

OCTAPHARMA
EXPANDS TO THE
CITY OF ROCK HILL

After a \$1.5 billion investment, Octapharma purchases Rock Hill land.

Featured on Page 2

CREATION OF THE
BLACK STUDENT
UNION AT WINTHROP

Following previous protests, BSU fosters a welcoming space for black students.

Featured on Page 2

WINTHROP
ATHLETICS FIRST
DUAL SPORT ATHLETE

Learn how Janie Spicer balances school and two athletic teams!

Featured on Page 4

Winthrop University receives \$250,000 grant from the city of Rock Hill

Winthrop plans to use the money to create a new engineering program to bring new students in.



(From left to right) York Technical College President, Stacey Moore; Rock Hill Mayor, John Gettys; Winthrop University Board of Trustees Chair, Joel Hamilton; Winthrop University President, Edward Serna; and Winthrop Provost, Sebastian van Delden.

Photo by Julia Longshaw

Hudson Mize
Staff Writer

Winthrop will receive a \$250,000 grant from the city of Rock Hill to help launch its new manufacturing degree program.

The grant was announced on Sep. 15 at a press conference at the Rock Hill City Hall. It will come out of Rock Hill’s Economic Development Fund to encourage job growth in

the York County region.

An equal amount has been given to York Tech, which plans to use the grant to help develop South Carolina’s first life science training facility.

The reasoning behind this grant aligns with the Economic Development Fund’s program to offer various methods to support job creation, business development and investment, and improve the overall quality of life for Rock Hill and its

residents.

“Education is what will make our community what we want it to be over our lifetimes,” Mayor of Rock Hill John Gettys said. “[Education] is the silver bullet that will change Rock Hill.”

Using the grant, Winthrop will establish S.C.’s first bachelors program in advanced manufacturing engineering.

Advanced manufacturing

engineering is the process of using innovative technologies and methods, such as artificial intelligence, to make manufacturing more efficient, sustainable and competitive.

A key element of the program, composite materials, aid in the process to increase performance characteristics, such as strength and durability of machines and other automated processes.

Currently, no public four-year degree university in S.C. has the degree. There is also no four-year engineering program in the Rock Hill region.

“We have been incredibly busy over the last few years adding workforce driven programs: artificial intelligence, aviation, health sciences, and software engineering,” said President of Winthrop, Edward Serna.

The purpose of these programs is to create a higher population of diverse students while meeting industry needs.

“All of these programs over the last few years have laid the foundation for advanced manufacturing engineering,” Serna said.

Winthrop’s presentation highlighted the various corporations and businesses that are

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The Missing Lesson: AI Literacy

Kira Rich
Editorial Editor

AI may be banned from certain classrooms, but students won’t be able to ban it from their futures.

Artificial intelligence has been so normalized online to the point it’s

rare if you don’t come across it in some form. It can write, make art, answer questions, alter images or videos, and even do homework. Naturally the wide range of capabilities that Artificial intelligence possesses has made a lot

of educators nervous.

Some professors have taken it upon themselves to ban AI from their classrooms completely. Others allow it for certain assignments or to be used in certain processes and some educators even use it themselves. Truthfully, both reactions make sense.

AI as a tool can definitely be helpful. For example, a student that may be struggling with a topic can ask an AI chat box to explain it in a different way. It can generate practice questions, assist in brainstorming, or help a student figure out where to start on an assignment. For professors, it can help with lesson

Winthrop Volleyball hunts for a Big South Championship

Winthrop Volleyball sets attendance record during tough non-conference schedule.

Kellan Hudson
Sports Editor

Winthrop University Women’s Volleyball is back to setting records after a competitive 2025 season.

Under Coach Heather Gearhart (University of North Carolina Volleyball alumni), the Eagles have always been a powerhouse amongst the Big South. However, they lost in the semi final round of the Big South tournament to UNC Asheville, leaving the girls hungry for revenge this season.

Winthrop has been dealt a tough out-of-conference schedule this season, facing multiple power four opponents (SEC, Big 10, Big 12, and ACC conference teams), but that hasn’t been a problem. Recently, the Eagles topped ACC opponent Virginia Tech in a 3-0 sweep for their home opener. On September 3, 1,149 fans packed the Winthrop Coliseum to watch the Eagles dominate the Hokies. This broke Winthrop’s own Big South Volleyball

attendance record last set in 2015. The Rock Hill community is eager to support the Eagles because they make their matches fun to watch by being competitive with every team they play against. Since then, the Eagles traveled to Ohio State University where they narrowly lost to Ohio State in the fifth set. The Eagles then rebounded and swept The University of North Carolina Wilmington on Friday September 18th. However, the losses have

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AI generated Big Stuff

Photo via Instagram @winthropu

Police Blotter



Chase Duncan
Copy Editor
Multiple students experience vehicle break-ins in mid-September

Multiple vehicle break-ins, thefts and suspicious person sightings have been reported in the Winthrop University campus area since September began, according to an email sent out to students by WUPD Chief of Police Charles Yearta.

“WUPD has been notified by numerous victims that their vehicles were broken into and rummaged through while parked in the area of College Avenue,” Yearta said. “Victims also reported items being stolen off their porches and property, also within the area of College Avenue. Although some of the items have been recovered, other items have not.”

The first entry involving vehicle theft in the WUPD’s online daily case log for September was reported on Sept. 11. A victim reported that their bike was stolen from the rack located near the railroad side entrance to Walk2Campus, sometime between Sept. 9 and 11.

The second incident was reported on Sept. 14, when a student contacted and spoke to a WUPD officer about an incident that occurred early in the morning on Sept. 8. The case log for the incident said that video footage shows “the subject appears to be [looking] into vehicles and walks up onto the back porch and tried to tamper with the back door.” The prowler then left the area.

Another set of similar incidents was reported at a house on College Avenue on Sept. 14, where multiple victims reported vehicular larceny. One victim told the responding WUPD officer that someone attempted to break into their vehicle, while the other reported that someone stole their scooter off of their porch.

Two days later on Sept. 16, a WUPD officer discovered multiple vehicles in the Ward parking lot had been burglarized between 12:30 a.m. and 9:30. a.m. One vehicle’s driver side door was damaged and a rear passenger window broken. While examining video footage, WUPD discovered that a car was stolen from the lot as well. The incident is still marked as “active” in the case log as of Sept. 20.

\$250,000 grant Cont.

entering the York County area for the past 25 years. These companies hold jobs that students seeking manufacturing degrees could get a career in. Some listed companies are Octapharma, Boeing, Atlas Copco, Bosch and Nucor. Octapharma, a wide range biopharmaceutical business with over 40 manufacturing sites and offices worldwide, pledged an announcement on July 23 to invest \$1.5 billion in a biomedical campus with plans to hire around 1,500 employees. Winthrop’s Provost Sebastian Van Delden

said that university administrators have visited and spoken with industrial manufacturing companies about the new degree. “We visited Atlas Copco a couple weeks ago, visited New Corps, visited Cummins, and time and time again, all of these companies were very impressed, very excited about the advanced manufacturing engineering curriculum that we are about to roll out,” Van Delden said. The curriculum that a student of advanced manufacturing engineering would take are those that focus in engineering,

computing, physical and material sciences, along with mathematics, statistics, and data science. According to the SC Department of Commerce website, the Palmetto State has averaged manufacturing employment growth of more than 17% over the last ten years. Another reason Winthrop has begun to put a concentration on creating engineering programs, such as aviation, was due to a recent market analysis done by the consultant firm Gray Associates. The market analysis looked into student

demand, employer demand and competitive intensity in the job market. Serna said that with the results of their research, “The top 15 programs that we didn’t have on our portfolio that we needed to have were all in engineering.” The program will require approval from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Their meeting will occur next spring. Winthrop plans to have their first students enroll in the new program in the

fall 2027 school year. “[Winthrop] has been working very hard, [. . .] they’ve been taking deliberate steps to be ready for the workforce we knew was coming,” Gettys said. The mayor of Rock Hill finished the press conference with a call to action. “[The grant] is not going to pay for it all. And if you are an employer of some significance, where you need engineers, and you need professionals [. . .] a responsibility I think we all have [is] to see this growth here to invest and be part of that.”

RHPD abandoned Rock Hill land to be transformed into \$1.5 billion pharmaceutical plant investment

York County is concerned about their privacy, leaving students worried.



Sign where Octapharma is going to be built

Photo by Zoey Molina

Evi Houston
Managing Editor

Samiyah Heyward
Staff Writer

Octapharma, a large plasma fractionator company from Europe, is landing its first manufacturing plant in the United States here in Rock Hill, leading to benefits for all involved in the deal.

On a 200 acre plot off of Interstate 77, Rock Hill city government has been turning down potential developers left and right for four years- until this summer, when they finally said yes. Octapharma, a pharmaceutical company creating plasma-derived drugs, will soon begin construction in York County.

The development “marks a significant milestone as the biopharmaceutical manufacturer moves forward with establishing operations in South Carolina, further strengthening the state’s rapidly growing life sciences industry,” according to a press release from Governor McMaster.

Octapharma’s Background

Octapharma is a global biopharmaceutical company based in Switzerland, and currently it stands as the largest independent and privately owned plasma fracturing company in the world. In the past year alone, they reported up to \$4 billion in revenue, representing a five percent year-on-year growth. As the world’s largest

privately owned plasma fractionator, their primary focus is on the process of taking proteins out of donated plasma to create therapeutics, medications and various treatments. These drugs aid in conditions that include but are not limited to clotting disorders, physical trauma, cancer and over 300 types of primary and secondary immune deficiencies.

With over 10,000 units of plasma needed daily in the U.S. alone, they pride themselves on providing “unmatched service to [their] donors, employees, and communities” with strict and enhanced safety protocols to enforce it, according to their website.

“They [are] a very well respected company, [. . .] they genuinely care about their employees. They care about their patients— not just the money,” said Lisa Brown, Economic and Urban Development Director for the City of Rock Hill. Brown was a major proponent of closing the deal with Octapharma.

Timeline and location

Octapharma formally announced plans to establish its first ever U.S. manufacturing and production facility at the Palmetto Research Park off of Interstate 77 in Rock Hill, South Carolina on June 29, 2026. This will be located on the site of the failed Carolina Panthers’ headquarters and training camp, which was terminated mid-construction due to disputes between the owners and York County and Rock Hill officials. The Panthers

development was expected to be a \$500 million project, making the projected \$1.5 billion investment from Octapharma more than double it.

The Octapharma investment is estimated to bring in around 1,500 jobs, each paying well over six figures.

The biopharmaceutical company plans to build their headquarters and office first. Construction and grading is expected to begin in 2027, with the manufacturing facility estimated to be finished around mid-2030 upon FDA approval.

The deal as it currently stands has not been finalized yet, but is expected to close by the end of 2026.

Novant Health will also develop a hospital at Palmetto Research Park worth \$300 million.

Novant Health is a large, non-profit integrated network based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina serving communities spanning across North Carolina and South Carolina.

“[They] are nationally recognized for [their] unwavering commitment to safety and the highest quality care, and we serve as a catalyst for healthcare transformation through clinical trials, leading-edge research, innovative care delivery models and robust virtual care networks,” their official website said.

Details of the deal

After a tumultuous summer of negotiations among Octapharma, York County government and Rock Hill city government, a final deal

was reached on July 29. “This has been a long road for us to get to this point, and today we’re turning that page once and for all,” said Mayor John Gettys of the two-year long negotiation process.

Octapharma will purchase 50 acres from the city, with an expectation of 1,500 jobs within its first ten years of development. Novant Health will purchase an adjacent property in which it will invest \$300 million in a new hospital and provide 250 jobs.

The county and city government are both looking forward to the arrival of Octapharma, but that does not mean that they were always on the same page. Disagreements between the two government entities held up the deal over the summer, which according to the Rock Hill Herald “got ugly in public.”

These disagreements were mostly about where to spend the revenue which would come from the deal. While York County was initially on board, they rejected the deal late in the process, leading to conflict and distrust.

“City officials questioned the integrity of their county counterparts, along with motives for shifting funding,” reported the Herald.

Lisa Brown commented on this conflict with the county, explaining that the county is in charge of negotiating tax incentives, which they would ideally agree on with the city - but this is not always the case.

During public negotiations, the county

changed their mind about where tax revenue would be allocated, wanting more money to go into local schools. The city instead wanted this revenue for city services.

Ultimately, a compromise was made which pleased both sides.

“At the end of the day, we have great partners at the county, and though we may have a difference in opinion, I think we all agree Octapharma is a great project and something that we all want to see,” Brown said.

Benefits for Rock Hill

The Center for Economic Development, Brown’s organization, was started in the 1980s with the task of filling the void which textile mills left in Rock Hill once they were moved overseas. A life sciences plant is one way to fill this gap.

“To me, it’s really important that we have good diversification in our industry base,” Brown said.

The life science industry was specifically recruited for their longevity in the area (as Octapharma plans to stay for generations), high wages and secure jobs which recruit from various skill levels. This ranges from weeks of certificate-based training to a PhD, making it an “easy entry” industry.

Overall, these traits made Octapharma a very safe investment for the city. Combined, Octapharma and Novant Health “represent over \$1.8 billion

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Behind the scenes at Pygmalion

Backstage of Winthrop University’s upcoming theatre production.

Kyan Feser
Staff Writer

Debuting September 30 in the Johnson Studio Theatre, students of Winthrop’s department of theatre and dance will perform a new take on George Shaw’s classic “Pygmalion.” Originally written by George Bernard Shaw in 1912, “Pygmalion” follows a phonetics professor’s journey to transform an impoverished, improper-speaking flower girl into a member of high society. Unlike the original “Pygmalion,” the reimaged comedy focuses on this flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, a character previously in the backseat, said Mattie Washburn, theatre education major and the play’s director. “We’re taking this in a direction that’s very focused on Eliza’s journey, so we’re very much coming at it from the angle of telling a story about women for women,” Washburn said. “It’s definitely very big about women’s empowerment, and how it’s not fair to control someone as if they’re an

object, or as if they’re a tool when we’re people. Women are people,” said Maryah McIntosh, theatre education major and actor for the character Clara Hill. Furthermore, the play now takes place in the mid ‘60s, amid the various conflicts of the time, said Marlee Sellers, theatre education major and actor for the character Mrs. Higgins. Despite these changes, the script itself has undergone very few rewrites, Washburn explained. “There’s been little slang changes here and there and everywhere, but overall, it is still George Bernard Shaw’s script,” Washburn said. Even in a script like this, one filled with drama and conflicting views, the characters “all somehow end up together,” said Maria Clara Pereira de Quadros, theatre major and actor for the characters Mrs. Eynsford Hill and Mrs. Pearce. This togetherness is also felt by the cast, said Dayshayn Powe, sophomore and double mass communication and theatre major, and actor for the characters Freddy



Cast of Pygmalion

Photo by Kyan Feser

Hill and Alfred Doolittle. “Every person that’s behind the show, whether it’s cast, whether it’s crew, everyone just gets together so nicely, and it’s like a bond,” Powe said. For Washburn, the chance to direct a show like Pygmalion, one where everyone already

has experience, has been a fun and exciting opportunity, she said. Unlike directing K-12 theatre, something Washburn is familiar with, directing college students is more about curation and guidance, as opposed to teaching students along the way,

she explained. “My favorite part about doing all of this has definitely been being able to collaborate with all these wonderful artists and all these wonderful human beings,” she added. “Theatre is about community; it’s about establishing community, and there is no better way to do that than working on a product together.” The show begins at 7:30 p.m. every night from Sept. 30 to Oct. 3, except for its final showing on Oct. 4, which begins at 2 p.m.

“Hidden Gems” and “Accumulation:” new Rutledge gallery exhibitions

Both exhibits shared a reception event in Rutledge’s main gallery.

Gabriela Griggs
AC&T Editor

On Thursday, September 17, Rutledge hosted a reception for two simultaneous gallery exhibitions. Brittany M. Watkins’ series of installations titled “Accumulation,” was on display on the main floor of the Rutledge Gallery. Above that gallery space, in the Elizabeth Dunlap Patrick Gallery, was “Hidden Gems,” a series of various artist’s “sequential” illustrations. Watkins, an interdisciplinary artist, is a gallery director and educator currently based in Columbia, South Carolina. She is the director of the Goodall Gallery at Columbia College while also teaching three dimensional design courses at the University of South Carolina. “Brittany’s large-scale installations have received notable accolades including the South Carolina Arts Commission State Fellowship FY24, South Arts State Fellowship FY22, and ArtFields’ Juried Panel Prize 2017,” Watkins’s website reads. “Her work as an educator, community advocate, and artist are shaped by personal experiences with mental health, cognitive impairments, and trauma; the idea of home remains a foundational thematic thread across her work.” For “Accumulation,” Watkins continues to work with themes of home and also explores the impact of consumerism on American society. “Accumulation imitates the accumulation of emotional, material, and political detritus overflowing in contemporary America... Watkins

interrogates the relationship between private and public space, an examination of their parallels in American governance and

“Structural Remnant III (The Brink of Collapse)” was created using corrugated board, chalk, house paint, roofing shingles, wood, and

Watskin witnessed family members ‘collect, preserve, and reuse material goods far beyond their intended purpose. This shaped

into the fantasy of the American middle class as it is about a fear of losing a position within it,” the artist statement continues. Above the Rutledge

Renzi had their work on display and for purchase at this event. Taglined “Sequential Illustration and Beyond,” the “Hidden Gems” gallery is defined by the Winthrop College of Visual and Performing Arts website as “[an] exhibition featuring a diverse group of professional illustrators that explores representation, design, animation and more.” Many of the artists featured in “Hidden Gems” are freelance artists based in the Carolinas. Colón, one of the illustrators, is based in Raleigh, North Carolina, and primarily creates fantasy-inspired art that “incorporates diversity, body positivity, and [Puerto Rican] culture,” according to her profile on the Durham Arts Network website. Another illustrator, McNair, is originally from the Charlotte area. His work, defined as “a mesh of influences from the artworks of Ernie Barnes, to anime/manga, graffiti, and western comic [art]” has been displayed in a variety of galleries, including the Charlotte MINT Museum. Renzi, a comic artist originally from the D.C area, is also the art director of Comics! Magazine. A color artist who’s worked on the Marvel comic series “Unbeatable Squirrel Girl” and “Spider-Gwen,” Renzi primarily works with comic style illustrations. Both exhibitions are available to the public during gallery hours, which are Monday through Friday 10am to 5pm and on Saturday from 10am to 4pm. Both galleries will be hosting their respective exhibitions until October 10.



Guests looking at Hidden Gems art

Photo by Zoey Molina

contemporary culture,” Watkins’ artist statement reads. Curated by Megan Bickel, “Accumulation” consists of various installations composed of recycled materials. Watkins’ piece,

pastel. Another piece, “Helpless to Corporate Rule,” is composed of couch upholstery, roofing, carpet, a ratchet strap, and foam. “Growing up in the American South,

her understanding of accumulation as something more than excess; it is also a long-held response to scarcity and, for many, remains a means of survival.’ Accumulation is as much an entrance

Gallery and Watkin’s exhibition is the Elizabeth Dunlap Patrick Gallery where “Hidden Gems” shared in this event reception. Five artists, John Burgin, Mirelys Colón, Marcus Kiser, Wolly McNair and Rico

Volleyball feature Cont.



Winthrop Volleyball coach, Heather Gearhart, watches from the sideline

Photo by Jackson Stanton

not deterred the Eagles’ spirits. “I think a lot of people try to base it [success] off [our] record but we just try to get better and better each weekend that we have to play together. Obviously we want to win matches but at the end of the day all that matters is the Big South,” Winthrop junior and sports management major Paige Bennett said. Bennett is an outside hitter from Pleasanton, California and has been a key contributor for the Eagles. She was named the Big South Player of the Week earlier in the season.

Winthrop has been focusing on getting to know their roster’s individual strengths and fine tuning their lineup before their conference matchups. Those games are what truly matter because winning the Big South tournament and making it to the NCAA tournament have been the Eagles goals for the last seven years since their last tournament appearance in 2019. “Definitely a team goal is Big South regular and tournament champions,” Bennett said. Gearhart also noted how this year Winthrop will be hosting the Big South

tournament, making a championship that much more special. The Eagles also work at setting themselves apart beyond just their performance on the court. They pride themselves on having a fun team culture that translates to playing loose and competitive on the court. The team is very close and even traveled to Brazil this summer as a way to bond and play with some Brazilian club volleyball teams. A lot of this comes from their bench and ensuring that every role on the team is valued no matter how big or small.

“Our bench is a big part of our team. We call it the bench mob and we always pride ourselves in having the best bench in the Big South,” Bennett said. Being high energy and having fun on the sidelines translates to positive energy on the court. Being too serious will only kill the fun of the sport and lead to playing tense. “We love to have fun and we’re super goofy,” Bennett said. “When we’re playing with that mindset of having fun and playing for each other and just playing the sport we love everyday and just thinking of it

like that we’re super good.” Not every team has this kind of positive relationship with the sport and this much personality, so the Eagles use this to their advantage. Gearhart also touched on this mentality of recognizing all roles on the team. Just because a player is not talked about in the media does not mean their role goes unnoticed within the team. Gearhart highlighted Alyah Cadavid, a senior sports management major, by stating, “Alyah shows up exactly the same everyday and is a

very competitive and a very steady presence for our team.” Looking ahead, the Eagles are eager to start their Big South matches, which begin Saturday September 26th against Gardner-Webb. All Big South matches will be competitive, but the Eagles have been neck and neck with High Point in the rankings for years so those matches are particularly important for the team. The Eagles have been proving themselves to be competitive this year and are on track towards their NCAA tournament dreams.

Track and lacrosse star Janie Spicer juggles two Division I sports
Winthrop lacrosse player Janie Spicer steps out of her comfort zone to become the school’s sole dual-sport athlete.

Natalia Barthel
Staff Writer

Balancing school and a Division I sport is hard, yet somehow Janie Spicer, a junior majoring in chemistry at Winthrop University, balances two Division I sports. Spicer is taking on a second sport, balancing the demands of Division I lacrosse, track, and a chemistry major, making her the only dual-sport athlete at Winthrop. Spicer ran track her junior and senior years of high school and loved it, but she did not expect to compete in it again once she arrived at Winthrop. She missed it more than she thought she would. “I didn’t realize how much I would miss it until I got to college and constantly found myself reminiscing on my track memories,” Spicer said. Her lacrosse teammates joked that she should join the track team, but Spicer never gave it much thought. She did not think she was good enough to compete at the Division I level, and she did not think she could manage two sports. Tori, a former Winthrop teammate who is now a graduate assistant coach, changed that. Tori played lacrosse and soccer at Winthrop, and Spicer watched her handle both while succeeding in the classroom and leading her teammates. “She gave me a lot of confidence that I could maybe do the same with lacrosse and track,” Spicer said. “If it wasn’t

for her, the support of my coaches, and the encouragement from my friends and family, I don’t think I ever would have found myself in this position.” Spicer’s training looks different from that of most runners on the team. She does not train with the cross country group. She works with the 800 group, which runs far less volume, and her coach barely tracks her mileage. Spicer joins the group on the track Mondays and Fridays and runs miles of two to five on Tuesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Wednesday is lacrosse

conditioning, so she adds nothing, and Thursday is a full day off. “It looks way different than what my other girls are doing,” said Coach Aidan Fiol, the head coach for cross country and assistant coach for track, “Might it be 100% optimal for cross country? No, and it’s definitely forced me to get out of my comfort zone, but if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” The two coaching staffs

do not coordinate much beyond the track team asking whether Spicer can race. The teams share an athletic trainer and a strength coach, who both work together to monitor Spicer’s workload. “She’s someone who will always try to do more if she’s able, but a lot of times it’s about

doing the opposite to ensure she can adapt to both training stimuli,” Coach Fiol said. “They do a good job of having

her rein it in when she needs to.” The work is paying off on the lacrosse field. Spicer said the track training has improved her conditioning. “I feel like I’m able to run faster for longer periods now, which is very beneficial when it comes to lacrosse,” Spicer said. “The tough workouts I’ve done with track have made scary lacrosse conditioning seem less intimidating now too.” Her

coach sees a different advantage in how she races. Cross country is less about times, since every course is different, and more about beating people head to head. Many runners overthink it and fixate on their pacing, but Spicer arrived without those habits. “She’s very driven, very competitive,” Fiol said. “She doesn’t have to unlearn any of that, and just goes in and competes hard.” Spicer said she is still adjusting to the workload, but two things have helped. One is a “one thing at a time” mindset that keeps her present and keeps her from feeling overwhelmed. The other

is her planner. “I’m the type of person who loves writing stuff down and making to-do lists, so having an organized calendar has made staying on top of things so much easier,” Spicer said. She also credits the people around her. When asked about the hardest part of balancing everything, Spicer pointed to her teammates, coaches, and family, who she said makes the days easier. Spicer said being a dual-sport athlete has not changed her perspective, since every athlete on her team works hard regardless of how many sports they play, but it has made her more grateful. “Not everyone has the chance to play one sport, let alone two,” Spicer said. Her coach said the experience builds skills that reach beyond the track. “I think work ethic and time management are two huge ones,” Fiol said. “It’s hard enough to be a single sport student athlete, and a lot of people can’t even manage that.” For Spicer, the most rewarding part is representing Winthrop in every way she can. “I love this school and all the opportunities it’s given me, so being able to compete while wearing Winthrop across my chest has made all the long days worth it,” Spicer said.



Janie Spicer
Winthrop Lacrosse and
Track and Field

Photo via
Winthrop Athletics

AI literacy Cont.

planning, creating activities, or finding different ways to explain a complex topic.

But there is an obvious downside: AI can also do the work for you.

There is a huge difference between asking AI to explain a concept to you that you're struggling with and asking it to write your paper. One helps you learn while the other is simply just a shortcut to get by.

There are additional issues as well. AI can confidently give you incorrect information. AI is more of a search engine that pulls all information relevant to that source, however it is not a fact checker. Students may not always know what information they can trust, and there are still a multitude of questions concerning privacy, copyright, and how much personal information people should load into these systems.

So, yes, there are good reasons for professors to put limits on AI.

But banning something does not necessarily teach students how to use it.

At Winthrop, professors are expected to explain their AI policies in their syllabi, while individual instructors decide how AI can or cannot be used in their classes. Which means students may have one class where utilizing ChatGPT is completely acceptable while the next prohibits it.

That makes

understanding AI even more important.

Understanding AI does not mean teaching students how to get ChatGPT to do their work for them.

AI literacy could be as simple as learning how generative AI works, why it sometimes fills in the gaps with incorrect information, how bias can affect its answers, and how to effectively fact check the information it gives you. It could also mean defining when it is an appropriate time to use AI and when it completely defeats the purpose of an assignment.

It could also mean talking about what AI looks like outside of school.

AI outside the classroom is especially important because students are not going to graduate into a world where AI suddenly disappears. AI is already being used in fields like marketing, journalism, customer service, programming and design. The World Economic Forum has identified AI literacy as an increasingly important skill as artificial intelligence changes the workplace.

The technology is adapting quickly. The AI we see today could look completely different from what may be encountered in the next two to three years. Without jumping on it now the learning curve could be insane difficult to overcome.



AI robot with students inside of a college classroom

Photo via the74million.org

It is becoming less of a separate tool that people intentionally open and more of something built into everyday softwares and services that are regularly used.

That makes the conversation around AI in schools bigger than whether students should be allowed to use ChatGPT on an essay.

Without a doubt,

students should still learn how to write without AI. They should still learn how to research, solve problems and think through difficult questions. There is value in struggling with an assignment instead of immediately asking a chatbot for the answer.

At the same time, students should understand the

inter-workings of the technology around them rather than have the knowledge repressed.

Schools already teach students how to ethically seek out credible sources, spot misinformation online, and apply critical thinking skills to what they see online. AI deserves the same amount of attention.

The goal shouldn't be to

convince students that AI is good or bad. It should be to make sure they understand what they are dealing with.

Students don't need to be taught not to use AI but instead have awareness of its increasing capabilities as well as being able to apply their critical thinking skills.

The college expectation: how reality differs from advertisement

The unfavorable challenges that come with the college experience.

Dakota Gold
Staff Writer

There is a commercialized promise that colleges advertise and a specific aesthetic that many students and families expect. Students typically want the shiny dorms, the big friend group that attends parties, high-tech lab equipment and a bustling campus.

Higher education is not just viewed as a degree. It includes a way to independence, community and self-discovery.

But, once the excitement of move-in day fades, students face the harsh reality that college life may not be what it seems. Students are met with busy schedules, financial insecurity and isolation from the life they knew before.

Journee Preston, a freshman psychology

major, came to campus expecting an exciting and fresh start. Her fresh start was shaken when encountering mold problems in her room.

"We all started getting sick, and it was affecting us enough that one of my roommates had to miss class and was coughing throughout the night," Preston said. "Then, my suitemate noticed big black splotches around the bathroom doors and hinges. We found out that what we thought was just rust or staining was actually black mold, and eventually, we all had to move out."

Her suitemates were given another room in the same building, but Preston and her roommate had to move all of their things to a room in another building. This created an unfortunate setback to the start of her freshman year.

Planning is a key aspect of a student's experience in college. This includes keeping up with assignments and mapping out classes for future semesters.

Creating a schedule for the upcoming semester is difficult enough on its own without the trouble of scheduling a required advising meeting. Advisors are there to guide and advise students through the course of their college career.

It should be easy to meet with an advisor, but for sophomore political science major, Lekhi Bennett, this is not the case. Bennett's advisor has a packed schedule which means it is difficult to find a time to meet with them.

"If I was not able to meet with my TRiO advisor, then I would have a hard time finding openings in my actual



The Courtyard at Winthrop

Photo via Design Collective

advisor's schedule," Bennet said. "The Department Chair [of Sociology, Criminology and Anthropology] ended

up emailing my advisor so they could approve my classes."

This can be the case for many students, as advisors can meet with hundreds of students on top of their personal work.

Once settled into the semester, many students want to have the ideal college experience, but it may seem out of reach for some students. With tuition, textbooks, housing, food and gas, simply getting through the semester takes priority over enjoyment.

One student who works two jobs on top of their academics said that they feel they are missing out on the real experience because of financial worry. They need to work to be able to sustain themselves, which takes a toll on their studies.

The pressure of balancing academics with work can leave little time for the fun experiences

that are a part of college. For these students, the college experience is not about having the ideal four years, but about navigating the financial challenges that come with it.

Finances look different for every student. Some students may worry about loans and paying tuition while others are concerned about finding a steady job or having enough gas money to commute.

College may come with difficulties, but there are plenty of opportunities that make all the difference. Getting involved on campus by joining organizations and being a student leader, making friends with classmates and the feeling of accomplishment after passing an exam.

Even with the pressures of college life, students can find support, purpose and moments that make the challenges worthwhile.



Winthrop University sign on Cherry Road

Photo via winthrop.edu

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Bailey Wimberly, Editor-in-Chief

Pharmaceutical plant Cont.

dollars of investment and over 1,800 jobs” reported a Rock Hill press release. This makes the research park one of the largest investments in the state’s history, with many financial benefits to come from it.

In the next 40 years, property taxes from Octapharma will be split accordingly: \$286.8 million for schools, \$71.4 million for the city and \$50.8 million for York County. The Rock Hill school district will also receive another \$65 million within this 40 years.

It is worth noting that the benefits of Octapharma for the community are in contrast to the benefits anticipated from the failed Panthers site.

Brown explained that the Panthers would have provided larger hospitality tax and tourism to Rock Hill, but required much more public funding. Octapharma, a private

development, will be cheaper for the city to build and provide jobs which out-number and out-pay the Panthers by a great amount.

The benefits of the plant have been weighed against many other proposals for development in Rock Hill, including data centers. Ultimately, Brown felt that Octapharma was the best fit for the community due to its mission, quality of jobs and investment into the county.

“I think it was something that the community would be proud of, and that it wouldn’t be something that we regretted later on,” Brown said.

On data centers, Brown said, “we have no interest. We have told them no before.”

She referenced the quality of life in Rock Hill which a data center might disrupt, along with its drain on energy and water resources.

Brown hopes to recruit companies which are equally desired by the community and the city government.

What this means for Winthrop students

With new facilities being built close to campus, there will be an influx of opportunities for Winthrop graduates — especially for those with science degrees.

Other biopharmaceutical companies in the Charlotte metro area are struggling to find workers upon opening, so there is a massive focus on recruiting new employees locally.

This is especially important since there are few manufacturing locations in the United States which do similar work to Octapharma, requiring local training in Rock Hill rather than recruitment.

Since Octapharma’s current career programs

are international only, Rock Hill will be their first U.S. based facility to potentially offer them.

“There’s lots of opportunities [for Winthrop students]. They’re still going to need HR people. They’re still going to need finance people. They’re still going to need communications people,” Brown said.

Additionally, York Tech will have the first ever life science training facility in South Carolina. With the upcoming construction of Octapharma, they plan to use Winthrop and York Techs’ Dual Enrollment “Fast Track” program to prepare new employees for the plant.

“Winthrop is being very future focused in their desire to have the Advanced Manufacturing Engineering Program,” Brown said.

Student Perspectives

As council members continue their efforts to

close Octapharma’s new deal, Winthrop students weigh in their opinions of the plant and the potential career and internship opportunities.

“It’s a really good chance to get people introduced to phlebotomy, which is drawing blood,” Isi Millard, sophomore biology major said. “[This would be] a pretty good opportunity for those interested in healthcare”.

“I’m not the biggest fan of big pharma corporations, but at the same time it’s still a [critical] need. [. . .] Plasma and blood are always in constant demand in the medical field, and I think it’s important that people have easier access [when it comes to donating] blood and plasma because just one donation can save three to four people,” Millard said.

“If I ended up doing a hypothetical internship, I think I would enjoy it,” Cadyn Bagley,

sophomore biology education major said. “They would be a good place to have an internship for those going into the medical field [as this] shows a side of medicine not many people see and I think it would be worthwhile info to learn”.

“Jobs in science are hard to come by, so I think 1,500 jobs that pay well are a great step for South Carolina’s science industry,” Bagley said.

Following the development of Octapharma, Brown expects a growth in more life-science related industries, while still exalting small businesses which make up the bulk of Rock Hill commerce.

“We will continue to fight for more life science [investments],” Brown said.

Once the deal is closed in the coming months, it will become public record and available on the York County Register of Deeds.

New student union created in response to racial statement allegations from Winthrop Administration

Winthrop University BSU (Black Student Union) hopes to foster a safe and supportive community for the black student population on campus.

Ta’Ni Miller
News Editor

Amidst recent racial controversy surrounding Winthrop administration as of Spring 2026, a new club has formed centered around providing a supportive space to uplift black students.

Two protests took place this spring after outrage sparked over allegations of racial insensitivity by University administration were brought to light.

Background on Allegations

Whistleblower Todd Hagins filed a state court lawsuit and a Charge of Discrimination against Winthrop University in September of 2025 on claims of witnessing racial discrimination, gender discrimination and homophobia in the workplace.

This decision came after he was fired from his position as General Counsel and Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Hagin’s legal complaints said the decision for his termination from the University was in part caused by his opposition

to former employee Amy Bailey’s termination, after she made complaints about a hostile work environment.

Bailey said that she overheard on numerous occasions white administrators in the President’s office using racial slurs in the workplace.

Tammie Phillips, one of the main alleged perpetrators, had recently been promoted to Executive Director in the Office of the President.

After filing a federal discrimination complaint in November 2025 with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Bailey was fired in December 2025.

Winthrop University denied the accusations of retaliation and racism, citing the decision was solely based on “misconduct” within her position as Administrative Coordinator.

Additionally, Hagins further alleged that the change of the student government model from the Council of Student Leaders (CSL) to a Student Government Association (SGA) was a deliberate act by the

Winthrop Board to reduce minority involvement.

In response, Winthrop filed a legal malpractice suit against Hagins along with President Serna sending an email to all students, citing that his allegations of racial insensitivity were “false and misleading.”

Winthrop also claimed that the model change was first initiated and requested by the club itself.

The email sent on April 27 highlighted how there was “no place for racial comments or racial insensitivity within Winthrop” and specifically how Winthrop has seen a significant increase in Black/African-American student enrollment over recent years.

However, many students felt that this response lacked real accountability, initiative and transparency within administration and staff.

Student Protests

Students organized two peaceful on-campus protests in retaliation to the situation. Participants were encouraged to wear black outfits and make



Winthrop student protesters in front of the Winthrop Eagle statue Photo by Chase Duncan

posters voicing their concerns.

The first protest occurred during Cram Jam, a study day hosted by Winthrop in the Eagle Eatery that provided food, music and games.

Students came together on Monday, April 27 and handed out informational flyers about the ongoing situation to educate their peers, before marching out of the event and gathering in front of the Amphitheatre. I believe they also gave links to hagin’s filing, not sure

Many students could be seen celebrating together with their own hymns and singing. Accounts described this event as a surreal experience that gave students more confidence to voice their opinions about the injustice on campus.

Large turnout from this event led to the creation of a second protest on Tuesday, April 28 organized by the student movement titled “WU United.”

Students marched across the entire Winthrop campus to further demonstrate their outrage and concern on the recent allegations.

Multiple news channels from Charlotte covered the event live.

Creation of BSU

After these protests, the question of how minority voices are represented on campus became a serious discussion across campus.

In response to recent controversy and student demand, concerned students created BSU with the goal to showcase and uplift the large black student population on Winthrop’s campus.

BSU President JB Simmons, junior human development and family studies major, helped lead the WU United movement before chartering BSU during his sophomore year.

“I wanted to be able to create an organization that really can give the black community here a safe and inclusive environment, where they could be able to join and create their own events,” Simmons said.

One of the main highlights of the club, Simmons shared, is the ability of all members to have input in upcoming events during mass meetings. Any student can help create an idea

they would like to see happen with approval of a committee chair.

The organization’s mission statement includes “fostering a supportive and inclusive environment that celebrates the culture, heritage, and achievements of the American-American community on campus.”

Vice President Kendrick Pulliam, senior integrated marking communication major shared that his belief in strength in numbers will bring the black community together under one united goal.

BSU has various committees such as Community Service, Media, Event Planning & Fundraising and Education & Advocacy that are open for all students to join.

Education initiatives are a core aspect of the club, with executive staff sharing information about professional enhancement within the workplace and positive ways for students to be more involved on Winthrop’s campus.

Students interested in joining BSU can contact the club via Instagram handle @winthropbsu for more information.



Students march in front of Johnson Hall and Roddey Hall. Photo by Chase Duncan

