

Houghton Lacrosse Faces Extinction

ERIN MAGGIO

On Thursday January 21, the Houghton Athletic Department announced that its men's and women's lacrosse programs would have just one last season of competition this spring before being discontinued.

This past fall a task force, with representation from athletics and enrollment, was assembled for a formal review which led to the decision that was then finalized in January.

The press release cites this change being made to allow for resources to be reallocated, especially to give more support to programs they feel have "the potential for greater strategic impact and growth for the department and college." This includes a plan to put more support into various areas including wellness and recreation programming and the track and field program.

The task force found that there is a growing interest in the health and wellness of the community. In order to fill this, the department is planning to bolster its offerings of fit-



Cori Beck ('20) cradles the ball in-game.

COURTESY OF JASON MUCHER

ness opportunities, maximize the use of Houghton's facilities, launch a club sports program, and rejuvenate its intramural sports.

In terms of reallocation in the track and field program, this decision means the addition of two graduate assistant coaches. Director of Athletics Matthew Webb says that "of all our sports, track and field has the greatest potential to

grow its roster. We are increasing our expectations for recruitment in this area...[and] we anticipate this investment will have a positive impact on the enrollment of new students at the college."

Current and former students, though, were not as impressed. Upon hearing of this decision, a group of eight current and former Houghton lacrosse players created an online petition

directed to the College's Board of Trustees. The group—consisting of Nathan Anderson ('21), Andrew Bub ('19), Cole Chapman ('19), Marissa Hews ('20), Quinn Hull ('20), Alyssa Johnson (Strom) ('18), Tom Woodward ('20), and Michael Wrobel ('21)—included a few who originally wrote individual letters to Matthew Webb. According to Hull, all of these were

met with nearly identical responses.

After receiving those responses, I jumped on a FaceTime call with former teammates of mine Tom Woodward, Nate Anderson, Mike Wrobel, Andrew Bub, and Cole Chapman. We all decided that our next move would be to write to the chairman of the board of trustees for Houghton College in an attempt to have them review this decision. The six of us reached out to Marissa Hews and Alyssa Johnson of the women's program to help us with their side of things and make sure both teams had a voice in this attempt at a review," Hull recounted. This letter was included at the beginning of the petition.

Along with other aspects, the letter included qualms with the decision itself. Primarily, they felt the decision was contradictory. Webb stated that the decision was made to "find ways to invest our resources that align with [the Athletic Departments'] priorities for competitive ex-

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Dining Services Evolve To Meet Complex Demands

JOHANNA FLOREZ

Changes in dining hall practices and offerings quickly come to the attention of large numbers of students. Many are already aware that the semester's first three weeks saw three different models of breakfast service; less available is information regarding what went on behind the scenes of this and other recent changes to Houghton's dining services.

The "Dining Service Regular Hours" distributed via all-campus email on January 21st indicated that the dining hall would not be open until 10:45am on weekends. These were reduced hours compared to the fall semester's con-



Houghton dining hall stands empty between meals.

COURTESY OF EVAN TSAI

sistent 7-9:30am breakfast slot (which was itself a change from prior years' continuous grab-and-go dining for students on full access meal plans). The decision to turn weekend breakfasts into a later "brunch" was made in mid-December, according to Metz General Manager Bryon Richards. Multiple departments agreed on the adjustment, including Dining Services, the Of-

fice of Student Life, Center for Engagement and Hospitality, and the Office of Finance.

Richards explains that weekend breakfast attendance started being evaluated "about two years ago." "We... saw a steady decline in participation between each semester," he says. "We also looked at the trends from other colleges in the region and saw that many had discontinued their weekend

breakfast programs and moved to a brunch/dinner pattern on the weekends." The fall 2020 semester also saw even fewer students than usual coming to breakfast on the weekends: "at most only 80 students" had breakfast in the dining hall on any Saturday or Sunday last semester. With so many students learning remotely, Dining Services anticipated even fewer people eating weekend

breakfast. According to Izzy Gritsavage '24, who has worked in the dining hall since fall 2020, each hot breakfast requires about six employees and eighteen payroll hours, regardless of how many people come to eat.

Despite the low average attendance at weekend breakfasts, students voiced concerns via Facebook and email. On Saturday January 30, an email from Marc Smithers informed students that they could request a takeout breakfast on Friday and Saturday afternoons to pick up at dinnertime and eat the following day. Richards later stated, "The decision to offer weekend night before breakfast pickup was always an option that was to be available for those students who still wanted an early breakfast on the weekend due to our changes."

While no one was able to pick up breakfast that Friday to eat Saturday morning, Sarah Evans '22 tried the Sunday morning

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News: HOUGHTON PROFESSOR PERFORMS IN "ZOOMSICAL"

VICTORIA HOCK

Houghton College Professor and director of the Lyric Theatre Amanda Cox has been cast in *USUCC: An Original Zoomsical*. This show chronicles the story of Hannah the Hound, an adjunct professor of Character Arts at The University School of Unified Character Craft, whose students decide to stage a mutiny after they are unhappy that the school moved online due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Professor Cox portrays the role of Hannah the Hound.

Director Brian Ryu discussed that he and director Julia Krom got the idea for making this *Zoomsical* "to bring people together and be creative." Krom also added that the idea to focus on a relevant issue, particularly for those who are attending school in this new environment, was "exciting," and she also mentioned that working from home "can be tedious," so "having a project like this as a creative outlet was so fulfilling for us both." Ryu also brought up that through this musical, they're showing the schools that did not put the interests of students above their own.

Because this show was filmed remotely, Krom explained that they were able to "secure such prodigious talent, not only because of more available time during the pandemic, but also because we weren't limited by geography. Cast and crew from Hawaii, LA, Indiana, New York and New Jersey all simultaneously contributed to this beautiful project."

Both Ryu and Krom were in agreement that casting Professor Cox was an obvious choice. Ryu explained that although they had hundreds of people apply around the world, they did not audition anyone. He also stated that "We loved that Amanda was a professor and had this first-hand experience and interest in helping and educating students. We could tell from the get-go that she believed in the character's mission and we loved how she brought her own spin to it." In addition, Krom added that Professor Cox "brings such an effervescent energy to the screen and her background as a professor brought a unique authenticity to the role."

Furthermore, Krom says they hope this musical "questions the role of educators for their students during this pandemic." She also brought up that "Amanda led this discussion

with her superb acting and singing, but more so with her advice on the story and project. She was a great mentor for us — both cast and crew — and we hope that whoever watches it comes out sharing her spirit."

Professor Cox explained that she was cast in this show after submitting to a casting call on Backstage.com. She says she realized quickly that she was in for a "wild and hilarious ride!" as she began to work with the cast and crew. Professor Cox also added that she "really enjoyed filming," and "learned so much." She mentioned that in a show like this, the cast not only acts and sings, but they are "also responsible [for] our own lighting, sound, recording our vocals, filming B-roll, etc. We were able to learn so much more about different aspects of TV and film than we would have in a normal production." Overall, she said that "It has been an incredibly rewarding experience with really wonderful people!"

USUCC: An Original Zoomsical is available for viewing right now on the HOCACA TV YouTube Channel. ★

Victoria is sophomore.

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cellence and that support areas where there is the most potential for growth." However, the petitioners felt that the lacrosse programs themselves supported such ideals of competitive excellence, pointing out the men's improving winning percentage in the past three seasons as well as the women's program's statistical achievements.

The group also took issue with the handling and timing of the decision. For instance, they say "there was no effort made to save the program through other means," as they believe there could have been a call for fundraising from alumni or individual team fundraising. Instead, the teams were only notified of the decision once it was final. The decision announcement was also problematic to the group because it was announced after spring semester bills for students were due, which hampered student-athletes' abilities to transfer.

The letter continued by outlining ways that the group perceived the lacrosse programs to be

behind all along due to the way they were handled, including, but not limited to, the men's program being rushed into participation prior to having a proper lacrosse coach or an initial recruiting class, and a high turnover rate in coaching on the women's side. The group also included possible alternative solutions to simply cutting the programs "as they sit on the cusp of breakthrough."

The petition, which is now closed, amassed 2,074 signatures and 261 comments, including those "from students, faculty, staff, family members, complete strangers, and even from among the ranks of [the programs'] Empire 8 competition like Sage, Hartwick, St. John Fisher, and more," according to Anderson.

As of now, it does not look like the alternative solutions will be explored. According to Webb, the department has seen the petition: "our decision follows the essential practice of higher education to regularly assess and realign resources in areas that will realize the greatest impact for the entire student body. Al-

though the petition demonstrates the passion for the lacrosse program and the impact it has had on both our alumni and current athletes, we are confident in the process and our final decision," he said.

Both current and former men's and women's lacrosse student-athletes attested to Houghton Lacrosse's positive impact on their lives:

"There is a very specific culture surrounding the sport of lacrosse. It is one that certainly contrasts with the values Houghton College stands for. In his time at Houghton, Coach Lundeen created a team and culture that consistently went against the grain and did things in a way that countered that culture. This, after all, is essentially what the Christian lifestyle is. The lacrosse program was just one way that Houghton College equipped its students 'to lead and labor as scholar-servants in a changing world,'" which is what the college's mission statement articulates, Hull expressed.

Currently a senior on the men's lacrosse team, Anderson also testified to the impacts of this culture — "the Houghton men's lacrosse team, led by Coach Lundeen, has not only shaped my college experience, but the very foundation of who I am today. I have learned hard work, discipline, determination, respect, honor, courage, grace, patience, faith, and trust through my teammates and Coach Lundeen. They are my family."

Reegan Mitchell ('22) emphasized how being a part of the Houghton Women's Lacrosse team has been an integral part of her Houghton experience, saying, "I have played lacrosse for several years now, but playing for a team that loves God and wants to serve Him on and off the field is not something I experienced throughout high school. These girls have pushed me to look beyond myself and learn how to best encourage others in ways that are unique to them. This program has carried out the mission of Houghton Athletics [in] encouraging their players to become strong leaders and teaching them how to be Christ-like on and off the field."

It is evident that the Houghton Lacrosse programs have left a lasting impact on those who participated in them. It seemed to be a consensus that these current and former student-athletes were saddened by the news of the discontinuing of their teams. As the student-athletes simultaneously reflect on the impacts of the lacrosse program and look ahead to their final year of competitions, the athletic department thanked all of the current and former coaches and players of the two teams on February 4 in an update to their statement, while acknowledging the difficult personal and emotional nature of such a decision.

While there was a wide range in reactions to the news, Mitchell also acknowledged how she felt going into her final season in a Highlanders lacrosse uniform: "one thing that the women's lacrosse team has talked about is the blessing of having another day. We in no way deserve the gift of sport but we've been blessed through many years of this program to have it. We are not promised a tomorrow, we certainly are not promised four years of lacrosse, so I truly feel blessed to at least know I have this season to look forward to, even if it's the last." ★

Erin is a senior majoring in writing and communication.

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breakfast out of curiosity. While morning classes and sleeping in on the weekend often keep her from going to the dining hall for breakfast, "I just thought it would be nice to get breakfast and not have to get up early for it," she says. She found a "sad" packed breakfast of orange juice, a water bottle, a banana, a muffin and a pastry. "I would not have picked the items that they put in there," she says, also noting that the sign-up process did not ask about food sensitivities.

Smithers' email promised, "A more formal announcement about this option will be coming out next week." Two days later, another all-campus email announced the resumption of hot meal service for weekend breakfasts. Richards explains that the responsible departments "realized the timing on the decision to discontinue breakfast service was not the best."

With in-person dining back open for three meals a day, seven days a week, other new changes are still apparent. The dining hall's takeout containers were switched from styrofoam to more eco-friendly brown boxes. According to Richards, these are made from "natural molded fiber which is produced from byproducts of crop harvests and produced with a chemical free pulping process." They are both biodegradable in garbage and recyclable when clean. "As soon as we knew for health and safety reasons we were going to exclusively use single serve products (approximately June 2020) we started the process of identifying more sustainable options," Richards says. Supply and demand issues delayed access to the brown boxes until this semester.

Sarah Halvorson '22, a Center for Sustainability intern, noted that a student-led petition last semester specifically asked for consideration of alternatives to styrofoam takeout containers. The Center for Sustainability and Metz are continuing to look for sustainable alternatives to the straws and plasticware used in Java and the dining hall. ★

Johanna is a senior majoring in Adolescence Education and English.

Open Letter to the Houghton Community from the We Are All Houghton Project

The following letter is in response to President Mullen's last correspondence on December 7th. If you would like to read it, visit: www.WeAreAllHoughton.com/Resources.

We implore Houghton College to make firm and swift policy changes that ensure a safe environment for the LGBTQ+ community on campus. The signatures of the many Houghton community members who stand together with Amy, Josh, and all LGBTQ+ persons demonstrate the Houghton community's desire to grow together in support of each other.

off campus about LGBTQ+ rights, Houghton's stance, and what the Christian response should be.

While we recognize that conversations are the impetus of progress, more must be done by the Houghton administration. We know now, more than ever, that Houghton must employ tangible changes in order to make LGBTQ+ students, alumni, and faculty and staff feel welcomed and safe, and to ensure their ability to thrive on Houghton's campus and within the greater Houghton community.

As part of *We Are All Houghton*, we spent months col-

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many within the greater Houghton community do not feel welcome at Houghton. While Houghton may say, "We

identify as LGBTQ+. We challenge Houghton to actively work to ensure that all can say with pride: *We Are All Houghton*.

We have identified the following ways for Houghton College to meet this challenge:

1. Remove all text from the Student Guide that suppresses LGBTQ+ students and publicly denounce this and other past discriminatory practices.¹

2. Prioritize a LGBTQ+ affirming candidate in the upcoming College Presidential search.

3. Create an official and funded school club for LGBTQ+ students on campus.

4. Have a paid faculty/staff position dedicated to supervising this club and providing year-round support for any LGBTQ+ students in need, and allow current LGBTQ+ students to be involved in the selection of this club supervisor.

5. Create a dedicated LGBTQ+ safe space on campus.

6. During the annual I Am Houghton giving day, create a dedicated *We Are All Houghton* fundraiser for the LGBTQ+ campus space.

In examining the results of the survey, it is abundantly clear that Houghton has made many feel unwelcome and unaccepted through its oppression of the LGBTQ+ community both in the past and currently. These measures would act as a first step in gaining back the trust of ostracized Houghton alumni and as a means of ensuring that Houghton LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff feel

welcomed and accepted.

One final note: We sincerely thank those of you who have joined us as allies in this movement. Thank you for showing us that Houghton's projected stance of nonacceptance is not the stance of many of its community members. Thank you for standing beside us and all LGBTQ+ alumni, students, faculty, and staff. As artists, we accomplished what we sought out to do, but we don't want this effort to end with us. We're overwhelmed with your determination and while we will be tapering down *We Are All Houghton*, we encourage the Houghton community to continue to speak out for LGBTQ+ rights. We've learned that activism is hard but worthwhile work, and is only possible with the support of others. That's how real change can be sustained.

To add your name to the list of Houghton community members who advocate for immediate policy change at Houghton, visit www.WeAreAllHoughton.com/Open-Letter.

Sincerely,
Amy Coon '14 and Josh Dutweiler '14, et al

¹ For years Houghton College oppressed the LGBTQ+ community on its campus through the Community Covenant, which specifically prohibited "homosexual behavior." Only this school year (2020-21) has the Community Covenant been replaced with the Student Guide, which now uses discriminatory instead of oppressive language. Page 18 reads: "We affirm that it is best for students not to enter same-sex dating relationships [...] If it becomes evident that a student is in a same-sex dating relationship, the students will have a conversation with the Dean of the Chapel [...] where every effort will be made to find a way forward [...]"

19 February, 2021

Dear Houghton Community:

The goal of *We Are All Houghton* was to give a voice to the LGBTQ+ community at our alma mater. After months of discourse with Houghton alumni, current students, faculty, staff, and President Mullen, and others on the topic of LGBTQ+ rights in the Houghton community, we believe we have helped to accomplish that first step.

We want to thank President Mullen for her commitment to "welcome open dialogue about these concerns," and for "keeping them in the light within the life of our community." We are energized by how many conversations are now openly happening on and

"We challenge the whole Houghton community to be more open, loving, and accepting of those who identify as LGBTQ+."

lecting over 120 surveys from alumni, students, and faculty and staff members who identify as LGBTQ+. Some of these responses were used to create the work displayed in *We Are All Houghton*, and all of them were presented to President Mullen; Marc Smithers, Dean of Students; and Paul Young, Dean of Faculty, in November 2020.

Many of the stories from those surveys are heartbreaking—a sobering reminder of the pain that Houghton's policies have caused. They confirm that

are all Houghton," the administration's continued inaction sends a message that we are not.

Therefore, we challenge Houghton College to take the next step and make real change—policy change—that firmly acknowledges the challenges that LGBTQ+ students face on campus and provides a safe space for them to be who they are without judgement, shame, or controversy. We challenge the whole Houghton community to be more open, loving, and accepting of those who

Have an opinion
you want to share?

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SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor
should be 250 words or less

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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 College 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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STAR

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Christian Political Discourse

Title

David Bowers

In this new column, I'm going to try to facilitate a conversation about the nature of Christian political engagement. To do that, I'm going to expound what I believe are guiding principles for Christians who want to be active in the political realm. I will also talk more specifically about how Christians can engage with one another and the world on particular issues.

If you're interested in how Christians can engage in politics while not treating this world like our home; if you're interested in how to engage with people on the other side of the aisle; if you're interested in working together to find a good way to distribute healthcare or to make and enforce moral laws, I hope you'll return to this column.

Remember: my aim is to facilitate a conversation. I'll fail in my aim if none of you participate in the conversation. So please, when you read something here that you disagree with, or think could have been expressed better, or to which you have something to add, tell me. If I make you angry, don't just walk away from the article muttering under your breath (as I do too often); *tell me*, either by writing privately or by writing a letter to the editor. We'll all benefit from hearing it.

For the first article, we need to understand some basic things about Christian identity—who we are. A Christian believes the gospel: that God created us without sin, bearing his image (Gen. 1 and 2). In Adam, all sinned, and thus all fell under God's just condemnation (Rom. 5:18). All of us under Adam were infected in every part of our nature by sin, such that even our "righteous" deeds are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). But we were not infected to the fullest possible extent: we retained the image of God.

But then, God the Father—not willing that any should perish but that all might have eternal life (2 Pet. 3:9)—sent God the Son, who, for the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2), willingly came to earth and suffered on the cross. There, he endured the separation from the Father that we, his people, would otherwise have endured (Psa. 37:9), so that all who believe in him might have his righteousness imputed to them in justification (Rom. 5:18-19). He rose from the dead to defeat the power of sin and death, and sent his Holy Spirit to dwell within his people, transforming them more and more into his likeness by the renewal of their minds (Rom 12:2). He will return soon to judge the living and the dead either according to their own deeds, or according to the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.

Two things central aspects of the gospel animate and inform Christian political engagement. First, Christians know that all people, regardless of their political beliefs or moral failures, are worthy of dignity and respect as image bearers of God. This means that there is no excuse for demonizing people on the other side of an ideological divide, no matter its size. Of course, where there is sin, there must be accountability, but too often that caveat is used as a lazy justification for our refusal to seek peace with that one crazy progressive friend or that one whacko conservative uncle.

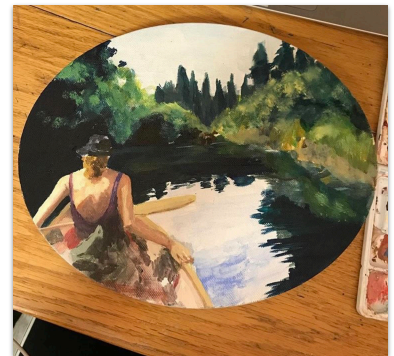
Second, Christians know that our greatest loyalties are not to our ideological allies, our socioeconomic peers, our nation, or our fellow patriots. Because God has graciously brought us into his pasture through Christ's death, we know that we have more in common with the Christian on the opposite end of the political spectrum than we do with our closest political ally bound to Satan's cause. This means that the maintenance of the bonds of peace that tie us together is among our highest priorities. A house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25).

So frequently (I speak as one guilty of this on a nearly weekly basis), we think ourselves to be the last defender of truth and reason on social media, and run around sowing the kind of rage that's the inevitable result of that hubris. That rage inevitably makes its way into the Church. There, it makes Christians forget (as we attempt to justify our rage) that all our righteousness is from Christ. It makes us begin to believe that maybe some of our righteousness is from our right socio-political ideas. How else can we justify our rage, if we do not implicitly believe that the Other is less Christian than we? Truth is essential, but if we win truth at the cost of love, we have nothing. Let's find kind ways to promote truth within the Church.

So, these two fundamental components of Christian identity—the image of God in every person, and the righteousness of Christ on every Christian—begin to give shape to Christian political engagement. Next time, I'll pivot from asking *who we are* to asking *what we do*: our missional priorities. ★

Artist of the Week

Megan Saltsman



ABOUT THE ARTIST



My name is Megan Saltsman and I am a Studio Art major. I decided to study studio art because creating is the best way for me to express and communicate who I am. I plan on pursuing interior design post college and am so excited to make beautiful spaces for people! My art account on Instagram is @salt.works24, give me a follow!

