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GILLETTE GETS A GLOW UP!

AIVERY SHUCK '26

Houghton University (HU) is embarking on new renovations and upgrades. One of the biggest is Gillette Hall, which will be renamed East Hall in fall 2026. Vice President of Advancement and External Engagement Karl Sisson and President Wayne D. Lewis Jr. secured a gift of $10.4 million from Donald and Beverley (Roberts '56) Greene. The donation will be used to improve the residential living experience for Gillette residents.

The renovations are a part of the University Strategic Plan, Priority #3, "Capital Investment," which focuses on modernizing residential areas. A major part of this plan is to improve accessibility, safety, security and privacy in one major residence on campus. Another part involves completing two previously paused capital projects that would improve accessibility, safety, security and aesthetics for the campus.



Gillette undergoing renovations.
COURTESY OF LAURA QUISENBERRY

HU also submitted a grant proposal to New York State that would help advance campus wide security. The grant was accepted, but there is no set date for the project's start. This project is expected to enhance existing safety measures, although more information on this will not be known until after the contract is in place.

When asked how the renovations will help students on campus, Vice President for Student Engagement Bill Burrichter said, "The updated facilities will significantly enhance accessibility opportunities through the addition of an elevator that will access all floors of the building, creating more accessible bathrooms and lounge spaces for students. A new roof, internal mechanical updates and new floors, ceiling tiles, paint and built-in furniture will provide for a comfortable and pleasurable environment for residents."

Not only will Gillette be renovated, but the Health Center will also be getting new flooring, paint, ceilings, bathroom fixtures and cabinets. Additional renovation plans include a new pull-in area along the roadside of Gillette, as well as an outdoor lounge space. "The Gillette Hall renovation will improve the quality of the living environment for the women who will live in this residence hall," Burrichter said.

Rachael Smith '26, a current Gillette resident, said, "I am very excited about the Gillette renovations. I am so grateful to the donors who provided the funds to make Gillette a safer place for us to live!"

Among the many new campus upgrades is a new laundry service. The previous laundry machines well exceeded the expected life of the machines. A new lease was secured with Caldwell and Gregory Laundry Services to provide more efficient and effective machines for the students. Each laundry room was updated with new paint and flooring, and the machines are now managed through an app called Speed Queen. Student

See **GILLETTE** *page #2*

Israel Accused of Genocide

SYDNEY ARNOLD '27

On Sept. 16, 2025, the United Nations' Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) accused Israel of carrying out four of the five genocidal acts outlined in international law against the Palestinians in Gaza.

"Israel's foreign ministry said it categorically rejected the report, denouncing it as 'distorted and false,'" reported the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Israel's political and military leaders continuously stated that Israel's military operations are "in self-defense, to defeat Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, and to secure the release of Israeli hostages." The leaders also "insisted that Israeli forces operate in accordance with international law and take all feasible measures to mitigate harm to civilians."

However, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, shared in the BBC's piece that "Prime Minister Netanyahu vowed to inflict… 'mighty vengeance' on 'all of the places where Hamas is deployed, hiding and operating in, that wicked city, we will turn them into rubble'" and told Palestinians to "leave now because we will operate forcefully everywhere."

Despite continuous denial from Israel, the Commission stated that "genocidal intent was the only reasonable inference."

The United Nations categorizes the crime of genocide into two main components: physical and mental. Among the physical acts for which Israel has been accused, the four charges include the killing of group members, interfering with births, deliberately creating conditions that contribute to the destruction of the group, and inflicting serious bodily and mental harm. For the mental aspect, there must be an "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group."

The qualifications for this decision are outlined in the UN's General Assembly Transcript. The Commission stated that the significant casualties fall outside the accepted parameters of just warfare. They emphasized that "mass casualties, mass destruction, mass displacement, and mass starvation continue to be inflicted in Gaza daily by Israeli occupying forces." It was also reported that "the casualty toll is nearing 52,000 Palestinians killed and over 117,000 injured," with the majority being civilians, specifically women and children. Additionally, the United Nations Commis-

See **ISRAEL** *page #2*


COURTESY OF EMAD EL BYED / UNSPLASH
Destruction in Rafah after being bombed by the State of Israel.

Tanya Perkins

KATIE ULRICH '29

At the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year, Houghton University (HU) graduate Tanya Perkins '95 became the school's new Director of Student Engagement.

During her time at HU, she was a member of the soccer team and majored in Outdoor Recreation with a minor in Spanish.

Before returning to HU, Perkins worked part-time as the college ministry director at Christ Community Church in Geneseo, NY. She served the students who attended the church and worked with the Christian campus community, Intervarsity. Perkins developed an unexpected passion for ministering to college students- "I didn't realize how much I would love it until I started it," she said.

To supplement her part-time income, Perkins took on other jobs, but knew she needed a change. "I felt like God was pushing me to move on," said Perkins. She began interviewing for jobs that would give her more flexibility within her church role. "I was hoping to actually move to Geneseo, so I could be more available and more ready to meet with students on the fly," Perkins explained.

During her search, HU's Slate administrator and Perkins' daughter-in-law, Zoe Perkins, discovered an open position at the university and encouraged Perkins to apply.

"Tanya has experience working with college students and a background in recreation. Furthermore, she holds a strong Christian faith," commented Zoe Perkins. "I thought she'd be a great addition to the Houghton community."

Tanya Perkins was hesitant at first. "I wasn't sure because I knew it was a full-time job… That was really tough because I wasn't looking to leave [Christ Community Church]," she said. "I was looking to supplement it with something different. But as I went through that process… I really do feel like God flung the door open for Houghton to happen."

As Director of Student Engagement, Perkins' responsibilities include overseeing organizations such as the Student Council and the Campus Activities Board (CAB). In addition, she helps set up new clubs and plan budgets and events.

CAB President Emma Podobinski '27 said the change in leadership worried her at first, but Perkins quickly put her at ease. "Knowing that there was going to be a transition of supervisors, it was a little scary," said Podobinski. "But Tanya is super amazing, and I was in contact with her over the summer, and I knew right away that it was going to be good." Podobinski works closely with Perkins to organize CAB events and budgets. She said that she and Perkins "share the weight" of meetings, working together to lead the group.

"I love being part of the team—talking and creating and brainstorming," she said.

Perkins said the most rewarding aspect of her job is interacting with students. She enjoys advising and helping run organizations, but also appreciates being involved in activities like ultimate frisbee with students.

Although ministry is not a chief part of her job description, it is still important to Perkins: "Spiritual life, such as discipleship and mentorship, is my heart and passion- that is what truly brings me joy." ⋆

ISRAEL *from page #1*

sioner for Human Rights confirmed that "in 36 recent Israeli strikes, all those who lost their lives were women and children." These acts, according to the COI, constitute as the deliberate killing of group members.

Inflicting mental harm on a group includes acts like "bulldozing entire cemeteries, desecrating graves, and even tormenting the dead." The COI asserts that these actions once again reveal Israel's "genocidal attempts" by inflicting both mental and physical harm.

Additionally, the COI cited evidence that Israeli forces were deliberately preventing births and targeting critical infrastructure. "As it persists with its attacks on humanitarians, Israel also continues its systematic attacks on the health system in Gaza, intent on depriving Palestinians of life-saving care, further contributing to their demise and thus further exposing its genocidal intent," the COI said. On May 27, 2025, the BBC wrote, "through the December 2023 attack on Gaza's largest fertility clinic, reportedly destroying around 4,000 embryos and 1,000 sperm samples, and unfertilized eggs."

The third observed genocidal act is creating conditions that contribute to the destruction of the group. These acts may include: forced evacuation of homeland, killing by all means of lethal weaponry, or by starvation and disease.

Israeli Minister of War Israel Katz declared that "no humanitarian aid is set to enter Gaza." He said the blocking of humanitarian aid and vital resources serves as a "pressure tool" (Reuters). The COI assembly reported that "food and water are intentionally being withheld with total disregard for civilian welfare, including that of 1 million children."

The Commission concluded its assembly by stating, "Stopping this genocide and ending this illegal occupation and historic injustice are existential matters for preserving human life and our common humanity… for establishing peace and security for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, the Middle East and globally."⋆

GILLETTE *from page #1*

McGlynn '26 said, "The laundry machine transition has sought to bring upgrades to the laundry machines as well as give students more information on availability."

Kinley Construction and CPL have been working on Gillette since this past summer, and HU students can expect the Gillette renovations to be done by the end of Summer 2026. "We are also grateful to the patience of the students as we work together to complete this project," Burrichter said. "We know that the interruptions have an impact and want to thank everyone for their understanding."⋆

THE WEEKLY W'S

These Highlander teams took home the win this week.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

	1	2	FINAL
HOUGHTON	3	1	**4**
BUFFALO ST.	0	1	**1**

	1	2	FINAL
HOUGHTON	1	2	**3**
ALFRED ST.	0	0	**0**

Grab a STAR to stay up to date on the Houghton Highlanders!!

MEN'S SOCCER

	1	2	FINAL
HOUGHTON	1	1	**2**
FREDONIA	1	0	**1**

WOMEN'S TENNIS

	D1	D2	D3	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	MATCH
HOUGHTON	6	6	6	6-6	6-6	6-6	6-6	6-6	6-6	**7**
SAGE	0	0	0	1-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	**0**

STAR ⋆ PLAYER



Jessica Prentice '27

This week's STAR Player is Jess Prentice '27, a right-side hitter for the Women's Volleyball team who is majoring in Exercise Science and minoring in Psychology.

Prentice is described as joyful, spontaneous and reliable.

"She provides so much warmth to our team, something that I think both upper and lower classmen value. Jess is a hard worker on and off the court," Houghton Women's Volleyball Assistant Coach Ella Smith said.

Prentice talked about how thankful she is for her team. "My closest friendships have been made through this team, and that's something that I'll always be so grateful for. Having teammates who always have your back, and your best interest is something so special."

The Houghton University Women's Volleyball team is heading into conference games next week. Prentice expressed that she is confident in the team and knows that they will play to the best of their ability, with Christ in the center. ⋆

— Kara Valandra '27

Letters to the Editor

NOAH HRUSTICH '27

After spending over eight years in the top ten spots of the Billboard 200, Taylor Swift has become a massive celebrity and is now worth 1.6 billion dollars. One could say this kind of fame is marked once a person receives heavy criticism or they are featured on NFL TV—a realm that is relatively distant from the music industry. Jokes concerning Swift are not new. Indeed, they are expected of a famous public figure. Any figure who holds numerous musical accolades and who Harvard offered a course about (Spring 2024: Taylor Swift and Her World) will inevitably receive negative feedback along with their positive achievements.

Few people criticize Swift for writing about her dating and break-up experiences. Instead, she receives actual criticism because she writes most of her songs on this topic. In the same genre. In the same style. That are sometimes hard to differentiate between. This is why her musicianship is called into scrutiny by some. Attempting to bolster her by saying she plays several instruments is quite unimpressive—just ask one of our Music Education majors who learn every instrument. However, commendation must be given for her singing abilities… at least her abilities before she was auto tuned to high heaven. This specific criticism is not of her alone, though, but of many pop singers because famous people are criticized. Furthermore, critics knock Swift's musicianship because she lip-synced on her recent Eras Tour. This is not an opinion but rather a proven fact which has been shown by comparing recordings from her various venues.

For Christ followers, Taylor Swift has been called into scrutiny for her religious views. As Christians, this should be prioritized. Christians should carefully understand those who we allow to influence us. Swift's lyrics and comments have accusations of being syncretistic as well as other claims. Instead of telling the reader how to think, the author would encourage one to analyze her lyrics for oneself and draw one's own conclusions. If the reader concludes that Taylor Swift is of questionable Christian integrity, the author would like to posit that the dislike of Taylor Swift's character (or her music, musical ability, or influence for that matter) is not misogynistic but a view conducive of a Christian perspective.

Moving past the strawman of Swift being hated for writing romance songs as a woman and the appeal to emotion that teenage girl fans are laughed at because they like Swift, a reasonable conclusion is that people have opinions. Choosing to like Swift's music or hate it is a right we have as Americans and as humans created in the image of God. Calling into question her doctrine is also not misogynistic, but rather what we are called to do as discerning Christians.

Putting Taylor Swift to the side (after all none of this will matter in time), let this be a moment of reflection of who we allow influence in our lives and what kind of content we consume. Are we consuming worldly content or content that we have discerned is good, acceptable, perfect, and in line with God's divine will? Here is a word of encouragement that can help us thoughtfully meditate today. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2 ESV). ★

PAUL CLAYDON '28

I am writing this in response to a fellow Houghton student who wrote an opinion piece in last weeks STAR titled "Why hating Taylor Swift is Misogynistic," which I found to be worth responding to with respectful dialogue. My purpose in writing this article is not to bash this person's character because I do not know them and that would not be charitable. My purpose is to engage with what was written.

I will start off by saying to label all those who hate Taylor Swift as misogynistic without understanding why they hate Taylor Swift is not good. People, men in particular, may have a variety of reasons why they hate Taylor, but to paint them all as misogynistic would be inaccurate and it uses Taylor's gender to shield her from criticism. To the claim "If a man had produced the same songs (breakup songs) she had, he would have been praised," I say male artists rarely produce breakup songs because male audiences' frown upon that kind of music. Men do not like it when someone's dirty laundry from their relationship gets aired in public. We view that as disrespectful, but women typically do not and that's why Taylor is so popular among women, and I find that disturbing. Here is why: Men are often the most mistreated in relationships these days, in part because of Taylor's breakup songs which are disrespectful towards men and inadvertently encourage women to treat men the same way Taylor treated the boyfriends she wrote about.

We talk all the time about the problems women have in relationships, but we never talk about the problems men face unless it is about how we are the problem. Taylor's negative influence on young women has helped fuel this toxic dating culture that is not good for men or women. Men are giving up on dating and marriage because they fear ending up with a woman who does not respect men in part because of the negative influence of people like Taylor Swift.

So no, I do not hate Taylor Swift because I am misogynistic, it is quite the opposite, I hate Taylor Swift because she has a negative influence on young women and I think that women, Christian women especially, can do better than Taylor Swift. Listening to her music may not be bad in and of itself but some of the messaging in it and how it influences us is something all Christians must be aware of. This does not just apply to Taylor Swift music but also to all music. All artists make music to influence people to think certain ways for better or worse. Taylor Swift and other popular artists have been used to push radical far left ideologies and agendas that are anti-Christian so we must always be aware of what we listen to. I will end this off by saying may I decrease so that Christ may increase, may peace of the Lord be upon you and have a blessed day. ★

Have an opinion you want to share?

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SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor should be less than 600 words

SUBMIT TO **star@houghton.edu**

The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton University since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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Book Review

Project Hail Mary

DOMINIC LARSON '27

"Project Hail Mary" by Andy Weir (2021) spoiler-free review

Thrilling high stakes. Dense yet thoroughly intriguing and understandable science. A heartwarming, unlikely friendship. "Project Hail Mary" is a masterclass in science fiction storytelling.

"Project Hail Mary" begins with our main protagonist waking up from a deep sleep. He does not know where he is or why he is there, nor does he even know his own name. He quickly discovers his name is Ryland Grace, and he is on a spacecraft somewhere far away from Earth. Throughout the novel, Grace slowly remembers bits and pieces of his past, which are revealed to the reader through chapter-long flashbacks to his life before somehow ending up in space. He learns that the reason he is there is of such importance that the fate of the entire human race hangs in the balance, and he may be their last hope. In every chapter, many questions are raised and many are answered. As a result, the mystery unfolds at a natural pace, with twists and turns around every corner. The novel also masterfully employs the cliffhanger formula, in which every chapter ends with a thrilling revelation that makes it nearly impossible to put down until the very last page.

The main scenario that poses such a huge threat to humanity is among the most thrilling conflicts I have ever experienced in any story. It is breathtakingly huge in scale, yet feels deeply grounded in reality thanks to truly ingenious writing from Weir. Unlike many high-concept sci-fi stories where events are unexplained and reality is suspended, "Project Hail Mary" is written in such a way that every scenario, no matter how fantastical, is thoroughly explained and therefore is entirely believable. This is achieved through extensive, science-based explanations for every mystery, which never become tedious and are instead electrifying and baffling every single time.

Around a quarter of the way through the story, Grace meets Rocky, the secondary protagonist. The two must learn how to communicate and coexist with one another, which proves highly difficult due to many complications. Regardless, they quickly form an unlikely friendship, which raises the overall stakes even higher, since we grow to love both characters, and either of them dying means the other would be left alone. The friendship between Grace and Rocky is the driving force of the entire back half of the novel. It is evident that neither character could possibly accomplish the impossible tasks that are required of them without the support of the other. Every single aspect of their friendship is heartwarming and constantly puts a smile on my face. Not to mention, Rocky is hands down my favorite character in any book, TV, or movie in recent memory. Everything about his personality is lovable and quirky in all the best ways.

It is extremely difficult to write a proper review for "Project Hail Mary" without going in depth about the engaging science, huge reveals, and baffling twists and turns, but I tried my best in hopes that you can experience this masterpiece for yourself in full. The novel is phenomenal anyway you read it, but I highly suggest the Audible audiobook, narrated with perfection by Ray Porter. This book, more than any other I have experienced, has elements that are elevated by the strong audiobook narration.

Also, "Project Hail Mary" has been made into a motion picture starring Ryan Gosling, which will be released theatrically on March 20. Overall, "Project Hail Mary" is the closest thing to perfect sci-fi storytelling that I have ever seen or can even imagine. In fact, I am willing to say that storytelling in general does not get better than this. Every element is expertly crafted with deep care and thoughtfulness, resulting in an awe-inspiring and exhilarating thrill ride from start to finish. ⋆

Final score: 5/5 (a must-read)

Want to write a review of a book, movie, etc.?
Want to recommend an Artist-of-the-Week?

CONTACT
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Artist of the Week



ABIGAIL MAYS '27

"My name is Abigail Mays, I'm a Junior at Houghton studying for my Bachelors of Fine Arts. I'm also one of the four gallery assistants at the Ortlip Gallery on campus. I love many mediums, 2-D and 3-D but my favorites are watercolor and photography. After graduation I would love to become a children's book illustrator or continue my work in the gallery." ⋆







