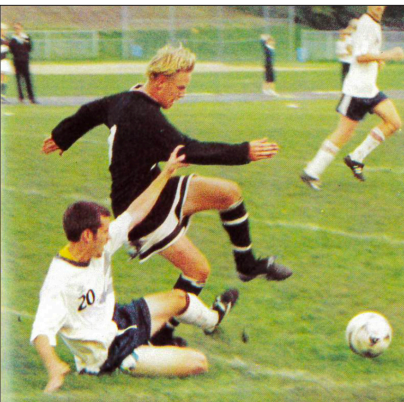
'90

FIND YOUR FOOTING. SPA's football team wins their homecoming game.

BAND TOGETHER. The jazz band practices for the Pep Fest.



IBID ARCHIVES: 1990



IBID ARCHIVES: 1995

SLIDE TACKLE. Tim London evades a tackle during the homecoming match against Osseo. The Spartans won this game 4 to 0.



IBID ARCHIVES: 1995

FULL BLAST. Kyle Herskovitz chose the music for the homecoming dance. According to the yearbook, students enjoyed his music choices.

'95



IBID ARCHIVES: 2000

'00

DOUBLE DOWN. Seniors pose for a photo during x-period to show off their outfits for Clone Day.

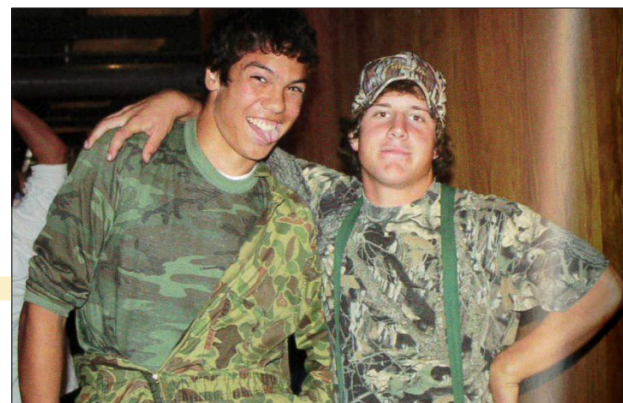
CODE RED. A group of junior girls pose in red for class color day.



IBID ARCHIVES: 2000

'05

THIS IS SPARTA. Senior Jack Adams rallies the school as the Spartan during the Pep Fest. The sword and shield have been removed from the costume.



HUNTING SEASON. André Adams and Nick Long show off their outfits for Camouflage Day. The Spartans played the Blake Bears in the homecoming game; posters around the school declared "it's hunting season."

IBID ARCHIVES: 2005