



Winthrop University

February 20, 2025

Rock Hill, SC

BASEBALL SEASON BEGINS

Recapping the first series of the year and hear from first-year head coach Mike McGuire about their expectations for this season

THERAPY DOGS SPOTLIGHT

Meet the people (and dogs) behind PAWS Together; who are set up in DiGS every other Wednesday

S.C. PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

South Carolina GOP politicians seek to use lottery money to pay for private school vouchers



Josiah Johnson (left) and Mattie Washburn (right) posing as their "Into the Woods" characters, the Baker and the Baker's wife

via Instagram/@winthroptheatre

Winthrop theater brings fairytale characters to life with "Into the Woods"

Beginning February 26 through March 1, the Winthrop University Theater Department will open the curtains for their production of "Into The Woods." The cast began rehearsals in January in preparation for the performances.

Riley Brodie
AC&T Editor

Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods" is one of the most iconic musicals of all time, and starting February 26, Winthrop's theater department will put their own spin on the 1986 classic.

Into The Woods follows a complex storyline of many classic fairytale characters, including but not limited to Jack, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood. The musical incorporates many twists and turns and long lasting life lessons.

Rachel Dawson, who holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Florida Atlantic University and is a visiting assistant professor

for Winthrop's Department of Theater and Dance, is directing the production. She has been with the Winthrop Department of Theatre and Dance since August 2022.

During this period of time, she has directed "Pippin", "Noises Off" and "Musical Theatre Workshop: There's No Business Like Show Business."

Dawson said she took a lot of time to develop her approach to directing this play.

"A deep understanding of the text is the foundation from which I begin my directing process," Dawson said. "I read the script multiple times before I develop the concept. As far as the rehearsal room goes, excellent

directing is about meeting students where they are and guiding them toward a path of expansion that deepens their work and honors the demands of the craft and script."

Dawson said the best part of directing is seeing the cast members become comfortable and confident in the characters they're acting as during rehearsals, as well as watching them get to know each other in real life.

"My favorite part of directing is watching students shift to a place in the rehearsal room where they feel confident to play and explore," Dawson said. "Play and prep allow for nuanced performances and

help tell a clear story. I also love watching how different casts bond and support one another."

The assistant professor said she performed Into the Woods during her time as an undergraduate student, and has loved returning to the story from the perspective of the director.

"I performed in Into the Woods when I was an undergrad. It has been a joy to revisit the piece as a director. The show explores so much of the human experience and the text resonates with me differently as I am in a different stage of my life."

An assistant stage manager and two cast members additionally

Cont. on pg. 4

A step backwards for students with disabilities: The effects of DEI removal

As the Trump administration takes aim at DEI policies and programs, special education professors explain how this can hurt people with disabilities.

Mia Molfetta
Staff Writer

On Jan. 21, President Donald Trump, on his first day in office, released an Executive Order to remove federal contracting requirements for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. DEI policies are designed to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to education, resources, and

opportunities.

These policies provide accessible classrooms, support for individual learning styles, and foster inclusive environments. They also help students with disabilities in career services, internships, and mentorships.

At Winthrop University, DEI policies are an integral part of the community. One program, WinthropLIFE

(Learning is for Everyone), is a federally designated Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) that offers college education to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The program provides personalized schedules, partial traditional courses, internships, and specialty courses aimed at skill

development.

Winthrop also offers programs for students who want to become special education teachers, providing opportunities for hands-on experience working with children in K-12 schools.

With the removal of DEI policies, Winthrop's community and individuals are affected.

Cont. on pg. 4

Federal grant freeze temporarily blocked

What the grant freeze is and what it could look like for Winthrop's campus and students.

Gabriela Griggs
Staff Writer

Following Donald Trump's inauguration, there has been a slew of executive orders written into effect daily. One order has caught the eye of college students around the nation though.

A recent memo from Trump's office on freezing federal grants has sparked widespread confusion, especially with how quickly it was blocked by federal Judge John J. McConnell two days after it had been announced.

The memo states that, "[To] the extent permissible under applicable law,

law, federal agencies must temporarily pause all activities related to obligation or disbursement of all federal financial assistance, and other relevant agency activities that may be implicated by the executive orders, including, but not limited to, financial assistance for foreign aid, nongovernmental organizations, DEI, woke gender ideology, and the Green New Deal."

In regard to how this freeze would appear on federally funded properties, such as universities, the exact outcomes are unclear. However, it is implied that without federal assistance

Cont. on pg. 2

Winthrop trumpet ensemble to compete in National Trumpet Competition for the first time

Evi Houston
Staff Writer

Winthrop University's trumpet ensemble is set to represent the state of South Carolina this March in the National Trumpet Competition at Texas Christian University (TCU).

The group of seven stands out as the first to participate in the NTC in Winthrop history and the only collegiate ensemble in South Carolina to advance to quarterfinals for the 2025 season. A university press release recently asserted that this event is the "largest and most prestigious

competition for trumpet players in the United States."

Josh Frye, a senior music technology major who has participated in the group during the entirety of his time at Winthrop, gave his thoughts on the competition and experience within the group.

"It's very exciting to represent not only my future alma mater but to represent the state of South Carolina," noting that both the University of South Carolina and Furman

Cont. on pg. 2



Winthrop trumpet ensemble members outside Byrnes

photo credit/Winthrop University

Police Blotter



Evi Houston
Staff Writer

Four roommate disputes in three days

WUPD addressed four roommate conflicts from Feb. 9 to Feb. 11, three of which took place in The Courtyard, with the other in Walk2Campus. One instance involved multiple roommates making threats over text, who were later moved to a different apartment. Another fight revolved around a contentious phone call which prompted one roommate to pack her things and throw chips on the floor of the dorm. All involved students have been referred to meet with the Dean of Students.

Two Winthrop vehicles collide

A Winthrop Facilities Management truck was exiting a tunnel at the Winthrop Coliseum on the morning of Feb. 6 when it backed into a Winthrop John Deer Gator turning into the tunnel. Both drivers appeared unharmed following the collision.

WUPD assists other agencies in Rock Hill shooting

Rock Hill Police called WUPD to assist with a shooting at the Villas Apartments along Celanese Road. The officer received the call at around 9:28 p.m on Feb. 15. Four people were shot, with one sustaining life-threatening injuries. An arrest was made when officers arrived on the scene.

Man arrested for trespassing on campus

A man sleeping on a bench at Winthrop's Facilities Management Complex was reported to police on the afternoon of Feb. 6. The subject was registered as a prior trespasser and subsequently arrested and taken to jail.

Marijuana use in Walk2Campus

An odor of marijuana was detected at Walk2Campus on the night of Feb. 14. Police arrived and the individual was issued a citation for possession of marijuana.



Federal grant freeze | Cont. from pg. 1

and funding, many universities would have to reconfigure their operations.

Universities in America heavily rely on federal funding, alongside students' tuition and grants. As a four-year university, Winthrop relies less on federal funding than a local two-year university may, but still depends on the consistent funding they've been receiving throughout the years. This grant freeze, if eventually implemented, would be extremely disruptive to financial planning and to Winthrop's campus operations.

It has also been explicitly stated that, should this grant freeze go into effect, it will not interfere with federal student aid funds, such as Pell Grants, and these aid programs will continue to support upcoming students.

With the outlines of the grant freeze remaining extremely broad, it's difficult

to pinpoint exactly to what extent it will affect operations on campus, especially with so many campus groups struggling to proceed already with the current state of financial distribution.

Winthrop's DiGiorgio Student Union, or DSU, faced these difficulties last semester, with their funding almost completely cut, causing them to be missing in action most of the year. It's only recently they've recovered and are finally able to host and plan events again.

Should a government grant freeze be implemented nationwide, it can be inferred that what happened to Winthrop's DSU may continue and repeat itself throughout many other campus groups that rely on the university and its funding to operate.

However, despite the blockage of the freeze, many universities are still preparing for uncertainties in

whichever way they believe most securely protects them.

Ella Williams, a Winthrop freshman, has been preparing for summer internship programs and applying over the course of the last two months. One of the programs she was most interested in, Johns Hopkins' Biology Research Experience for Undergraduates (BioREU), sent an email out to all applicants that reads, "We regret to inform you that the John Hopkins University BioREU program has been canceled for Summer 2025 due to budgetary uncertainties associated with various federal funding agencies."

The Johns Hopkins BioREU summer program is funded by the United States National Science Foundation (NSF), which is a federal agency that, under the grant freeze, would pause operations. On the NSF website, a

new section became available on February 15 that is entirely dedicated to the NSF's "Implementation of Recent Executive Orders," which remains blank.

"This whole situation makes me feel discouraged, especially because I applied to seven other internships that are also funded by the NSF, so it probably means they're also going to be cut," Williams said. "It's just unfortunate that [I] don't really even get a chance."

Internship programs are extremely important for Winthrop students, as well as any other undergraduate who is looking to pursue graduate studies. Universities are already selective in their processes for summer programs and acceptances, which will likely be furthered as fewer and fewer programs are being offered before the grant freeze even becomes implemented.

The uncertainties of the grant freeze are already beginning to rear. There's no way to say exactly how or what those freezes will look like nationwide, or just in application to campus. It's difficult for all to navigate these sudden changes, especially in the whirlwind of all the other posed and implemented executive orders.

Nothing has been legally solidified yet, but as long as the grant freeze remains proposed, it will continue to evoke highly cautious perspectives from organizations everywhere as they attempt to navigate the gray area. It will continue to be something students should keep in mind as they themselves navigate through their academic careers and understand what, should it be implemented into everyday life, a grant freeze would look like.

Winthrop trumpet ensemble | Cont. from pg. 1

University trumpet ensembles were unable to join Winthrop at the NTC this year.

Frye elaborated on the audition and competition process, which the ensemble began by submitting a video of their best performance in November of 2024. From March 12 to 16, the group is set to participate in four rounds in front of a live audience, with beginning rounds on Thursday narrowing down to the semifinal and final rounds on Saturday and Sunday, depending on their performance.

Nathan Brown, a sophomore music education major, has been in the ensemble for two years and played an important role in encouraging the group to participate in the competition, along with helping to select the piece for their performance. Having participated in the high school division of the NTC while at Clover High School, along with member Will Isenhour, he explained that "we decided that we really wanted to do it again, so we pushed everyone to do it, and they agreed."

Brown's past experience with

the competition dovetails with his prior connection to the group's applied professor Dr. Marisa Youngs, who taught him trumpet lessons while at Clover High School. Youngs was an instrumental part growing his talents while at Clover, where he started to become serious about music after learning music theory and taking lessons from the instructor.

"She has taught me a lot, she's been my mentor for a really long time," Brown said.

Dr. Youngs is a continuing inspiration to Brown and encouraged Brown to audition for both the high school and college trumpet ensemble.

While Dr. Youngs has been valuable in organizing and supporting the group, their participation and current success is largely a result of individual student effort.

"There's no director, there's no conductor, it's all student led [...]. It's the most group effort that you could get out of an ensemble, there's no one [member] that's more important than the other," Frye said.

The competition

requires each group to master a particular musical piece, which they will continue to play throughout every round of the competition. Brown tasked himself with finding such a piece that would suit seven players, and eventually landed on "Fantasia for Seven Trumpets" by Eric Ewazen. While there was a limited number to choose from, Brown found a piece that had done historically well at the NTC, saying "This one's been played the most and actually made it the farthest," and that "It's been a good piece" for the group overall.

The ensemble has been putting in the hours to perfect their piece, with rehearsals three times a week last semester and twice weekly for the spring, on top of their regular class schedule. They have additionally practiced in front of the Winthrop music department and were recently invited to open for UNC School of the Art's Brass Day on Feb. 16, which hosted the famous Canadian Brass band, both of which allowed them to gain some experience in front of an audience.

Brown explained that the group tries to "hold

each other accountable and make sure no one's slacking" by picking apart different portions of Fantasia to have each other play individually and perfect which may be difficult to address during group rehearsal.

Both Frye and Brown affirmed that the ensemble is looking forward to the event.

"I think everyone's excited," Brown said.

For the three members who have past experience with NTC from high school, Brown explained that all of them had "...all done it before, so we're not as nervous, but everybody else hasn't done chamber music at a competitive level, so I'd assume they're more nervous."

Frye agreed that the event has invited some stress, but it is a point of pride as well.

"We're stoked to be able to go make history," Frye said. As the only senior in the group, Frye particularly sees attending the NTC as a great accomplishment to finish off his time at Winthrop.

"I wanted to be able to go to college and say that I went to this big competition that not a whole lot of schools get to go to," Frye said.

Of course, NTC grows

in its competitive nature at the collegiate level, with Brown highlighting some struggles the group may face. As a group of seven in the large ensemble division, which spans from seven to ten musicians,

"We are the smallest band in the division, which is kind of a disadvantage." Brown said, "The college division is a lot more competitive, [...] undergrad, grad, people that are studying for their doctorates, are in these ensembles."

With a large age range among participants, he feels that Winthrop is in some ways an underdog, expressing that the college division tends to be less fair, highly challenging, and generally more stressful than his experiences in high school. Fellow competitors include Florida State, Auburn University, and the University of Miami, among many others.

For those seeking to support their Eagles but unable to cheer them on in Fort Worth, Texas, donations are currently being accepted to assist with travel costs through a GoFundMe, accessible on the ensemble's Instagram account @winthroptrumpets.



(From left to right) Lillie Robles-Smith, William Isenhour, Olivia Clifton, Nathan Brown, Michael Mott, Riley Lazar and Josh Frye

photo via Josh Frye

February 20, 2025

South Carolina Senate bets big on lottery-funded vouchers for private schools

Zachary Bell
News Editor

Earlier in February, the South Carolina Senate passed S.62, which allows lottery money to fund private-school vouchers in the state.

Bill S.62, or the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship, marks another battle between private and public schools over funding. In September, the South Carolina Supreme Court struck down a similar bill that would allow parents to cover private school tuition with state tax dollars.

This new legislation circumvents old legal barriers by pulling money from the South Carolina Education Lottery.

Shortly after the bill passed, the South Carolina Education Association (SCEA) released a statement, calling the voucher bill a partisan ploy.

“This misguided effort to divert public funds from public education towards private school will further deplete existing resources and undermine our public school system that is to benefit all South Carolinians.”

For the 2024-2025 school year, 8% of South Carolina K-12 students attend private schools, per a report from Private School Review.

Asked about the voucher program, Dr. Costner, Winthrop’s Dean of the College of Education, Sport, and Human Sciences, suggests that funding diverted to private schools would better serve a community by being directly sent to public schools.

“Notably, many students using vouchers return to public schools, particularly those requiring specialized

support unavailable in private settings. This is problematic because the funding that would have been received by the public school does not necessarily become available to the school when the student returns.”

Academics and policy officials have mixed reactions to private schools and vouchers.

Studies published and shared by the Brookings Institution suggest a negative impact on academic achievement: “In Louisiana, for example, two separate research teams found negative academic impacts as high as -0.4 standard deviations—extremely large by education policy standards—with declines that persisted for years.”

On top of covering tuition, the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship also covers “Qualifying expenses.” These include

textbooks, online instruction, tutoring services, computer hardware and other technological devices, national examinations, transportation, and school uniforms required for attendance.

Per the Brookings Institution, “There’s also existing academic evidence predicting that traditional voucher programs incentivize existing private schools to raise tuition, using the new dollars as something of a public subsidy.”

In Iowa, which passed similar legislation to South Carolina, some private schools saw their tuition rates nearly double.

In a bill that does not include a sunset clause, the cost of the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship could become substantially larger as existing and future private schools inflate their rates.

The Johnsonian asked York County State Senator Michael Johnson for a comment. His office did not answer. Johnson, who sits on the State Senate Education Committee, voted in favor of S.62.

Private schools are held accountable to the Department of Education. Qualifying private schools must adhere to the educational curriculum set forth in the state’s diploma requirements.

However, opponents of voucher programs question whether private schools are held to the same standards, and subject to the same oversight, as public schools.

Asked about these concerns, Dr. Costner said, “A more balanced approach reducing excessive testing in public schools while implementing basic accountability for voucher-funded

private schools could create a more comparable educational landscape.” Religious schools that receive funds and maintain faith-based curricula should also meet agreed-upon academic standards.

Advancement of the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship reflects a national shift toward school choice that raises concerns about public school investment. “Diverting funds away from public education risks undermining the system that serves the majority of students,” Dr. Costner said. “I hope for policies that strengthen rather than diminish its reach.”

At the time of writing this article, S.62 sits in the South Carolina House of Representatives. A scheduled vote has not been set. No legal injunction has been filed.

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Hudson Mize, Advertising Manager

"Into the Woods" production | Cont. from pg. 1

shared their experiences during rehearsals for "Into the Woods".

Mason Hall is a Junior theater education major and the President of APO, a collegiate level theater Honor Society. He's currently working as an assistant stage manager for Into The Woods.

Hall has a deep personal connection to Into The Woods.

"Into The Woods has always been something really important to me, but now I get to look at it as an adult and realize it carries a lot of weight," Hall said. "So it's just something I think stands no matter what age you are."

A key takeaway from the musical that Hall resonates with is, "Just because someone is nice to you doesn't mean they're being good to being good to you."

Hall's favorite part of stage management and theater is "connection".

"Without people talking, without all this passion, without all this communication, theater wouldn't exist, nor would it have a purpose," Hall said.

Hall showed great enthusiasm for working

with the Into The Woods team.

"I have to say, the cast we're working with is phenomenal, but I'm also very excited to be working with our director, Rachel," Hall said. "She is a professor and a director I've always looked up to, so getting to work with her is so exciting."

Hall said that the stage management is a big help in keeping the production running as smoothly as possible.

"I keep in mind that stage management really holds a lot of things together, and we are responsible for a lot of the organization to make sure what we get done in rehearsal gets done. So I approach stage management by understanding the importance of organization in this position."

Aidan Tibbitt is a Junior Theater Education major and the Vice President of APO. He will be playing the Narrator in Into The Woods. Tibbitt has been involved in multiple other Winthrop productions, including, Pippin, Rent, Romeo and Juliet, and Lily's Purple Plastic Purse.

Tibbitt also has a prior connection with Into The Woods.

"Spring Break 2020 I was supposed to go to New York and see a bunch of shows but COVID happened, so I couldn't," Tibbitt said. "Instead, my mom and I would sit on the couch and watch recordings from Broadway HD, because they had pro shots of different musicals. We watched both available versions of Into the Woods, the original version, and then the 2012 London version. And so Into The Woods kind of helped get me through that time- the no one is alone message in the musical really spoke to me, especially then, when it was so hard not to feel that way."

Tibbitt has also found a more recent connection with the role he is playing in Into The Woods.

"From my understanding with the direction that the character is going in for this specific production, he's kind of someone who's returning somewhere and figuring out who others are and where they've come from," Tibbitt said. "This speaks to

me a lot because I have a lot of family mystery. It's hard to pinpoint what happened with a lot of members of my family- we're a mysterious bunch over there."

"I also love telling stories and I have always loved the narrator trope and so being able to explore that very literal side of theater is exciting."

Tibbitt said he takes his time when preparing for roles.

"I do a lot of research into what the director wants for the character, as well as different interpretations of the character. I try to see what works and what doesn't work. I will also literally write down on physical paper my thoughts on the character, why they are the way they are and why they do the things that they do- it helps me understand them a little bit more."

Tibbitt said the story will keep the audience on their toes, even when they suspect that they know where the story is going.

"Into The Woods seems like it wraps up in a nice little bow with the end of Act One, but the point of the story

really lies in the second half of the show," Tibbitt said.

Emily Camp is a senior theater performance major with a concentration in musical theater and a member of Delta Zeta. She will be playing the role of Milky White's puppeteer. Camp has been involved in previous Winthrop performances, such as Growing Up and Moving Out and Romeo and Juliet, as well as multiple dance showcases."

Camp has a great deal of love for the Into The Woods cast and staff.

"I love this cast," Camp said. "I love this director. I've had Rachel for a few of my classes, and I have grown so much as a performer, with my confidence, and just as a performer from her- she's literally one of the best staff members in our department."

Camp said that she has performed with many of her cast members before, which makes the rehearsing for the production more intimate and fun.

"As far as the cast, I've done a bunch of different shows with many of these

people. I have hung out with them outside of rehearsals, and some of them have become some of my best friends. It's just a really great connection that we can all make, because we all have something we like and are connected to, but then we can also build those relationships outside of that connection."

Camp said she looks forward to performing her role as a Milky White's Puppeteer.

"My goal is to be able to connect and to breathe life into the character, making her someone that everybody can relate to and enjoy"

Camp also stated, "I think because of how involved I'll be in this production, and how special it will be as my senior year, Into The Woods will be very memorable for me."

Tickets for Into The Woods cost \$10 for Winthrop students and \$15 for general admission. The team highly encourages coming see all the production has to offer.

"This cast has been a joy to work with while contributing to a joyful show," Dawson said.



Emily Camp (right) preparing props/stage design for "Into the Woods"

photo via Riley Brodie



"Into the Woods" cast rehearsing lines for the play

photo via Riley Brodie

The effects of DEI removal | Cont. from pg. 1

Isabelle Lockhart, a sophomore, shared her thoughts on the changes.

When asked about the impact of the DEI removal on her ability to access extra support for her education, she said, "Nothing has been impacted for me yet, but my friends who are in the process of receiving accommodations are having a hard time."

Lockhart also discussed her opinion on the removal of DEI programs and its effect on how educators and peers understand and address the needs of students with disabilities.

"It has brought light to the true colors of professors and students who do not care about disabled people or their needs, but I fear this has always been an issue," said Lockhart. "However, with the executive order that essentially repealed the DEI, I am concerned that this will worsen the issue and make it even harder to gain accommodations

but also use them successfully."

When asked what challenges she has faced since the DEI removal, Lockhart expressed concern about the impact on job opportunities.

"More companies are removing DEI initiatives which, as a student who works part-time, affects places I have an opportunity to work for and maintain a job—because even getting a job with disabilities is difficult itself, to the point where a company cannot hire you because of it."

Lockhart emphasized, "Students with disabilities should simply be able to get the assistance they need. Being a college student is hard enough, and with a disability you are working even harder to be on a level playing field." She concluded, "we need to make the process of applying and accommodations easier."

Winthrop's Special Education Assistant

Professor Amy Clausen also spoke about the DEI removal and its impact. She noted that, to her knowledge, there have been no changes at Winthrop yet.

"Right now, 17 states, including South Carolina, are suing to repeal parts or all of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which protects the civil rights of people with disabilities in institutions receiving federal funds," she said. "However, the law sets minimum standards. I have faith that even if it is repealed, Winthrop will continue to meet the needs of all their students."

Clausen added, "I know that the faculty has been having conversations about what the changes to federal and state laws mean for us and also the students. I am not aware of any changes to policies currently. Every faculty member I have spoken with is committed to the success of all students."

Asked about the challenges she faces

as an educator in advocating for students with disabilities, Clausen said, "As an educator in public schools and now as a teacher educator, I am always fighting for inclusion and accessibility. I am extremely concerned about the recent moves by our federal and state government to repeal and revoke funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts." She urged, "I urge everyone to do the same."

Dr. April Mustian, a fellow professor, also shared her perspective. Mustian explained that South Carolina's attorney general recently pulled out of a lawsuit that challenged Section 504, which includes accommodations for college students and employees with disabilities.

"Luckily, enough SC citizens made calls to their representatives, and South Carolina is now pulling out of that lawsuit," she said. "So, students at Winthrop should still be able to

access needed support through OA."

Mustian noted, "As a faculty member in the College of Education, Sport, & Human Sciences (CESHS), I can say with quite a bit of certainty that my colleagues and I are steadfastly committed to supporting our students in all the ways that they need, regardless of which words are or are not allowed to be used. The language may change, but our efforts should not. Our collective goal remains to ensure all students feel seen, valued, heard, and that their learning experiences are positive ones."

On the challenges of teaching in the absence of DEI-focused initiatives, Mustian explained, "One area of great challenge is if the state passes any legislation related to the use of DEI language in course syllabi or content. In my field of Special Education, I use the word include or inclusion at least 20 times a day in my

courses. You cannot teach about disability and educational access for school-aged children with disabilities without using that word."

She continued, "We have a moral and ethical obligation to prepare our teacher candidates to support students and families from all backgrounds and walks of life, including disability status. Another incredible challenge happening right now with the federal government's attempts to upend many federal agencies and initiatives is the loss of federal grants supporting PK-12 schools and the field of teaching. Our jobs become that much more challenging - and nearly impossible - without federal funding to implement important reforms and improve student outcomes for special populations."

"With the hope of Section 504, Winthrop is behind the support of education for all," expressed Mustian.

The Democratic Party has a leadership problem – and it needs to be fixed immediately



House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-NY

AP Photo/John McDonnell

Clark Vilardebo
Editor-in-Chief

As we wrap up the first month of Donald Trump's second presidency, one word comes to mind when describing it: chaotic.

From the quick shuttering of agencies like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to mass firings of federal workers, airline disasters left and right, Elon Musk's role in the administration, and taunting our European and North American allies – it cannot be denied that it has been turbulent.

Yet, the opposition party is nowhere to be found – or heard from.

Despite having two months to prepare for Trump's presidency (and perhaps even more if Biden's internal polling was true), the Democrats seem to have no cohesive game plan to prevent many of his executive orders or the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) mass firings.

Leading up to

Trump's second presidency, Democrats clearly showed they had no desire to pass the torch or stop going right.

Democrats needed a new leader for the House Oversight Committee, and the two options were 35-year-old Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and 74-year-old Gerry Connolly.

Ocasio-Cortez has moved up the ranks quickly among Democrats and is closely associated with Bernie Sanders, whose proposed policies like universal healthcare are widely supported by Americans.

Connolly has been in office longer than Ocasio-Cortez and is strikingly less popular. He is also currently battling esophagus cancer, which certainly has to take a toll on him physically.

Ultimately, Democratic leadership went with Connolly.

Post-election, it has been even worse – which highlights the lack of a plan from Democratic leadership.

House Minority

Leader Hakeem Jeffries has seemingly waved the white flag already.

In a Feb. 7 press conference, Jeffries openly said the Democrats "have no leverage."

Four days later, a report from Axios came out that said top Democrats (mainly Jeffries) were "pissed" at liberal organizations MoveOn and Indivisible.

These organizations had people flooding Democrats' phones and demanding "a more confrontational opposition to Trump."

While it may be true Democrats have no control in any of the three branches, that is certainly no reason to essentially roll over and die.

On Dec. 3, 2024, South Korea saw a constitutional crisis when their president declared martial law in an attempt to overthrow the Democratic Party (DPK) and regain control of the National Assembly (South Korea's legislative body).

South Korean lawmakers proceeded to scale the National Assembly Proceeding Hall and fought against soldiers and police in riot gear to prevent the president. They succeeded, and the president was impeached.

Meanwhile, here in the United States, Democrats stand idly by while DOGE staffers rummage through buildings like the Department of Education.

There is just simply no fight from Democrats, and if there is, there is no energy.

Trump's current crusade against the transgender community is a perfect example. For a party that prides itself on supporting LGBTQ+ rights and being the party to legalize gay marriage, the silence has been deafening.

Between South Carolina's own Rep. Nancy Mace shouting anti-trans slurs in the House of Chambers, to Trump and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth outright banning

transgender people from the U.S. Army – there has been virtually no pushback.

This election made it clear that people want a true opposition party. Kamala Harris' attempts to appeal to the right were widely criticized – particularly for buddying up with Liz Cheney.

Democrats have seemingly learned nothing from it. When discussing the mass firings, Democrats mainly focused on USAID and the FBI.

While the layoffs in those departments certainly don't benefit America, most of the population simply does not care about them.

DOGE is currently eyeing cuts to Medicare and Social Security, which are more effective issues to focus on.

Still, Democrats are stuck in their ways. That's just speaking on the national level, too, as South Carolina Democratic leadership is just as bad.

Therefore, it is time to do what Republicans did after 2008:

primary the top party leadership.

Leaders like Jeffries and Connolly have shown they have no backbone, and the time to pass the torch to younger, more energized members is now.

It is also time to focus more on populist issues. While Biden was shilling to Israel at a time when the American population was voicing their concerns over inflation, Trump was telling people he heard them – whether it's true or not.

People want to know you hear their struggles. That's why Bernie Sanders is more popular among conservatives and libertarians than Biden or Harris were, despite having more left-leaning policies.

Democrats have to get their messaging together – and fast. The longer they take to form an outspoken opposition party, the easier it will be for the Trump administration to enforce these court-blocked executive orders.

Lazy or leading? How Generation Z Is redefining the definition of workplace success

Adriane Alston
Editorial Editor

The term Generation Z refers to individuals born from the late 1990s to the early 21st century. Often perceived as the most digitally fluent generation, Gen Z has grown up with the internet, social media and advanced technology.

However, in recent years, the term "Generation Z" has taken on a negative connotation, especially in the workplace.

Increasingly, Gen Z is being labeled as the "lazy generation," with many professionals attributing workplace dissatisfaction to younger employees. Reports of tardiness, unprofessional behavior, poor

communication skills, and difficulty managing workloads have fueled this perception.

But are these criticisms grounded in reality, or are they simply a manifestation of generational misunderstanding?

As a Gen Zer, I set out to investigate these narratives. I interviewed various professionals and fellow Gen Z students and workers to better understand the root of these assumptions.

Dr. Jeremy Lopuch, Associate Professor of Education Core with a Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, provided compelling insight.

When asked if he views Gen Z as

unprofessional, Dr. Lopuch responded, "I wouldn't say lazy, but I will say the expectations today are different than before."

He elaborated on how cultural and generational differences contribute to the perception of laziness. For example, older generations often stayed in the same job for decades, prioritizing stability over personal fulfillment.

He shared a personal anecdote about his father, who worked as a postal worker for over 20 years. In contrast, Gen Z tends to seek out dynamic work environments, prioritizing job satisfaction, work-life balance, and personal growth over long-term job loyalty.

This conversation reminded me of a lecture from Ashley Garrick's SCWK306 course, where we discussed how generational and cultural values shift over time. The lecture provided insight into how Gen Z is aware of how the workplace perceives them and how accurate or inaccurate these perceptions are.

Workplace expectations was one of the most debated topics. Many of my Gen Z classmates expressed that they are less inclined to stay in jobs that cause excessive stress or dissatisfaction.

As young professionals, many of us still receive some level of mental,

emotional, or financial support from our parents. Consequently, we have the flexibility to prioritize happiness and work-life balance over job stability or financial security.

The economic reality today is far less predictable than in the past. Hard work once promised the American Dream, but now, even with tireless effort, many remain in debt, never owning a home.

Unlike older generations, who may have worked tirelessly to support families, mortgages, and other responsibilities, many Gen Z employees are working for personal rather than familial financial goals. Whether it's saving for a new wig, affording hobbies

or engaging in new trends like thrifting or sports parlays, our professional motivations differ significantly from those of previous generations.

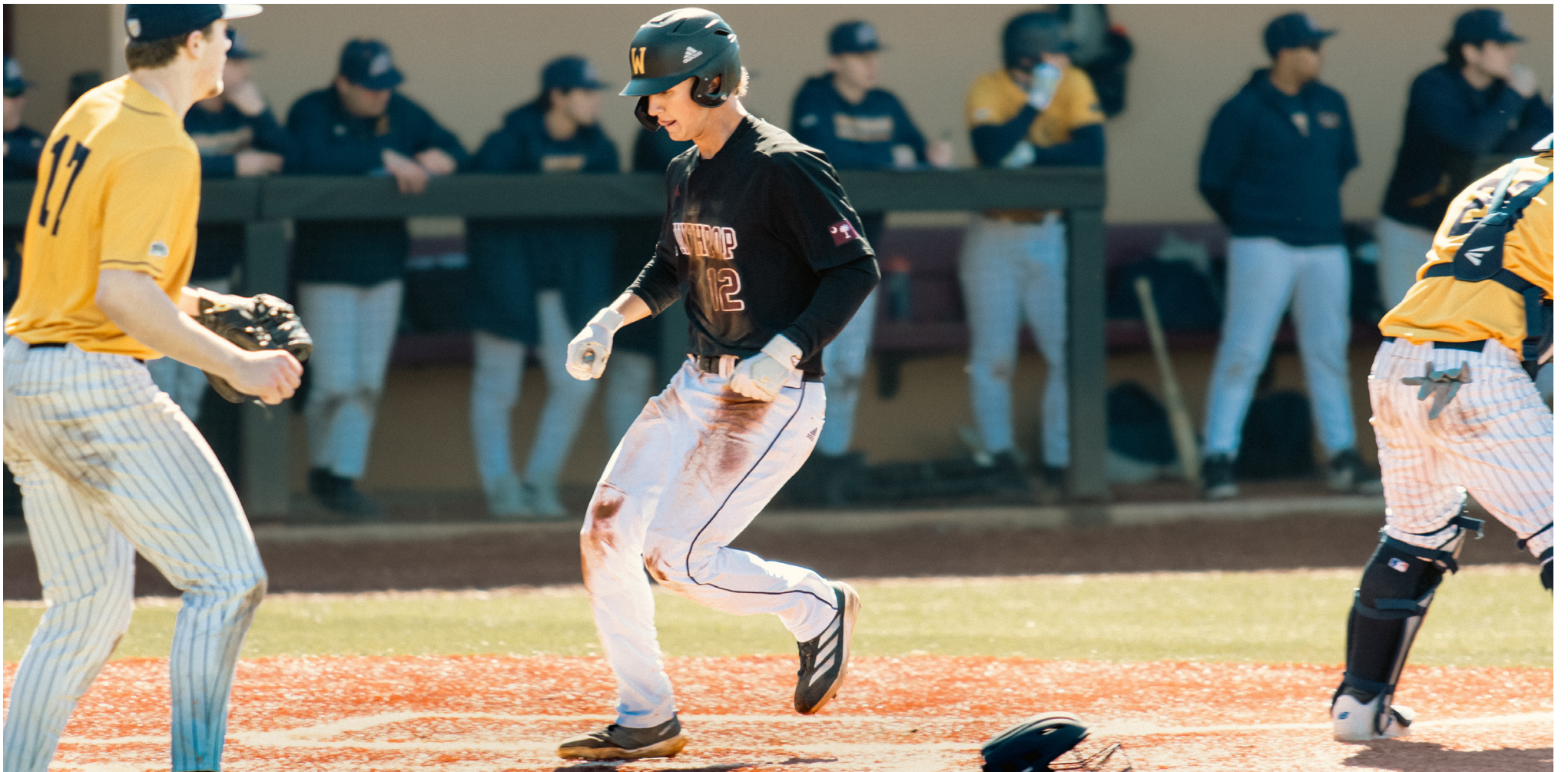
The narrative that Gen Z is lazy ignores the reality that we are redefining workplace success. Our generation seeks purpose, fulfillment, and a healthy work-life balance – values that are becoming more prominent across all age groups.

Perhaps the issue isn't that Generation Z is lazy, but that traditional workplace structures have yet to adapt to evolving priorities in a rapidly changing world.

February 20, 2025

Winthrop men's baseball team swings into Spring 2025

Winthrop baseball enters a new era with head coach Mike McGuire and sets their eyes on returning to the Big South Championship and College World Series Regionals.



Colin Crowley (#12) scoring Winthrop's first run of the season

photo by Jackson Stanton

Omar Woods
Staff Writer

Winthrop baseball players coaches are excited and ready to face the Spring 2025 season as former assistant coach Mike McGuire steps up to the plate as the new head baseball coach.

"I had a relationship with a lot of people at Winthrop because I had worked here for so long," Coach McGuire explained. "Worked here for twelve years as assistant coach. There were a lot of connections at Winthrop."

Coach McGuire said he has had a very long relationship with the

sport of baseball that has led him to this point.

"My dad got me interested in baseball and my love for the game so when I got to the end of my playing career I couldn't see myself walking away from baseball and coaching was a way to stay heavily involved with it," coach McGuire explained.

Every single head coach of a sports team has a gameplan, and Coach McGuire is no different. He describes what believes will make a well-rounded, winning baseball team.

"Besides talent and work ethic, I think

it's the culture of the program," coach McGuire said.

Coach McGuire continued, saying, "As the head coach, I'm responsible for setting the expectations, setting examples, portraying how we work, how we compete and how we practice, how we behave and treat others."

Coach McGuire has one main goal for the season: playing on the national stage.

"I want to compete nationally," Coach McGuire said. "Given where the program has been, my number one goal this season is to get ourselves up

off the mat and put ourselves back on the map of the national scene. That may not happen overnight, we got to take baby steps but I think we're going to be a much improved program that has a chance to compete for a Big South Championship."

Winthrop baseball struggled notably over the past four years, with 3 losing seasons and one season in 2023 where they ended the year right at a .500 winning percentage.

Beyond this season, coach McGuire wants to see the team become a powerhouse among the college baseball

teams.

"Longterm, my goal is for us to be a mainstay in the college baseball postseason."

The baseball players of Winthrop also shared the same sentiment of their coach.

Nate Chronis, a senior playing for the team, also expressed the desire to go far this season.

"More than anything, I just want to go to a regional and win one," Chronis explained. "Play into June as far as possible, get to the playoffs and see what we can do from there."

Despite it being the first week of the season,

the baseball team already made quite the statement, as they completed a 3-0 sweep in their series against Merrimack College and outscored them 32-7.

"It was great," Chronis said. "Great series and a great start to the year. Looking forward to building off of it."

Winthrop looks to build off their strong start as they begin a weekend series against Villanova this Friday, Feb. 21. The team will then head up to Clemson to face the Tigers on Tuesday, Feb. 25.

Photos from the series below



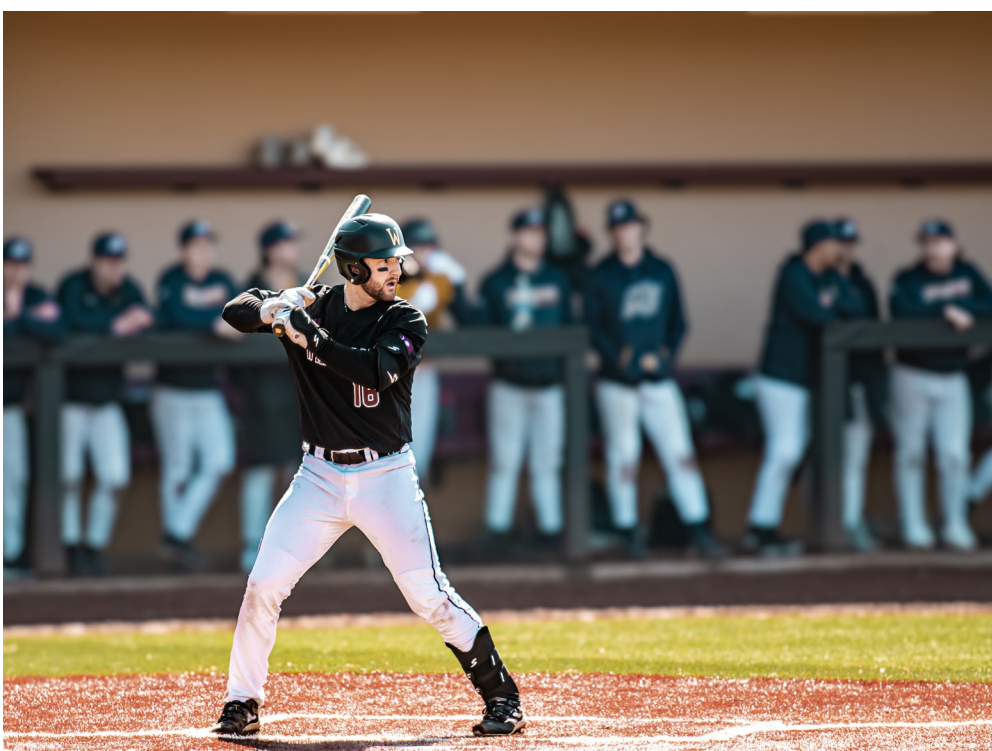
Connor Harris (#30) in mid-pitching motion

photo by Jackson Stanton



Winthrop baseball players watching and cheering their teammates on

photo by Jackson Stanton



Nate Chronis (#16) in the batter's box

photo by Jackson Stanton



Winthrop baseball players standing for the National Anthem

photo by Jackson Stanton

Sports Editor: Now hiring!
Contact @vilardeboc2@winthrop.edu

February 20, 2025

Therapy dogs bring paw-sitive vibes to Winthrop

Every other Wednesday, PAWS Together brings adorable canines to visit and help students relieve stress.

Kyan Feser
Staff Writer

Winthrop University is no stranger to pets, and every so often a familiar cast of dogs visit the DiGiorgio Student Center.

These dogs are with PAWS Together, a volunteer organization that brings certified therapy dogs to DIGS every other Wednesday from 11 a.m. – noon.

The Johnsonian got the opportunity to speak with them last Wednesday, hoping to showcase their cause and expose the canines to more students.

“We’re called PAWS Together, and the PAWS stands for ‘Partnering Animals with Students.’ Unless we’re the library and then it’s ‘Partnering Animals with Stories,’ and when we’re visiting assisted living facilities it’s ‘Partnering Animals with Seniors,’” said Maxine German, the

unofficial leader of PAWS Together.

“We’re kind of versatile,” she added.

German got her start with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, the nationwide organization that PAWS Together works under. She became a “tester” for the alliance, and helps register therapy dogs in the local area, she explained.

PAWS Together is composed of these local dogs, and they’ve been visiting Winthrop for 10 years.

Therapy dogs are certified for therapy work, and we go to universities, nursing homes, hospitals, the airport sometimes, any place that people might need a little bit of a stress relief,” said Pat Ferrel, a member of PAWS Together.

Ferrel hopes that people can “come pet the dogs, love on them,

and just get a break from whatever is going on in their life,” she added.

Aside from being cute as can be, there’s science behind the dogs as well, German explained.



Pat Ferrel and her dog Caia

“It’s a proven fact that petting a dog will lower your blood pressure, and you can feel — I can feel — the relief when I put my dog, and it just relaxes you like that.”

The students can feel it too.

It’s a very good way to relax. It de-stresses me

a lot,” said Amy Morgan, a senior at Winthrop.

“It’s great when they love you so much they just sit on you when you come up, or they just get really excited to see you. It’s amazing,”

Morgan added.

PAWS Together loves any opportunity to visit Winthrop, but they especially enjoy exam week, said German.

“We really enjoy coming during exam week and on study day. That’s pretty special. It really lifts the spirits and just makes things a little less tense so we

enjoy coming here then too.”

PAWS Together is also inclusive, allowing young volunteers to gain experience with dog handling. Annagrace Marshal, a junior dog handler, accompanied her mom Ruthanna Marshal last visit.

“It’s a lot of fun to get to see college students that still enjoy to see dogs, and I enjoy

getting to see college life and experience that,” said Annagrace Marshal.

At the end of the day, PAWS Together is about the smiles, said German.

“Oh, the smiles, the happy smiles, and to see our dogs’ excitement with all the people who love them and pay attention to them. The smiles do it for me.”



Maxine German and her dog Sparky

photo by Kyan Feser

We are hiring for a Sports Editor!

If you are interested please message our Instagram account or email the Editor-in-Chief @ vilardeboc2@winthrop.edu

February 20, 2025

