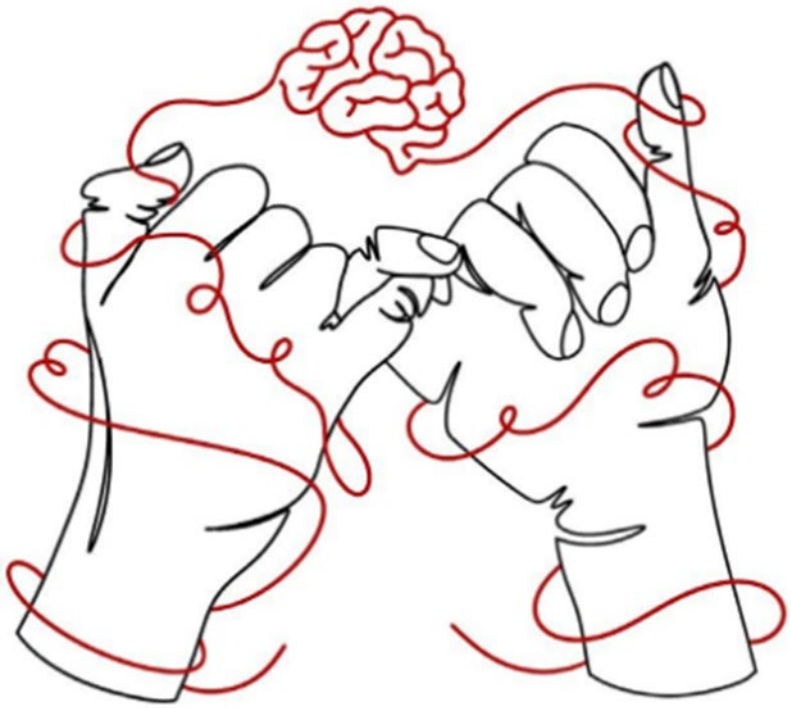
Connections Symposium

April 24, 2026

2:00 – 6:00 p.m.



Welcome to the 2026 Connections Symposium at Wittenberg University!

The Connections Symposium is an opportunity to celebrate student achievement and showcase the many experiential learning opportunities integrated throughout our campus and curriculum.

We are pleased to feature presentations from Wittenberg students on the afternoon of April 24. In the following pages, you will find a schedule of events along with brief descriptions of each presentation. For those looking for a specific presenter, a "Presentations by Author" index is included at the end of the program.

We will begin with a welcome at 2:15 p.m. inside Thomas Library Atrium. Presentations are scheduled between 2:30-5:30 p.m. at different central campus locations. Performing Arts will take place in Weaver Chapel. Oral presentations will take place throughout Blair Hall in rooms 101, 108, and 201. Two panel discussions are scheduled in Blair Hall 101. Two sessions of poster presentations, accompanied by light refreshments, will be held in Thomas Library. Senior Art Theses in Koch Hall will remain open through 6:00 p.m.

Thank you for joining the Wittenberg community as we celebrate the inspiring and meaningful work of our students!

Schedule of events

2:15 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks

2:30 p.m. Performing Arts

2:30 p.m. Art Exhibition Opens

2:30 p.m. Oral Presentations (Block 1)

2:30 p.m. Poster Session A begins

3:30 p.m. Panel and Oral Presentations (Block 2)

4:00 p.m. Poster Session B begins

4:30 p.m. Panel and Oral Presentations (Block 3)

5:30 p.m. Art Exhibitions continue until 6:00 p.m.

Performing Arts

2:30-3:30 p.m.
Weaver Chapel

Performing Arts

Featuring student performances in musical theatre and dance.

Moderator: Greyson Sanders

tick, tick...Boom!

Antwan Terrell ’27, Cambryn Tom ’28, Jules Bigl ’28, Zoe Brunner ’29

Antwan will introduce a song from the musical "Tick, tick...BOOM!" which was his senior directing project.

Cambryn was "Susan" in the student production of "tick, tick...BOOM!" this past Feb.
Jules was "Jon" in the student production of "tick, tick...BOOM!" this semester.
Zoe was the student music director and accompanist.

Singin’ in the Rain

Gabby Fronk ’28, Jillian Paskvan ’27, Caitlyn Shelton ’26, B (Bertha) Smith ’29, Ellah Smith ’28, Cambryn Tom ’28

Gabby, Jillian, Caitlyn, Bertha, Ellah and Cambryn will be performing in the dance piece "Singin' in the Rain" - choreographed by senior Caitlyn Shelton, 2026 for the upcoming Spring Dance Concert.

Oral Presentations Session 1

2:30-3:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 101

Moderator: Kunal Chatterjee

How the Increase in Remote Work Impacts Coworker Relationships

Emma Gearhart ’26

A survey and interviews were conducted to spot the differences across three types of work: in person, hybrid, and remote. The study focuses on the changes across the work types and the shifting views on remote work from before, during, and after Covid. It also takes a look at how gender is impacted by these ever-changing relationships and work dynamics.

The Liam Payne Effect: Parasocial Grief of a Celebrity's Tragic Death Through Sociological Lenses

Maddy Weidman ’28

This is the start of what I hope to be my senior thesis. I want to look at if there are stronger feelings of parasocial grief when a celebrity dies tragically. If so, can this be evaluated through a sociological lens. I am still at the beginning stages of this project, so there are no concrete findings yet. I am starting to build the connection between parasocial relationships and sociology.

Policing Homelessness

Samuel Evan Nitzberg ’26

Policing in America was never neutral; from its inception, it reflected the priorities of elites, whether in suppressing labor unrest, surveilling immigrants, or enforcing racial hierarchies. Decisions about what counted as “crime” were shaped by lawmakers who were overwhelmingly white, male, and property-owning, while women, Black Americans, Indigenous people, and the working class were excluded from political participation. Racism, sexism, and classism thus shaped the very foundations of U.S. law enforcement, ensuring that poverty and difference were treated as threats rather than conditions requiring redress.

Oral Presentations Session 1

2:30-3:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 201

Moderator: Anastassiya Karaban

Constructing the Female Athlete: Investigating Sexism in Team Names & Uniforms

Shania Stone ’26

Sports have always been an extremely influential part of society, inspiring culture, values, entertainment, and purpose between groups of people. Just as they reflect the celebration of teamwork, strength, and pure dedication in competition, the world of sports also seems to reflect many inequalities and prejudices found in our society. Even from the beginning, women have had to fight for the right to compete. At around 776 BC, the first ancient Olympics was held, where women were not allowed to compete and married women were prohibited from watching. From not being allowed to compete or watch sporting events to still having to fight to prove themselves as worthy opponents in sports matches, women have dealt with various struggles that have been shown all throughout history. Throughout history, women have faced significant barriers and backlash in their pursuit of participation and recognition in athletics. Two of the most visible examples of these barriers can be seen in the various ways that female athletes are represented, viewed, and treated, not only by their coaches and peers, but also by themselves and their fans. Sexist team naming practices and the sexualization of women’s athletic uniforms reinforce gender hierarchies by amplifying stereotypes that objectify women’s bodies, restrict perceptions of their athletic abilities, and undermine their place in sports.

Can a Videogame Character Help Break Gender Stigma?

Moose Harper ’26

This essay argues that "The Walking Dead" game series offers a rare positive portrayal of women through Clementine. Unlike many female video game characters, Clementine is not sexualized, is dressed realistically, and faces experiences that reflect real challenges for women, such as puberty and relationships. The essay also explains how her character breaks common gender stereotypes in gaming by being complex, autonomous, and central to a violent game genre often associated with men.

Senior Honors Thesis Framing Female Athletes in Sports Journalism: Changes in Newspaper Coverage of Professional and Collegiate Women Over Time

Allyssa White ’26

This study examines how newspaper coverage of professional and NCAA Division I female athletes has changed from 2015 to 2025, focusing on both quantity and quality of representation. Using Agenda-Setting and Framing Theory, it analyzes how often female athletes appear in print media and how they are portrayed. Through quantitative and qualitative content analysis of major U.S. newspapers, the research investigates whether increased participation and support for women’s sports have translated into more equitable and/or performance-focused media coverage.

Poster Session A

2:30-4:00 p.m.
Thomas Library

Moderator: Maddy Beachly

Beyond the Mentee: Investigating Mentoring Satisfaction Among College-Age Mentors (A1)

Alyssa Burnside ’26, Myrah Burton ’26, Estefanny Gonzalez ’26, Gabriela Gonzalez Lillico ’26, Madison Horton ’26, Lanie Mersch ’26, Rebecca Schafer ’26, Lucy Ripepi ’26

The focus of this study was to explore how self-concept, personality characteristics such as extraversion/introversion, flexibility, tolerance, resiliency, views about youth, and career certainty may be related to mentoring satisfaction. Twenty college students with mentoring experience responded to survey questions related to these constructs. Results showed all of these constructs except for extraversion/introversion and flexibility were related to mentoring satisfaction.

Examination of Values in Relationships (A2)

Lucy Ripepi ’26, Alyssa Burnside ’26, Madison Bolin ’27

This is a replication study looking at how personal values relate to romantic relationship quality. In this study, we focus on two types of values. Self-transcendence and Self-enhancement. We aimed to find if self-transcendence is a better indicator of relationship quality than self-enhancement. Self-transcendent values include caring and tolerance whereas self-enhancement focuses on achievement and power.

Exploration of Rat Social Interaction When Challenged With Escalating Effort (A3)

Carter Wesley Bonar ’26

Animals expend effort for food and social interaction in research settings. Food is a powerful motivator, and social rewards are meaningful and sought after, but the exact difference in reward motivation is unclear. Rats analyze the costs and benefits of obtaining a reward to determine how much effort to exert to obtain the reward, with high-effort rewards less sought after than the low-effort rewards when shown concurrently. I hypothesized that when rats expend more effort in the Progressive Ratio task, than they will have greater social interaction during social self-administration than rats who expend less effort in the task.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Assessment of Effort for Distinct Natural Rewards: Food vs. Social Seeking (A4)

Ever Zepeda ’26

Effort plays a key role in motivation and decision-making in both animals and humans. Previous research shows that as effort requirements increase, humans, like animals, are less willing to work for rewards and often shift toward easier alternatives (Sharma et al., 2012). Reduced effort is linked to depression, social withdrawal, and low motivation. Using an operant lever-press paradigm allows comparison of food and social rewards and effort-based behavior. The goal was to examine how effort influences motivation across rewards. I hypothesized rats would work more for food than social reward, showing greater persistence and movement despite increasing effort demands levels.

The Benefits of Structured MVPA for Older Adults (A5)

Mia Hankerson ’28, Maddie Duff ’28, Jason Samuel ’28

This poster explores the impact of structured, age-tailored moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) programs on community-dwelling older adults. The PICOT question investigates how such programs, compared to usual routines, affect weekly MVPA minutes over 12 weeks. Evidence from key studies, including the LIFE Study and Tai Ji Quan interventions, indicates that tailored programs more effectively increase MVPA, improve mobility, strength, and cognitive function, and help prevent chronic diseases. Teaching points highlight the superiority of accessible, adaptable programs with behavioral support over general advice or technology-based interventions for promoting adherence and healthy aging.

The Effects of Accepting vs. Rejecting Negative Labels on Social Media Impressions (A6)

Kaylyn Smith ’27

Negative labels can shape social perception. Not much is known about an individual's response to the negative labels and the impressions about them. This study examines how we evaluated the participants based on their reactions to negative labeling. Participants were presented with a scenario which targeted one person and gave that person a negative label. The participants rated the person based on likeableness, supportiveness, and negativeness. The results show that the response played a big role in social perception.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Analysis of Heavy Metals in Protein Powder with FAAS (A7)

Shannon Morrissey ’26

I tried to measure lead and cadmium in protein powders. I was unable to reliably measure the metals using flame atomic absorption spectroscopy. This is due to the concentration of lead and cadmium in protein powders being too dilute to detect on the instrument, and protein powders containing many other compounds which interfered with absorbance measurements.

Antibiotic Resistance and Cross-Resistance in E. coli (A8)

Camden Gladden ’27

Irresponsible usage and dispensing of antibiotics have created one of the three most important health threats of the 21st century, antibiotic resistant bacterial infections. To explore this problem, this study investigated the progression of resistance to ampicillin, ciprofloxacin, neomycin, and kanamycin. Antibiotic resistance was investigated with E. coli ATCC 25922. Alongside developing resistance, the resistant E. coli strains were tested for cross resistance, multi-drug resistance, and the loss of resistance. All strains developed rapid antibiotic resistance at high concentrations of each antibiotic. Cross resistance was seen between ampicillin and ciprofloxacin as well as neomycin and kanamycin.

Violence and Human Rights in Children (A9)

Alexis Martin ’27

This project examines how children are affected by violence through a human rights lens. Building on prior coursework, it explores how children, despite being a vulnerable and politically powerless group, are disproportionately impacted by domestic, community, and systemic violence. Their limited ability to advocate for change highlights critical gaps in protection and policy. This research emphasizes the need for stronger advocacy, increased awareness, and structural reforms to better safeguard children’s rights and well-being within society.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Population Trends and Drivers of Decline in Red Headed Woodpeckers (Melanerpes erythrocephalus) in Ohio (A10)

Alexander James McGinnis ’26

Red-headed Woodpecker (Melanerpes erythrocephalus) populations have declined in Ohio over the past several decades. This study used North American Breeding Bird Survey data (1966–2022) to examine long-term population trends and compare them with European Starling (Sturnus vulgaris) populations. Results show a clear decline followed by a slight recovery in recent years. These trends suggest that habitat loss and environmental change are key factors influencing populations, highlighting the importance of habitat management for conservation.

Assessing Water Quality in Relation to Flood Events on the Old Snyder Park Golf Course (A11)

Jane Javorek ’26

The former Snyder Park Golf Course sits between Mad River and Buck Creek. The potential for flood, sediment, and nutrient storage on the former course, since it is hydrologically connected to the Mad River through a set of conduits, would benefit water quality in the downstream Mad River system. Water quality sondes established at two locations on the former course, one nearer to inflow, the other in a central water hazard, provide data on the quality of flood flow on the course. Turbidity, an indicator of suspended sediment in an area of water, can indicate the health of an ecosystem’s water quality. Sediment measures will be used to propose how the land could be developed in order to maximize its ecosystem service of sediment storage. The pond stores more sediment during flood events than the central water hazard therefore efforts to better utilize the course will focus on improving the pond and flow to it.

Soil Health and Management (A12)

Cameron Casto ’26

I will be taking soil samples of a plot of land to test the overall soil health for crop production. After I have my results I will be coming up with a calendar plan that the farmer could follow to improve the soil health and crop yields. My plan will be based off of an agronomy filed guide that I have been reading throughout the semester.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy of Diazonium-Grafted Glassy Carbon Electrodes (A13)

Owen Gulvas ’27

Exploring potential glucose-sensing properties of electrodes grafted via a diazonium paste method developed at Wittenberg when coupled with electrochemical impedance spectroscopy. It was found that nitrophenyl, carboxyphonyl, and phenylboronic acid grafted electrodes did not possess significantly different impedance values when subjected to 25 mM glucose solutions. Impedance values of grafted electrodes appeared to increase with sequential tests.

Examining tRNA Quality in Yeast Cells Under Nutrient Deprivation (A14)

Carmella Haueter ’27

Protein synthesis relies on functional transfer RNA (tRNA) to deliver amino acids for proper protein formation. Aberrant tRNA, produced by incomplete intron removal, cannot bind amino acids and may disrupt protein folding and cellular function. Although aberrant tRNA exists under normal conditions in Saccharomyces cerevisiae, its response to nutrient stress is unclear. This study examined how nutrient deprivation affects tRNA quality. Yeast cells were grown in varying nutrient conditions, and RNA was analyzed using PCR and gel electrophoresis. Results showed that aberrant tRNA levels increased with decreasing nutrients, suggesting that nutrient deprivation impairs tRNA quality rather than improving functional tRNA production

Food Self-Administration and Effort in Rats using Custom Tools (A15)

Abby Lanhart ’26

Animals across the globe require food to survive- this natural desire makes food an effective reward system for animal models. In animal models, ‘motivation' can be quantified for rewards through operant conditioning in which rats learn that the manipulation of a lever is followed by a consequence, typically in the form of food. Rats will learn that the action of pressing a lever 'earns' them automated delivery of sugar. For my project, I will be utilizing multiple cameras to create a 2D representation of the rat's velocity as it lever presses for a reward.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Food vs. Social Self Administration Exploration of Fast Learning in Rats (A16)

Taylor Collins ’26

Social interaction is a compelling reward system that provides benefits such as stress buffering and increase in positive affect. Similarly, food rewards are influential to human actions and affect facial muscles by relaxing those associated with negative emotions and activating those linked to positive emotions. Like humans, rats and other animal models are motivated through social and food rewards. Through operant conditioning, rats learn which actions result in receiving a reward versus no reward, commonly by pressing a lever. Mice have learned to self administer different types of food based on their interest and enjoyment.

How AI is Impacting Higher Education and Social Media Marketing (A17)

Jeff Mefford ’27

Over the past few years AI has become a lot more relevant in higher education, as students and faculty are encountering it more. Whether that be students using it to find sources for projects, enhance essays, create social media posts, or using it to write entire papers. Regardless of ethics, AI is being used in higher education. But what does that mean for professors; and what happens when the university itself uses it? How is this changing higher education?

LC-UV Method Development for Characterization of tRNA Nucleosides from Modified Yeast Cells (A18)

Tasia Nall ’26

Transfer RNA (tRNA) plays a vital role in cellular translation, as it serves as an adapter between messenger RNA and amino acids. Modifications to tRNA are critical for its function, and defective or hypomodified tRNAs have been shown to accumulate in disease contexts, including metastatic tumors. Previous studies show that rrp6, a nuclear exosome protein, helps degrade faulty tRNAs. Defective tRNAs can accumulate in diseased cells; such as metastatic tumors. In rrp6 strains, where this quality control is missing, we hypothesize that hypomodified tRNAs evade degradation, resulting in larger peaks to appear in chromatograms featuring wild-type cells compared to rrp6Δ mutations. To test this, we used reversed-phase HPLC with UV detection, which allows for rapid and sensitive method for analyzing nucleoside composition.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Methods for Nutrient Analysis in Urban Snow Samples (A19)

Abby Holman ’27, Hope Elliott ’27, Phoebe Scharle ’27, Lucy Barnard ’27

Snow can act as a temporary reservoir for contaminants deposited from atmospheric and roadway sources. In this study, methods were developed for the collection, handling, and chemical analysis of snow samples. Samples were collected across sites representing varying levels of anthropogenic influence to evaluate differences in contaminant accumulation. Following filtration, samples were analyzed for chemical composition. These methods highlight the use of snow as an effective indicator of environmental contamination.

Microbial Lead (Lead (II) Nitrate) Tolerance in Soil (A20)

Grace Pantalone ’26

Lead, a naturally occurring element that is commonly found in the soil can exist in harmful quantities through accumulation. Over time, human involvement has been contributing to the amount of lead present. High traces of lead can be found on Wittenberg's campus, though not a threat. We hypothesized that higher amounts of lead could increase microbes' ability to utilize lead as a nutrient.

Mitochondrial DNA in Pollinators (A21)

Anna Roller ’26

Bees are effective pollinators, playing a critical role in ecosystems. In addition to nuclear DNA, bees contain mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA); this maternally inherited DNA contains few mutations and therefore useful for distinguishing African and European lineages. Focusing on the cytochrome b region, mtDNA was isolated, and an intergenic region of the cytochrome b region was amplified then digested with BglII restriction enzyme. Honeybees have a sequence that is recognized by BglII. Comparison of cytB amplicons in other pollinators will identify genetic relationships. This variant in the cytB intergenic amplicon was found in other pollinators; these are currently being sequenced.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Comparative Effects of Tree and Shrub Richness on Bird Richness (A22)

Mason Steen ’26

I compared number of tree species on different parks across Clark County and looked at the relationship with number of bird species. I was trying to answer the hypothesis of a denser forest with more tree species will show more species of birds.

Quantification and Identification of Microplastics in Beverages from Wittenberg University (A23)

Caitlyn Shelton ’26

Microplastics (MPs) are plastic particles that are between 5 mm and 0.001 mm in size and nano-plastics (NPs) are plastic particles less than 0.001 mm in size. Soda beverages have been found to contain MNPs. Wittenberg students consume a variety of beverages on campus, but the number of microplastics in these drinks are unknown. This research used Nile Red staining and microscopy to compare the number of microplastics between soda machine or bottled beverages on campus. Data suggests that bottled beverages having significantly less plastics than soda machine beverages. Additionally, this project explores the use of thermal degradation process with SPME-GC-MS to determine the identity of the microplastic particles.

Response of Soil Characteristics to Increased Flooding on the Former Snyder Park Golf Course (A24)

Raymond Bennett ’26

This study examines how restored flooding affects soil properties at the former Snyder Park Golf Course in Springfield, Ohio. After reconnection to the Mad River, periodic flooding created distinct conditions across elevations. Fifty soil samples from low- and high-elevation areas were analyzed for nutrients and texture. Low-elevation soils showed higher and more variable nitrate, phosphorus, and clay content due to sediment deposition, while high-elevation soils remained stable and nutrient-limited. Organic carbon varied across sites. Overall, restored flooding increases nutrient variability and soil heterogeneity, supporting ecosystem recovery and emphasizing the importance of hydrological connectivity in floodplain restoration.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Taking Care of Yourself When Caring for Others (A25)

Mackenzie Kelley ’26

My poster will focus on the emotional, mental, and physical toll that nursing can take on nurses. It will also explore strategies to help reduce nursing burnout. One key resource that I will highlight is how journaling after shifts can help you to process your experiences. I will also be incorporating statements from patient experiences as a nursing student.

Wind effects on density of Uca pugilator larvae (A26)

Isabella Grace Klingler ’29

Three species of fiddler crabs (Uca pugilator, U. pugnax, and U. minax) reside in different habitats on the Atlantic coast. The species release larvae into coastal waters for development, and they return to estuaries as megalopae. In coastal waters, winds can cause differential movement of surface and bottom waters, which would affect larvae at different depths. We examined plankton samples taken at the Duke Marine Lab in Beaufort NC during summer 2024 to determine whether winds affected the presence of U. pugilator larvae in the plankton.

Accessibility to Healthcare for College Students (A27)

Tess Myers ’28, Gabby Moore ’28, Annie Gammon ’28

In our poster project, we bring up the very relevant topic of college students utilizing their university's healthcare services. Most students do not take advantage of these provided services; we are unpacking data to discover why, as well as educating them to promote use of healthcare services on their campus.

Poster Session A

(continued)

2:30-4:00 p.m.

Thomas Library

Closing the Theory-Practice Gap: Why Ongoing Clinical Competence Matters (A28)

Rylee Paddock ’29

Our poster is a scholarly literature review that explores the importance of clinically competent nursing educators. Nurses often transition into an education role where their responsibilities shift toward teaching, service, and scholarship. While these are important skills in education, decreased involvement in patient care and bedside manner can make it difficult for faculty to maintain clinical competence.

The Importance of Liberal Arts: A comparison of Liberal Arts VS Public Colleges and their Sociology Curriculum (A29)

Millie Goodwin ’27

This is the start of my senior thesis where I will be looking into the differences in teachings for public colleges vs private colleges. I will identify the influence of capitalism in schools and how the importance of liberal arts colleges are with the teachings of socialism.

Implementation of Artificial Nest-Boxes for the American Kestrel (A30)

Karlee Henderson ’26

The American Kestrel (Falco sparverius) is an obligate cavity nester that is commonly seen throughout North America. They will occupy already excavated nests, tree hollows, and man-made nest boxes. Due to pathogens, habitat loss, and pesticides, their populations have been on a decline. They may be limited by a lack of natural cavities. Artificial nest-box implementation has been seen to increase their local populations. Using ArcGIS Pro, potential sites were selected based on microhabitat and macrohabitat characteristics. Once sites were selected, a map of Clark County was created with a set of points showing potential locations for artificial nest-boxes.

The use of Catapult Load Monitoring System for Injury Prevention in Men’s Lacrosse (A31)

Emma Barnhart ’28

During the 2026 Wittenberg Men’s Lacrosse season the use of Catapult Load Monitoring and Polar Heart Rate monitoring was used to help determine the physical loads to see if injuries could be predicted and in turn prevented.

Art Exhibit

2:30-5:30 p.m.
Thomas Library

Vine Handle Teapot, Tulipiere, Abstract Vase, Pitcher (4 Separate pieces)

Dawson Smith ’26

Vine Handle Teapot - Wheel thrown teapot that consists of a snub nose spout and wooden handle.
Tulipiere - Vase concept introduced in the 1600's for a way to display tulips and other flowers.
Abstract Vase - Sectional pottery consisting of a wheel thrown base and coil built top, creating two abstract openings.
Pitcher - Wheel thrown pitcher with a pulled handle. Provides a purpose for everyday use. Glazed in Cornwall Orange and dipped in Saint John's Black.

Flared Vase Series

Kyle Holsopple ’28

Inspired by the clarity and order of Doric order pillars and the extreme geometry of satellite dishes, as well as minimalist ceramics. This project contains three large vases each with a flared top. Each vase is brown stoneware thrown in sections that are then attached to create a complete vase. These pieces are each dipped in glazes to create their glossy finish.

Panel Session 2

3:30-4:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 101

Panel A – Prologue to Somewhere: Senior Art Thesis Showcase

Moderator: Elena Dahl

Abby Rohrer ’26

My exhibition “Familiar” contains portraits of dogs belonging to my grandparents and to my family. Most of these dogs have passed away, excluding the Burnese Mountain Dog and the Dachshund. I chose to paint these dogs because they have had a major impact on me and alter my day-to-day life. I hope that looking at these paintings reminds people of their own pets or experiences with animals. Also, I hope people see the love and care I have put into the paintings, because it is the same love and care that the dogs gave to me.

Francesca Heidinger ’26

Inspired by Pink Floyd’s "The Wall,” my body of work “Where the Wall Cracks” reimagines the album’s narrative through a personal lens, merging its themes with my own experiences of trauma. Through Cubist fragmentation and contemporary abstraction, the pieces reflect the disjointed, nonlinear nature of life, memory, and emotion. Moments of escape and self-destructive coping emerge throughout, hinting at the ways pain is often managed but never resolved. The series moves through isolation, repression, and confrontation, translating sound into fractured visual forms. Together, these paintings trace an emotional journey, revealing trauma as both deeply wounding and quietly transformative.

Gabby Conaway ’26

Andromeda Printing Co. is a digital media project in which details made a series of magazines based on different topics I am passionate about; including fashion, music, science, and cooking. Each magazine reflects a different niche style fitted to the topic of the magazine, all falling under the branding guidelines I created.

Kris Such ’26

Lotus-Eater’s Paracosm is the first chapter of a graphic novel by the same name. Created after realizing the genre was missing stories with female leads and gay relationships, the chapter serves as an introduction to a horror-tragedy story about the relationship between two childhood best friends and how that relationship comes to its unavoidably bloody end.

Luke Stanfield ’26

This collection of work is my senior study in tea pots. They can come in all shapes, sizes and colors. I wanted to push form of the media along with expressing the beauty within throwing clay with the different colas types used. Throughout the throwing process you can see different swirling and contrasts from the different clay bodies. I want to push past the glaze that may cover a piece and show how the process of throwing itself is just as beautiful as the color added later.

Oral Presentations Session 2

3:30-4:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 201

Moderator: Austin S. McCray

Physical Security to Cyber: USB-Based Attack Research and Defense

Phillip Schlomann ’27

This research tested the vulnerability of common computer operating systems in regard to USB-based attacks. This was done using several devices that connect via USB and tested against virtual machines. The offensive side was tested first, displaying what types of attacks were possible. The defensive side was then tested, displaying what resources are available to prevent these attacks. Conclusions were then drawn to highlight the key takeaways.

Independent Study Project: Defensive Monitoring Lab

Jaxin Johnson ’26

To create a defensive monitoring lab to analyze different cybersecurity attacks and analyze their behavior. This lab has the aim to test how effectively open-source security monitoring tools detect common penetration testing techniques in a controlled lab environment. This study gives insight on both the defensive side and attacker's perspective in cybersecurity. This goal is achieved by the following VMs: Kali Linux (attacker), SecurityOnion (IDS), pfSense (NAT/Firewall), Metasploitable 2 (target), and Metasploitable 3 (target).

Oral Presentations Session 2

3:30-4:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 108

Moderator: Anastassiya Karaban

Ad Infinitum

MK Kirkpatrick ’26

Ad Infinitum is a project that combines my Art and Computer Science majors into one. It is a platformer styled video game featuring painted backgrounds and hand-drawn animation. Drawing inspiration from personal struggles, you navigate a dark house as a cat, led by poetic words and a mirror self.

FIRE Week Reflection- Schnitzel, Stein, & Stone: A Cultural Exploration in Southern Germany

Moose Harper ’26

“Schnitzel, Stein, & Stone: A Cultural Exploration in Southern Germany” Fire Week experience offers an immersive look at the region’s rich cultural landscape. This oral presentation highlights students’ firsthand experiences exploring Bavarian traditions, historic sites, and culinary heritage. Panelists will share insights on local history, art, and community life, reflecting on how travel deepens cultural understanding. Attendees will gain a nuanced perspective of Southern Germany and engage with students’ reflections on the intersection of culture, learning, and personal growth.

Poster Session B

4:00-5:30 p.m.
Thomas Library

Moderator: Kristin Cline

The Silent Killer: How America's Food Fuels Disease (B1)

Dakotah Timmons ’28, Cameron Corey ’28, Jaclyn Milliken ’28

While nutrition is essential, access to healthy resources varies significantly across communities, making it difficult for individuals to maintain healthy diets. In the US, factors such as income, education, location, and access to fresh foods contribute to differences in dietary quality, leading to individuals relying on convenience stores rather than grocery stores that offer fresh options. Limited access to affordable, nutritious foods contributes to higher rates of nutrition related diseases, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular conditions. On the other hand, proper nutrition supports healthy growth, strengthens immune function, and helps prevent chronic disease.

Evaluating School Counseling Interventions and their effects on Youth Mental and Behavioral Health (B2)

Sophie Eilert ’28, Chris Dawson ’28, Kaydee Roberts ’28

This poster examines how school counseling and other counseling interventions can positively affect the mental and behavioral health of students in middle school and high school.

Covering Behavior in Lytechinus variegatus (B3)

Kinu Shope ’26

Sea urchins often cover themselves with various objects such as shells or small rocks. This covering behavior is not limited to naturally occurring materials, as sea urchins have been observed to hold onto anthropogenic debris. Possible explanations for the covering behavior include protection from light or predators. This study aims to quantify covering behavior in Lytechinus variegatus by comparing the number of items held by individuals under different conditions. These conditions include presence or absence of predator scent, light vs. dark, and availability of natural or artificial covering materials.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Bias That Affect Painted Turtle and Red Ear Slider Populations (B4)

Waverly McLaughlin ’29 and Phoebe Underwood ’29

Phoebe and I are doing our poster over how different biases such as trapping methods, natural influences, and human biases can affect the number of turtles recorded, their age, sex, and species. We are using these biases to show how red eared sliders are invasive and harming the painted turtle populations.

Effects of wind patterns on planktonic density of fiddler crab megalopae (B5)

Karlee Henderson ’26

There are three species of fiddler crabs in North Carolina – Uca pugilator, Uca pugnax, and Uca minax. All species of fiddler crab move offshore for their larval development before reentering the estuary as megalopae. In offshore waters, wind can move surface and bottom waters differently. I identified megalopae from daily plankton samples taken in 2007 and compared the species composition to wind patterns to determine whether wind was affecting the transport of the species differently.

Examining tRNA Quality in Yeast Cells Under Oxidative Stress Conditions (B6)

Christopher White ’27

Transfer RNAs (tRNAs) are critical in the process of protein synthesis. Defective tRNAs can arise from errors during transcription, which could lead to disruptions in translation. Many are related to health implications such as neurodegenerative diseases and cancer. However, mechanisms are in place to spot and eliminate aberrant tRNAs. Caloric restriction has been seen to activate these pathways. In this study, we investigated the effects of nutrient deprivation (glucose) on the tRNA quality of the yeast cell BY4741. The cells were subjected to glucose deprivation, then their RNA was extracted for analysis. We side with the idea that under glucose restriction, there will be a reduction in the adulation of defective tRNAs and quality. This will provide a better insight into the prolonged stress of yeast cells without glucose.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Impacts of Land Use on Soil Microbiome (B7)

Alexandra Couch

This study evaluated the relative quantities of fungi and bacteria in soil samples collected from various sites with different land uses. The sites included campus sites, a cleaned-up trash dump, a rural residential area, and a farm. The moisture content, mineral and organic percentages, nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations were also studied. QPCR was used to measure bacterial and fungal contents of isolated DNA samples. Samples taken from the trash dump had significantly lower bacterial content and higher fungal content compared to samples taken from campus, the farm, and the residential site. Additionally, samples taken from the trash dump showed increased moisture percentage. This may indicate a correlation between an increased fungal-to-bacterial ratio and increased moisture content.

MLB Payroll and Win Percentage Analysis (B8)

Andrew Rust ’26

I conducted a study to see how payroll affects winning percentage for Major League Baseball (MLB) teams during the regular season. I found that as payroll increases, win percentage increases, but there is a drop-off point. I also found that it might be more beneficial for teams to allocate their payroll across the entire roster instead of only their top 5 star players.

Now You See It, Now You Don’t: Investigating the Role of Impulsivity in Change Blindness (B9)

Shania Stone ’26

I am studying change blindness and impulsivity, researching the effects of impulsivity on change blindness detection speed and accuracy. Basically, I'm exploring under-researched temporal parameters and addressing inconsistencies within experimental design by attempting to standardize and systematically investigate flicker ratios within change blindness flicker paradigm research.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Detection of Two Classes of Aberrant tRNA in Yeast Cells Under Stress (B10)

Collin LaVeck ’27

The role of transfer RNA (tRNA) is critical in protein synthesis and is extensively modified to maintain its structure and function. In this study, tRNA was isolated from yeast cells exposed to various conditions to assess the effects of environmental stress on tRNA. Small RNA was extracted using phenol-based methods, followed by enzymatic digestion and dephosphorylation. Liquid chromatography was used to analyze nucleosides and their modifications. Reverse transcription and PCR confirmed successful tRNA isolation and agarose gel electrophoresis showed variable band intensity. These results suggest that environmental stress influences and modifies tRNA abundance and quality.

Reasons Students Participate in the FIRE Week Trip at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont (B11)

Alana Williams ’28

Analysis of Wittenberg students and why they choose to attend the FIRE Week Trip at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. Surveys were done with most of the students who went on the trip. Interests were ranked in different sections, numbered 1-4. Includes the background of the trip as well.

Screening for Antibiotic-Activity in Soil Bacteria (B12)

Svetlana Daniels ’28

In this study, soil samples were collected from Wittenberg University’s campus. Bacterial colonies were then isolated and tested for inhibition against E. coli, S. epidermidis, and B. subtilis. Out of 192 colonies screened, 13 showed antibiotic activity. Upon genome sequencing, nearly all were identified as part of the Bacillus family. Nonetheless, this study offered hands-on experience with a very current medical issue.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Sex Differences in Operant Food-Reward Behavior in Rats (B13)

Kayleigh Arnold ’26

In rats, “motivation” for rewards can be assessed through operant conditioning, where rats learn that a specific action, such as pressing a lever, results in a consequence, such as an automatic delivery of a food reward, By pressing a lever, rats learn to earn an automated delivery food reward, causing rats to continue to press the lever. Food is a biological reward, but motivation for food can be based on biological sex. In humans and rats, differences are apparent in eating behavior and motivation. In rats, male rats are biologically larger than female rats which may influence motivation for food, but the specific behavioral changes that occur remain unclear.

Student Sense of Belonging in Academic Programs (B14)

Bethany Allen ’29

This study explores how students experience a sense of belonging in their program of study. Belonging includes feeling: Accepted, Valued, Supported by peers/staff. Goal: Understand what strengthens/weakens community in academic programs

The Effects of Accepting vs. Rejecting Negative Labels on Social Media Impressions (B15)

Emma Keene ’28, Kaylyn Smith ’27

This poster covers a replication study examining the effects of a person rejecting or accepting a negative label and how that affects participants' impressions of them, specifically in an online setting. The participants rated perceived likability and leadership ability of the person, as well as the negativity of the word.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

The Effects of Northeast Winds on Uca Minax Megalopae Abundance (B16)

Kiara Haislip ’29

On the coast of Beaufort, North Carolina, three different species of fiddler crabs are found: Uca pugilator, U.pugnax, and U. minax. Their larvae develop offshore in the Atlantic Ocean, where wind direction affects water movement at different depths. We collected samples of plankton entering the estuary, identifying the fiddler crab megalopae in the plankton. We compared the abundance of U.Minax to wind direction on the sample date to determine whether NE winds affect transport of U. minax megalopae differently than the other species.

Using BirdWeather to Assess Spring Migration Phenology of Wood Thrush: A Pilot Study (B17)

Kilen Limes ’26

Community science has been on the rise for application for bird conservation efforts in recent years. A global database of bird vocalizations using artificial intelligence called BirdWeather, has been developed to help everyone see where birds are remotely. By gathering detection data of Wood Thrush across their breeding range during spring migration, I hope to find if BirdWeather can be used to replicate regional migratory phenology patterns for further application within conservation.

The removal of Japanese honeysuckle and its effects on biodiversity (B18)

Averi Wells ’26

Japanese honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica) is a species of honeysuckle that is native to East Asia. Now, one of the most invasive plants in Ohio, efforts for its removal have increased in order to conserve native plant species. Invasive honeysuckle is known to alternative ecosystems, potentially decreasing biodiversity. However, it has also established a functional role in some ecosystems. This study evaluated the effects of honeysuckle removal on plant and invertebrate biodiversity by comparing treated and untreated sites, in order to observe whether or not complete removal of honeysuckle is harmful to the biodiversity of an ecosystem.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Thermal degradation and GCMS of polymers using copper wire as a SPME fiber substitute. (B19)

Ezekiel Forster ’27

Gas chromatography and mass spectrometry (GC/MS) are generally unable to analyze molecules with a high molecular weight. Polymers often fall above this limit. This issue can be resolved by a process known as thermal degradation, in which a polymer sample is placed in a vial and heated until it degrades, releasing distinct volatile fragments that can be collected by solid phase microextraction (SPME). These volatile fragments are small enough to be read by the GC/MS instrument. This entire process is known as TD-GC/MS. A cost efficient and easy setup for this process was created using metal tubing, small glass vials, and a sand bath. This setup eliminated the need for TEC cooling on the tube and appeared to work well for even very small masses of polymer. A standard method was established to identify any of the three polymers tested in this project, namely polystyrene, PETE, and HDPE. Additionally, experimentation was conducted to determine if fine copper wire is a suitable, cost-effective alternative to expensive SPME fibers. Replacing the fibers with unmodified copper wire did not provide effective results.

Study of the Urban Heat Island Effect on Bird Biodiversity (B20)

Lucas Eisele ’26

The urban heat island effect (UHI) is a phenomenon that occurs when surface temperatures in densely populated cities are higher than the surrounding areas. Generally, this is because of greater impervious surface cover, which leads to greater heat absorption along with increased emissions. Although some species of birds are adaptable and can live in cities, most prefer to live farther away. Greater tree cover is a driving factor in bird biodiversity and the importance of them is highlighted in urban parks that attract bird species. Trees and urban green spaces are pivotal for preserving biodiversity.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Snooze or Lose: The Role of Sleep Hygiene in College Student Well-Being (B21)

Lexi Wells ’28, Maddy Doerman ’28, Garrett Slater ’28

This poster presentation examines the role of sleep hygiene in promoting mental and physical health among college students. Poor sleep habits are associated with increased stress, anxiety, weakened immune function, and decreased academic performance. By highlighting evidence-based strategies such as maintaining consistent sleep schedules, limiting screen time, and creating restful environments. This project emphasizes how improving sleep hygiene can enhance overall well-being, cognitive function, and daily functioning in the college population.

Virtual Reality Settings' Effect on College Students' Affect (B22)

Taylor Collins ’26

College students experience significant stress when transitioning from high school to college, and factors such as academic pressures and financial strain are key contributors to an individual’s stress level. Due to financial stress being part of the burden, there must be a cost-effective way to improve college students' affect and wellbeing. When looking into what impacts mood, it was specifically interesting how exposure to nature influences us. Consequently, I conducted a study examining the difference in mood and affect before and after being exposed to a nature or non-nature scene.

Breaking the Habit: Lowering Tobacco and Nicotine Use in Youth and Adults (B23)

Sarah Deaton ’28

Our poster will display information regarding the global issue of nicotine and tobacco use in youth and adults. It will contain our PICOT question: Among the youth, how does education on the long term harmful effects of smoking and the social determinants of tobacco and nicotine use compared to no such education affect the rate of nicotine and tobacco use? It will also contain statistical graphs representing the population, interventions to lower tobacco use, challenges, summary of evidence, and more topics related to this bad habit.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Dose of Reality: Preventing Overdose Death Before It Happens (B24)

Kaylynn Spencer ’28, Tanner Domyanich ’28, Fatima Abu ’28

This poster is about whether or not Naloxone distribution and overdose education has an effect on overdose-related mortality rates among young adults.

Spread facts, NOT STI’s (B25)

Kylie Hornbeck ’28, Mallory Adams ’28, Nathan Ruban ’28

The rates at which STI’s spread through female college students based on if they use a condom or not during sexual activity.

The Growth of Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria in Sports Equipment (B26)

Lillian Chylik ’29, Ellan Ortiz ’29

This is a FYRA project that will look at athletic players' gear and whether they accumulate skin-associated microbiota with use. The hypothesis is that the relative proportion of antibiotic-sensitive bacteria will increase, leading to a lower detectable frequency of antibiotic-resistant bacteria compared to brand-new gears. Microbial colonization of new gear will increase over time and will primarily consist of antibiotic-sensitive species, with resistant strains appearing at low frequency. Any observed decrease in the proportion of resistant bacteria on used gear would likely result from increased colonization by common, antibiotic-sensitive skin flora rather than active ecological suppression.

Rural and Urban Populations of Red-Eared Sliders and Painted Turtles in Clark County (B27)

Alexios Avouris ’29, Jacob McDonald ’29

Looking at populations of red-eared sliders and painted turtles in ponds that are in rural or urban areas in order to estimate relative population size in order to determine the status of red-eared sliders as a potentially invasive species. Using net traps and observations, multiple ponds in each category are trapped and captured turtles are marked, recorded, and released.

Poster Session B

(continued)

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thomas Library

Global Education at Witt (B28)

Andrew Inks ’26

The Office of International Education wanted to emphasize global connections at Witt, as well as the school’s history of having international students. The OIE will be presenting a poster presentation that includes infographics of the international student population and involvement, both former and current. Also, showcasing how students can get involved with multicultural programs and study abroad at Witt. That includes Wittenberg Faculty-Led Programs, Third Party Programs, and Summer Programs. At the OIE we feel that maintaining relations with international pipelines, whether through exchange programs or global enrollment, is paramount for the liberal arts landscape of Wittenberg.

Startup Success Rates in Venture Capital Hubs (B29)

Michael Eickhoff ’26

The main premise of my project is to understand how geographic location of a startup can affect its success. I do this by looking at how access to venture capital funding, total funding, investor participation, and age all affect whether or not the company was acquired. I use a logit model to test all my variables and build my project.

Panel Session 3

4:30-5:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 101

Panel A – Prologue to Somewhere: Senior Art Thesis Showcase

Moderator: Sabrina Jaffe

Lanie Mersch ’26

In my work “I Carry Her With Me,” I am inspired by the feeling of nostalgia. Nostalgia has a tendency to bring people together and elicit feelings of fondness, and sentimental longing. My work explores the concepts of time, attachment, and memory as I reflect on my own personal life. I focus primarily on themes prevalent in my childhood and how they correlate with my current thoughts, behaviors, and experiences as an adult. As I grow older, I realise more and more how unique and formative our childhood is, and how I wouldn’t be the woman I am today without my child self.

Sam Monnin ’26

My project “Through the Times" is about feminine rage due to the current standing of our government. While we are going through these times, it has brought to my attention how we seem to be going backwards instead of forwards with our rights. I decided to show this by having 5 main pieces that are joined with red string and a bunch of smaller pictures. These bigger pictures take you back in time; we start off with a photo collage in the center then we move on to the Viking era that shows you how women have an inner warrior. Then we move on to the 1970s when women were fighting for equality. Next the 1990s when we were fighting for the LGBTQ+ rights. All of these show you how we have been fighting for our rights and how it seems like a never-ending battle. The smaller pictures around these bigger photos will show us the behind the scenes of these photos mixed with glimpses of the friendship between my model and I. Which also shows how connected my model and I are to this piece.

MK Kirkpatrick ’26

"Ad Infinitum" is a project that combines my Art and Computer Science majors into one. It is a platformer styled video game featuring painted backgrounds and hand-drawn animation. Drawing inspiration from personal struggles, you navigate a dark house as a cat, led by poetic words and a mirror self.

Becca Schafer ’26

My thesis, "From West to Midwest: Sculpting who I am," is a concentration focusing on wheel thrown ceramics where I can add aspects of West coast where I grew up on to ceramic ware, as well as adding aspects of the Midwest where I was born and moved to for college. Each piece will have attachments of animals, reptiles, bugs, plants or carvings engraved onto them that have a special meaning. The ceramic ware varies from mugs, vases, and bowls with different techniques used.

Oral Presentations Session 3

4:30-5:30 p.m.
Blair Hall 201

Moderator: Catherine Short

Between Books and Burnout: The Effects of Academic and Extracurricular Involvement on Student Health

Haleigh Heising ’26

This project will explore the relationship and/or correlation between college students’ chosen majors and extracurriculars and potential mental or physical illnesses. By examining connections between academic demands, involvement outside of the classroom, and student well-being, the research aims to identify both risk factors and supports for any potential illness. The findings may guide campus initiatives and nursing practice in promoting healthier student outcomes.

One of the Boys or Just a Girl? Female Instrumentalists in Pre-1980s Hard Rock

Emma Leckey ’26

Traditional gender roles and expectations of gender presentation have contributed to the hostility toward women in rock music. While the contributions of female instrumentalists in rock have been overlooked until recent years, women have been present in the genre since its creation. This project analyzes and compares the gender presentations of Joan Jett and Suzi Quatro pre-1980 and makes the case that neither a masculine "one of the boys" nor a feminine "just a girl" public persona allowed these women to escape the misogyny prevalent in the genre.

Senior Art Theses

2:30-6:00 p.m.
Koch Hall

Abby Rohrer ’26

My exhibition “Familiar” contains portraits of dogs belonging to my grandparents and to my family. Most of these dogs have passed away, excluding the Burnese Mountain Dog and the Dachshund. I chose to paint these dogs because they have had a major impact on me and alter my day-to-day life. I hope that looking at these paintings reminds people of their own pets or experiences with animals. Also, I hope people see the love and care I have put into the paintings, because it is the same love and care that the dogs gave to me.

Francesca Heidinger ’26

Inspired by Pink Floyd’s "The Wall," my body of work “Where the Wall Cracks” reimagines the album’s narrative through a personal lens, merging its themes with my own experiences of trauma. Through Cubist fragmentation and contemporary abstraction, the pieces reflect the disjointed, nonlinear nature of life, memory, and emotion. Moments of escape and self-destructive coping emerge throughout, hinting at the ways pain is often managed but never resolved. The series moves through isolation, repression, and confrontation, translating sound into fractured visual forms. Together, these paintings trace an emotional journey, revealing trauma as both deeply wounding and quietly transformative.

Gabby Conaway ’26

Andromeda Printing Co. is a digital media project in which details made a series of magazines based on different topics I am passionate about; including fashion, music, science, and cooking. Each magazine reflects a different niche style fitted to the topic of the magazine, all falling under the branding guidelines I created.

Kris Such ’26

Lotus-Eater’s Paracosm is the first chapter of a graphic novel by the same name. Created after realizing the genre was missing stories with female leads and gay relationships, the chapter serves as an introduction to a horror-tragedy story about the relationship between two childhood best friends and how that relationship comes to its unavoidably bloody end.

Luke Stanfield ’26

This collection of work is my senior study in tea pots. They can come in all shapes, sizes and colors. I wanted to push form of the media along with expressing the beauty within throwing clay with the different colas types used. Throughout the throwing process you can see different swirling and contrasts from the different clay bodies. I want to push past the glaze that may cover a piece and show how the process of throwing itself is just as beautiful as the color added later.

Senior Art Theses

(continued)

2:30-6:00 p.m.

Koch Hall

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Presentations by Author