

‘Let markets work’ | K-State researchers explain increased beef prices

K-State economists contextualize record-high beef prices as a result of increased demand.

AMYLEE GIL
news editor

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, beef prices are at an all-time high, with overall cattle size at a historic low of 75 years, and prices are predicted to rise an additional 10% for the full year. In a time of rising inflation and no relief in the grocery store, consumers

may wonder which factors of the current economic climate are causing their high-priced beef. Brian Coffey and Glynn Tonsor, professors in the Department of Agricultural Economics, have conducted research to provide answers on where the

price increase came from. The two K-State agricultural economists’ work has served to make something clear: consumer demand for beef has played a bigger role in price increases than people realize. Tonsor and Coffey co-authored an assessment of the

U.S. beef market. According to the assessment, although it is true that the low herd size contributes to prices, their data revealed that market changes have been “anything but one-dimensional” and are decades in the making.

SEE BEEF ON A2 »



Photo by Kaitlyn Cook | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP
Democratic candidate for Kansas House District 66 **Sydney Carlin** speaks to a community member after the Indivisible MHK Candidate Forum.

Voter involvement, civic participation shape candidate forum ahead of midterm elections

Candidates discuss competing priorities while calling for greater civic participation.

ALEX LANTERMAN
staff writer

As Manhattan residents prepare to head to the polls, candidates from three local races repeatedly returned to the same concerns Tuesday night: rising costs, government accessibility and the role voters play in shaping local government. Indivisible MHK — a pro-democracy grassroots progressive organization founded in Manhattan — and the Manhattan branch of the NAACP co-organized the event. It touched on issues ranging from education funding to election law to government accountability. The event was also a continuation of the 2026 Town Halls series, which included events with Jennifer Day and Lauren Reinhold in September.

The forum featured Democratic Riley County Commission District 1 candidate Rob Voelker, Democratic House District 67 candidate Brenda Bandy, Democratic House District 66 incumbent Sydney Carlin, Libertarian House District 66 candidate Andrew Frey and Republican House District 66 candidate Noah Perry. Organizer Philip Nel, Indivisible MHK board member and K-State university distinguished professor, said the forum’s primary goal was to encourage residents to become more engaged in local elections and government. “We really just want to get people engaged in elections and in voting and in our civic responsibilities as citizens,” Nel said. “I think a lot of people think that their vote doesn’t matter, but it really does.” Candidates frequently tied local concerns to broader discus-

sions about government responsiveness and public participation. Voelker said local offices often have a greater impact on residents’ lives than many people realize. “The local races control what happens on your most basic level,” Voelker said. “Who you vote for does make a difference on things that do impact your lives.” He said one of his priorities would be making the county government more accessible and responsive to residents. “I want to be a public servant,” he said. “I think there’s a tendency the longer you’re in government to feel like you’re the boss, and that’s not how it should be.” Property taxes and education funding emerged as recurring concerns throughout the evening. Bandy said these concerns routinely come up from voters, and that education funding is more important now than ever

because it is an issue currently facing the legislature. “I would say our school finance, because that is up for discussion every 10 years, and it’s coming up this session,” Bandy said. “I think we have to put that on everybody’s radar.” The three candidates for Kansas House District 66 spoke together as part of a panel, and each offered their own priorities. Carlin focused much of her answers on voting access and public participation in government. She criticized what she believes to be growing barriers to public involvement in the legislative process, and added that lawmakers must prioritize public input. “The one-party system isn’t working for Kansas,” she said. “Many issues voters care about go unaddressed. We can’t cut the people out.”

SEE HOUSE ON A2 »



Graphic by Evan Gnagy
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New positions expand hazing prevention, education and legal support

SLOANE BUCKWALTER
staff writer

Two new members joined K-State’s Student Support and Accountability team, expanding resources for students facing legal issues and hazing-related concerns. According to K-State Today’s Sept. 30 press release, the positions were necessary to enhance and expand how K-State supports both its students and community. Corinne Petrik, K-State alumna and new legal services attorney for Student Legal Services, offers education for students about their legal rights and responsibilities. She assists in resolving legal issues and supplies students with skills necessary to handle future legal situations — all while remaining free of charge. Common issues students face include misdemeanors, landlord-tenant issues and accidents, Petrik said. “If someone picks up a minor charge or misdemeanor, we guide them throughout what that process looks like, whether they want to go to trial or seek other options and what those are,” Petrik said. “Housing is [also] one of the most important needs that [students] have. So we assist in giving information that we can in order to get through issues like repairs, lease violations and so forth.” Petrik said she focuses on making resources accessible to both students and the K-State community.

SEE HAZING ON A2 »

K-State Rabies Laboratory observes increase in exposure to potential rabies cases in Kansas

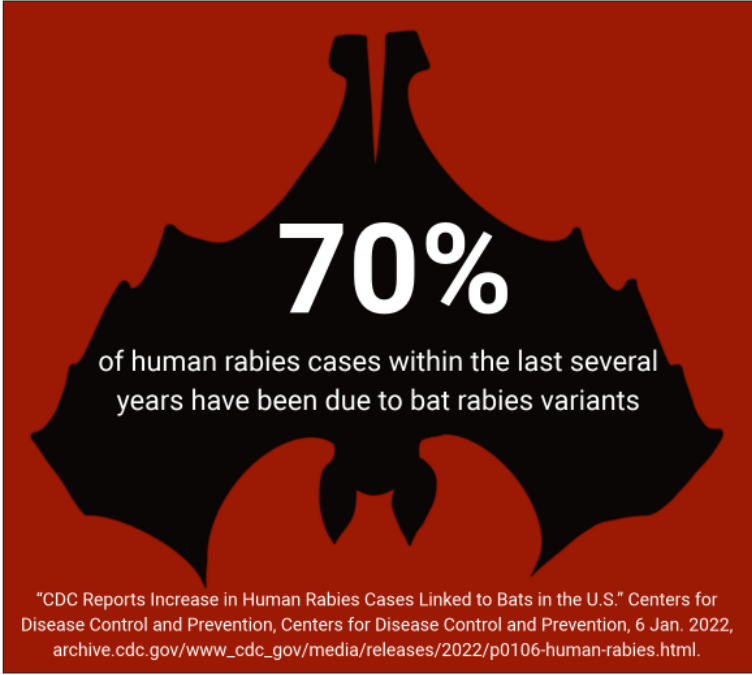
JULIETTE FALO
staff writer

Bats are a common sight around K-State’s campus, especially during the warmer months when they are typically more active. They are also one of the leading carriers of rabies, and with a growing number of sightings, some students and faculty are worried about their safety while in some campus buildings. Will Stafford, assistant philosophy professor, said he often sees bats while working in his office in Dickens Hall. He said he sees them so frequently that signs have been put up to alert people.

“There’s signs on some of the windows being like, ‘keep the windows closed’ because the bats will come in,” Stafford said. “Once I opened one of my cupboards and there was a dead bat inside.” Stafford and his other colleagues with offices on the highest floor of Dickens repeatedly see bats in the space. Stafford said he noticed a decrease in appearances after the roof was redone but has since noticed them coming back more and more. “It definitely interrupts things like meetings or stops people from being able to go into their offices,” Stafford said. “Luckily, I don’t think I’ve ever seen one fly into a class-

room while there was actually a class in session.” The increase in bat encounters is not just being noticed around campus. The K-State Rabies Laboratory is also seeing a rise in potential exposure to rabies. Dr. Janine Seetahal, rabies section head at the Kansas Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, said she has seen this rise firsthand. “For this year, we definitely did see more samples coming in between July to now,” Seetahal said. “This year, over last year’s number of samples, we have seen maybe a 40% increase within that time frame.”

SEE RABIES ON A2 »



Graphic by Evan Gnagy | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

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BEEF

« CONTINUED FROM A1

Tonsor and Coffey said consumers can look at the situation from a supply-demand position.

“There are developments on both supply and demand that have led to higher prices,” Tonsor said. “The most important economic force is the strong beef demand. Any time you have a product, in this case, beef, that the public wants more than in the past ... and nothing else has changed, we expect the price to go up.”

The first thing Tonsor said he wants consumers to keep in mind is that strong consumer demand will increase prices, and that this year’s price increase has more to do with high demand than anything else.

“The average American consumed more beef in 2025 than in 2024,” Tonsor said. “They paid more for it, even beyond inflation. The price went up more than the rate of inflation in 2025 even though the volume in that market went up. That only happens if the public values those pounds more because of demand growth.”

Despite herd size being at an all-time low in the U.S. this year,

Coffey said a shrinking herd size is a normal part of the “cattle cycle” and should not alarm consumers.

“This is a normal thing,” Coffey said. “In times where farmers think that keeping beef cows will be profitable, they grow their herds. ... Then, when economic times shift, or there’s a drought or political uncertainty, a lot of those same farmers will shrink their herds because it makes more sense to get rid of cows and have less of an investment tied up in them. ... Then eventually it hits kind of a low, things shift and it grows again ... it is up and down over time.”

Overall, Coffey and Tonsor’s research found that consumers can look to an increase in demand, rather than various external factors, when noticing high prices.

“We did some basic calculations that say between 2024 and 2025 that about 83% of that price increase was due to consumer demand, and 17% of the price increase was on the supply side,” Coffey said. “It’s not necessarily as big of a problem as it seems; it is mainly due to consumer demand. ... That doesn’t diminish the fact that livestock producers right now are battling some

really tough challenges with elevated input costs. ... There are some difficult times right now even at the grocery store with people trying to afford their grocery bills.”

AgManager.info, an extension site for agricultural economy information, contains Coffey and Tonsor’s research reports. Tonsor said his ‘Meat Demand Monitor’ program provides monthly updated reports of survey data.

“[The program] is based here at K-State ... and it’s a massive survey of U.S. residents,” Tonsor said. “We’re surveying over 3,000 U.S. residents every month; we’ve been doing it for seven years now. ... We track what’s important in your purchasing. It’s like we’re figuring out what is important to your buy and don’t buy decision when it comes to meat, protein and taste.”

According to Tonsor’s research, customers prioritize taste and eating experience when purchasing beef.

“It outranks price,” Tonsor said. “Price matters; I’m an economist, I can’t ignore price, but taste is more important than price. The reason, in my opinion, why beef demand is as strong as it is, is the public thinks it’s tasty. Because that’s the most im-

portant determinant on their buying decision, it favors a higher price because it’s consistent with a market trying to allocate those pounds to the people that value them more than they did five years ago.”

Both Coffey and Tonsor said they advise against regulations being made now to remedy the low herd size because it would cause long-term consequences in the beef industry.

“Let markets work,” Tonsor said. “Most market interventions, whether it’s federal, state or otherwise, whether it’s a new policy, a regulation, subsidy, whatever those interventions are, almost always ... have an unintended consequence in the long term. If I do something today to speed up herd expansion, I’m going to actually shrink beef supply next year. ... I would have to keep young females [cows] out of the production system and in the breeding system to facilitate a bigger herd. A natural consequence of that is ... we have less domestic beef production. I’m not saying that’s right or wrong, but it’s very clearly a consequence of that policy intervention that artificially changed the herd expansion.”

Coffey said there is not as much of an urgent need to grow herds back to the size they used to be due to mod-



Graphic by Evan Gnagy
COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

ern beef cattle farming being more efficient at growing larger cows.

“We will grow the herd back once economic conditions are such that producers are willing to make those investments,” Coffey said. “There’s just a lot of uncertainty right now. ... We probably won’t grow it back to as big as it was in, say, 2019, just because we don’t need as many animals now. I would look at it more as an example of markets working in a complex supply chain, moving beef from the cow calf stage ... all the way to putting beef in the meat case at the grocery store. That process takes a couple of years, and so it’s a very complex chain of events that happens to make all the beef get to where we want it to be. It just takes time for markets to work.”

HOUSE

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Perry, who describes himself as a moderate Republican, emphasized child advocacy and community involvement as his main issues. During the forum, he pointed to property taxes and education as major concerns and highlighted support for Erin’s Law as his top

priority, a proposal helping children recognize and report abuse.

“When you move to Manhattan, this is your home,” Perry said. “And as elected officials, it is our job to address concerns among people in Manhattan.”

Frey, meanwhile, said ranked-choice voting, civil liberties protections and a reduction in government spending are his main platform. He suggested eliminating “victimless

crime laws,” including cannabis restriction, could lower policing and incarceration costs and thus reduce the tax burden on Kansans.

“I’m campaigning on lowering taxes,” Frey said. “And I’m doing that by deprioritizing and removing victimless crime laws.”

Despite their policy differences, candidates repeatedly centered their discussion on the importance of civic engagement and local participation.

In Kansas, the deadline to register to vote or update your voter registration (including to change address to Riley County) is Oct. 13. Early voting through mail and in person begins Oct. 14, with the general election taking place on Nov. 3.

Nel said residents who want to influence local issues like taxes, education funding and government accountability should view voting as only one step in the process.

“You can’t do everything, but you can do something,” Nel said. “Figure out what it is you want to focus on, find the people who are working on that and get to work.”

In a forum focused on affordability, accessibility and elections, candidates from all parties came together to agree on one point: local government works best when the people it represents stay informed and involved.

HAZING

« CONTINUED FROM A1

“I want to build this [program] so that we have as many resources as possible for the students, and let everybody know that this is a free, confidential service that exists,” Petrik said.

Andy Thompson, assistant vice president of Student Support Accountability and senior associate dean of students, said that continued funding and support from the Student Governing Association (SGA) allowed the university to hire Petrik full-time.

“SGA continued the funding and helped us get to a ... level that was more competitive,” Thompson said. So, we were able to hire Corinne [Petrik] full-time. Getting a lawyer in town or anywhere can be pricey ... it was a no-brainer to continue that position.”

Thompson said he would’ve benefited from the service when he was a college student.

“I actually ended up in a landlord-tenant issue ... and I look

back and absolutely could have used that service when I was a student,” Thompson said.

Students and staff alike have described legal aid, education and representation as important resources. Jaxi Mitchek, junior in psychology, said understanding her rights could benefit her and her peers.

“I think that it is very important to understand and know your rights and to have somebody who is free of charge teach us them,” Mitchek said. “It would help us in more ways than one. I think with what’s going on in the world right now, you never know what’s gonna happen ... it would be very beneficial to have somebody help us.”

Petrik said that students should utilize her services, no matter the scale of the issue.

“If they have a question, then they should absolutely reach out to see if we can help,” Petrik said. “Whether it’s something they think is little or ... something that’s just absolutely terrifying.”

Alea Billingsley is the second new member of the Student Support and Accountability staff. Specializing in prevention education,

K-State designated her as the hazing prevention and conduct coordinator. Her role is to educate the community about hazing, lead hazing prevention and awareness initiatives and serve as an advisor for those with questions or concerns.

Billingsley said 70% of her focus is on hazing prevention and 30% on student conduct. She acknowledged that hazing and reporting can be scary topics, and said that, through her role, she wants to demystify that feeling for students on campus, focusing on educating students to combat the widespread prevalence of hazing.

“Hazing absolutely happens here,” Billingsley said. “It happens everywhere. It’s definitely not anything new ... that’s why education is so important. I think people are starting to understand more and more that [hazing] doesn’t just happen in fraternity and sorority life; it happens everywhere.”

Thompson said most students don’t understand what qualifies as hazing, pointing out how a lack of education commonly leads to a lack of awareness.

“I think there are sometimes ... things that occur that students don’t realize could be a definition of [hazing], and they just haven’t identified it yet,” Thompson said.

Billingsley said K-State created her position specifically to combat the increase in hazing nationwide and that she is currently the only hazing prevention and conduct coordinator in Kansas and one of very few in the nation. She said her role is separate from broader student conduct offices to face the spread of hazing head-on.

“Our driving force was trying to think of [students’] overall well-being and to be proactive in that work,” Thompson said. “We are always trying to think about our students ... and how they’re engaging with each other.”

Hailey Biswell, junior in elementary education and member of Gamma Phi Beta, helped advocate for this role as both a sorority and SGA member.

“When [Billingsley] came and spoke to the senate, she did an amazing job explaining exactly how she handles sit-

uations, education and much more,” Biswell said.

Billingsley said she already reached out to fraternity and sorority chapters to discuss expectations and reporting procedures and aims to become a familiar face.

David Gott, junior in political science and member of Alpha Sigma Phi, said the university could benefit from a hazing coordinator.

“I think hazing can get out of hand quickly, and making sure that you have a handle on it before it spirals is always a good thing,” Gott said. “I want to see a friendly face who has made their presence known. Everybody has their contact information. And knowing what’s gonna happen after you reach out to them and see where your claim is gonna go.”

Thompson said his goal is to make hazing prevention a part of K-State’s community and culture.

“In year one, we’re hoping ... we ingrain the education of hazing prevention in campus culture across the 400 student organizations the university has,” Thompson said.

RABIES

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Seetahal said she believes this increase could be due to a spike in rabies awareness in the media, among other things. She said it is important to have this awareness,

especially because about 70% of human rabies cases within the last several years have been due to bat rabies variants.

Due to the prevalence of rabies in bats, Seetahal said she thinks it’s important that people know what precautions to take when encountering one.

“Once it’s confirmed that nobody interacted with the bat at the level that they could have been exposed,” Seetahal said. “Open windows, open doors and the bat will go out.”

Seetahal said if the bat is acting sick or abnormal, that would be a reason to send it to

the rabies lab for testing. She also said she suggests sending the bat to be tested if you are unsure whether you or anyone else made contact.

“If somebody wakes up, there’s a bat flying in their bedroom, that is reason to test,” Seetahal said. “Even if they don’t

think or don’t recall that they were bitten or scratched or the bat landed on them.”

If a student finds a bat and sees a reason for it to be tested, Seetahal said they should call animal control or carefully capture the bat in a container while using gloves and other safety measures.

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Pumpkins and philanthropy | Alpha Delta Pi hosts fair for a cause



Alpha Delta Pi members pose for a photo at their 52nd annual arts and crafts fair, supporting the Ronald McDonald house and the Alpha Delta Pi Foundation.

MARIA VELAZCO
staff writer

For 52 years, the Pumpkin Patch Arts & Crafts Fair has welcomed the Manhattan community with a series of activities and local vendors to bring in the fall season. The Alpha Eta Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi at K-State hosted the event Oct. 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Proceeds benefited the Ronald McDonald House of Wichita. Grayce Lynam, member of ADPi and primary planner of the event, said the Alpha Eta chapter has spearheaded the event since 2013, its 40th year. “This year was incredibly exciting,” Lynam said. “We had 37 vendors come through. And for the first time in a couple years, we also had pumpkins back in the pumpkin patch.” Attendees could buy pumpkins, artwork, home decor, jewelry, handmade and homemade goods to support the Ronald McDonald House, a nonprofit family & children’s char-

ity dedicated to supporting families with sick children in their time of need, according to its website. According to the Alpha Eta Chapter, the fair welcomed 400 attendees. Community members who purchased items from vendors, participated in the raffle or made a donation supported Ronald McDonald House Charities Wichita, which has provided more than 7,779 free night stays in hospitals for children and their families, according to the organization. “You’re actually physically able to go see what the difference is when you’re serving your time and being able to see a sister who’s been affected,” Lynam said. “It is an event planned by one but supported by many.” While the fair is a historical event for Manhattan, Lynam said the annual event will continue to highlight philanthropic initiatives while featuring the work of local and regional vendors for the season.

SEE PUMPKINS ON A5 »

Manhattan local holds Guinness World Record for most Chiefs Memorabilia

CADENCE BRIER
staff writer

On his 9th birthday, Curt Herrman received his first Kansas City Chiefs item: a 1970 Super Bowl football. Little did he know that one birthday gift would turn into a Guinness World Record. “Every birthday, holiday or special occasion after that family, friends, everybody would buy me Chiefs stuff,” Herrman said. “It started out that way, and as I got married and had children I just kept buying cheap stuff.” While most of it was kept in storage for the duration of his collecting, it wasn’t until Herrman’s wife said to stop buying things that Herrman decided to pull out his collection and see how much of a stockpile he had. “I’m in an IT type profession, so it was kind of a natural thing for me once I got all my stuff out,” Herrman said. “I was taking pictures, putting it on an internet database, then hanging it up in my basement.” The original plan to organize and sort turned into a lavish Chiefs-decorated basement. From fidget spinners to earrings to statues, Herrman has it all. He said when friends and family entered the basement to watch a Chiefs game and saw the memorabilia, the typical response was, “Wow. You’ve got more Chiefs stuff than anybody I’ve ever seen.” Herrman decided to look into that fact and went to check the Guinness World Records website. Seeing that there was no record for a Chiefs memorabilia

collection, he decided to work to make that title his. “The process took two years to get the record,” he said. “It would’ve cost \$5,000 to have someone from Guinness come and authenticate it.” Instead of paying a hefty fee, Herrman chose the alternate route. The application and authentication process to do it yourself included filling out loads of paperwork, taking pictures of every item and putting together a video to showcase every item in one go. Wanting to include more of the community, Herrman used outside resources to help him create the video. “I called the local high school video production class to help me make the video,” he said. “They got class credit for it, and I got authenticated for the record.” To confirm the number of items in his collection, the video had to follow specific guidelines. “I had to have three witnesses standing behind me,” he said. “A police officer, a public elected official, and an accountant. They all stood there and watched me walk around counting from one all the way to 1,323.” Herrman has received local and national attention for his collection, often receiving Chiefs memorabilia or a note of admiration. “In the last few years I’ve probably gotten over 500 things,” Herrman said. “It’s really interesting because I’ll get something every two to three days with a note that’ll say, ‘I’m tired of dusting this’ or, ‘I wanted to make sure it’ll go to somebody who would appreciate it.’” His hobby extends far beyond Manhattan, too. The most impact-

ful story from being gifted collection items was from someone he’d never even met. Herrman received a call from the son of a mother who just passed away. She was a Chiefs collector who had about 600 items and left it in her will that Herrman would receive the collection. The Chiefs Ambassadors, comprised of former players and fundraisers, have reached out to Herrman. He was presented with a special ball in honor of his collection, and even got to hold and take a picture with the Chiefs 2020 Super Bowl trophy. “That was kind of a lifetime achievement for me,” Herrman said. “They won when I was 9 years old in Super Bowl 4 [1970]. I had to wait 50 years, a lifetime, to see them win another Super Bowl.” Throughout this journey, Herrman has created a full website, Chiefseum, showcasing his Chiefs items as if it were a museum. A recent addition is his YouTube channel, highlighting “from the vault” items and fun facts. Herrman has already reapplied to increase the memorabilia count stated on the record. This time around, it will cost \$500 to recertify and license the record in his name. His collection count is currently 2,651, more than double his original record. Although Herrman has received a lot of attention and recognition, he wants to acknowledge the community within Chiefs Kingdom. “A lot of people will say, ‘Well, boy, you’re the biggest Chiefs fan,’” Herrman said. “I’m not taking credit for that because there’s a lot of Chiefs fans in Chiefs Kingdom; I’m just one among many.”



Photos courtesy of Curt Herrman



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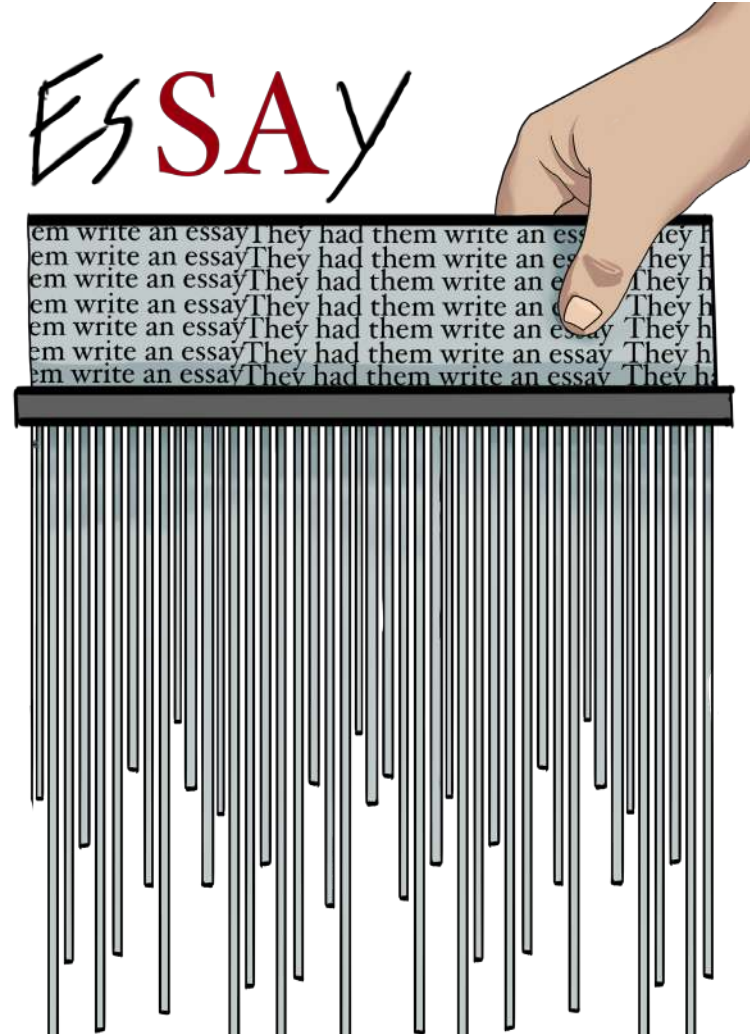
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An “essay” for Cornell University



Graphic by Grace Gibson | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

AMELIA LIKENS
opinion editor

One night’s actions can change a life forever. Even one minute, one quick decision, can haunt someone for the rest of their life. For many women, that decision, action and moment isn’t one they decide on, but one someone else does. Someone who walks away seemingly unaffected while the person left behind is forever forced to live with the repercussions.

Rape is a crime. And it should be treated and punished as such.

On Sept. 16, a former Cornell University student, known as Jane Doe, filed a lawsuit against Cornell, its Chi Phi Fraternity, Delta Delta Delta sorority and seven men she alleges drugged and gang-raped her in October 2024.

Their names are Matthew Ingalls, Johnathan Newell, Winston Lee, Gillio Lopes, Diego Sarabia, Scott Norris and Scott Kretzschmar.

This lawsuit prompted the local district attorney to reopen the case after he declined to press criminal charges in 2024. Initially, the district attorney left the

repercussions in Cornell’s hands.

Cornell expelled two of the men, suspended two others, named one of them “persona non grata” because he had graduated and issued no-contact orders with Jane Doe to the last two. The men were also, according to the lawsuit, “afforded the opportunity to mitigate their conduct by submitting essays to” Cornell.

The university responded to this particular claim in a statement, saying none of the defendants “were offered the opportunity to write essays as a sole consequence of their involvement.”

Even if the essays were not the sole consequence, their inclusion in the disciplinary actions is wildly unfit for the alleged crime, as are the other punishments. If the allegations are true, why would expulsion and essay writing be the end of their punishment?

Rape should not be treated merely as a violation of university policy. It is a crime. Punishments like the ones given to the “Cornell 7” do not reflect the severity of the alleged actions and only perpetuate rape culture.

Women who have experienced

sexual violence may see cases like Jane Doe’s and decide not to come forward. Why seek justice just for the system to fail you?

Jane Doe is not the only woman failed by a system meant to protect her. Rape culture tells women to stay silent, and Cornell’s handling of this case is only reinforcing that message. There’s no question that Cornell University failed Jane Doe.

The university’s treatment of alleged rape also sends a dangerous message about the consequences of committing sexual violence.

If there are little to no consequences, what is stopping other men from thinking they can do the same and walk away without facing any serious repercussions?

Institutions that treat sexual violence as anything other than a crime only reinforce rape culture. Jane Doe deserves the chance to seek justice in a courtroom, with a proper investigation where the defendants can be properly punished if found guilty.

Universities can give out suspensions, assign essays and expel students. But when the allegation is rape, justice should not end on campus.

‘So let’s get into it...’ | Taylor Swift has lost her spark

KATHRYN GREENWOOD
staff writer

After facing backlash over “The Life of a Showgirl,” Taylor Swift leaned into the controversy instead of moving on. She dropped four new songs on Sept. 25 as part of “The Life of a Showgirl: The Encore,” and they immediately became memes online.

There is no denying Swift’s commercial success, regardless of what haters and fans alike say on social media. One of her newly criticized songs, “Patient Zero,” debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Swift also acquired three Video Music Awards this year, bringing her total to 33, the most anyone has ever received, and the album won four iHeart Radio Awards. But at what point does commercial success start to mean little about the actual artistry in the music industry?

Many of the lyrics in her new songs are directed at internet trolls and brag about her new life, but it comes off as obsessive, self-conscious and embarrassing. For example, on her track “Eldest Daughter,” she sings “Everybody’s so punk on the Internet. Everyone’s unbothered until they’re not. Every joke’s just trolling and memes.”

Another track, “CANCELED!,” featured the cringe-worthy lyric, “Did you girlboss too close to the sun?” Swift’s latest releases feel less relatable



Illustration by Juli Tanksley | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

because she has reached such a high level of fame and wealth that she isn’t connecting with her listeners anymore.

Her early work was about young love, heartbreak and growing up. She was able to reinvent herself into a pop star successfully, and her lyrics were about finding herself and change. Not everything was even about her own life. Her lyrics in “folklore” and “evermore” were about fictional characters.

Each era had its own personality and production style that allowed listeners to devel-

op and evolve with Swift. This album, on the other hand, lacks the raw emotion of her ballads or infectious pop melodies. She has achieved so much commercial success that maybe the intense passion in her earlier writing has been lost.

I doubt any part of her life now is normal enough to be relevant to the average listener. Swift is a renowned singer, has just come off of the incredibly successful “The Eras Tour” and is now married to an NFL star. She has never had as many fans, but has also never had as many haters.

Even as a fan, I haven’t loved every single song she has ever written, but “The Life of a Showgirl” feels manufactured. The lyrics and music production sound like someone trying to copy or mock Taylor Swift. They don’t feel authentic at all.

In general, pop music has started to sound too robotic, too perfect. Each decade has had a specific sound associated with it up until now, and there isn’t anyone topping the charts who sounds particularly unique or revolutionary.

Listeners want something nov-

el and unvarnished in a world that is filled with AI and mass production. We want artistry to be competitive again. I think the fact that these songs are reaching the top of the charts has everything to do with the lack of mainstream pop music to compete with.

Swift should not give up writing music, but should take into account some of the recent criticism of her latest album. Her influence could really impact the future of pop and if Taylor Swift starts bringing back her true artistry, perhaps other pop stars will follow in her footsteps.

A college degree is worth more than its paycheck

ANNIA BLASI
staff writer

I started college as a business major.

It made sense. Business is practical, versatile. It promised plenty of job options and, hopefully, a decent paycheck someday. There were a lot of ways to answer the inevitable question, “What are you going to do with your degree?” Usually, my answer was some confident yet vague variation of “I could do pretty much anything.”

Then I switched to kinesiology, a degree that requires a little more explanation. And somewhere along the way, I realized we have a weird way of talking about college degrees.

Why are we so concerned about having a good answer to that question in the first place?

We try to maneuver ourselves into the intersection of practicality and purpose. Find something you can get paid well to do, but also something you enjoy. Find a career that is stable but not boring, meaningful but financially responsible. We explain our way into this big decision.

At 18, we look at return on

investment, job markets and projected salaries and try to make a decision about what the next 40 years of our lives should look like while still having only a set of plastic dishes and a beat-up pair of tennis shoes to our names.

And you can’t ignore money. It would be silly to pretend otherwise.

But I would argue that even choosing a practical degree doesn’t guarantee that it’s worth it. You can have a great answer to “What are you going to do with that?” and still miss something.

I think there are two parts to a degree: what it prepares you to do and what it helps you become.

Practicality has become so dominant that we sometimes forget college is also supposed to be formative. Somewhere between all the introductions that start with name, hometown and major, we have lost something of the heart and soul of higher education.

A degree should make you capable, yes. But it should also make you into someone who is altogether better than where you started. More curious. More confident. More thoughtful. More kind. More alive.

And that doesn’t necessarily

come from picking the “right” major.

I do think some degrees are more worthwhile than others. I don’t think every degree is automatically worth the time, money and opportunity cost that comes with it. There may very well be more value in learning accounting than memorizing bacteria in microbiology, or learning how to write proficiently than in learning history.

But picking the most lucrative major doesn’t guarantee that you will grow into someone you are proud to be. And neither does choosing the thing you are most passionate about. If I had the talent, I could’ve studied art, made a little money, had great passion for it and still ended up without the character of the true, confident, generous and committed woman I aspire to be.

The things that make college worth it are outside the degree. A degree can never encompass all your values and dreams at the same time.

It is the professor who made you realize there’s adventure out there. The friend who gets you better than anyone else does. The conversation that changed

your mind. The moment you realized you could be a leader. The late-night conversations when you were supposed to be studying. The experience that made you realize you were capable of more than you thought.

It is the network, the people, the experiences and, hopefully,

the person you become.

So yes, ask what you are going to do with your degree. Learn everything you can and try to choose something that will steer you towards a career you’ll love.

But remember, it’s worth more than the paycheck.



Graphic by Jacob Bush | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP



PUMPKINS

« CONTINUED FROM A3

Photos by Anna Martin | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP
Alpha Delta Pi members give out prizes from their booth that's part of the annual Arts and Crafts Fair that is located at Manhattan Town Center.

Members of ADPI pose for a picture as they prepare to talk with people at their booth outside Manhattan Town Center.

A sign for ADPi hangs in their outdoor booth that is called the "Children's Corner" that displays games and prizes at the 52nd Arts and Crafts Fair.



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Cybersecurity Awareness Month: Recognizing and Avoiding AI Scams

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Artificial intelligence has revolutionized the way we work, interact and connect online. As with any new technology, however, AI has also introduced new risks by making scams more sophisticated and harder to spot. Phishing attempts, fake job offers and impersonation scams can now appear more convincing, potentially putting students' personal information, security and finances at greater risk. Understanding how scammers use AI and knowing the warning signs can help protect you from becoming a victim.

AI is making scams look and sound real

AI-powered scams often fall into three categories: voice cloning, deepfake video impersonations and realistic-looking messages and websites. Through **voice cloning**, AI can help scammers to mimic a person's voice with convincing accuracy, making fraudulent calls sound like they're coming from a loved one. For example, you might get an urgent call from a family member asking you to send money immediately because of an emergency. In reality, there's no emergency, and the call is coming from a scammer using AI to manipulate their voice. Scammers can also impersonate bank representatives or law enforcement, claiming there is a problem with your account, potential fraud or another issue that requires immediate attention. Scammers can even spoof caller ID, making it appear the call is coming from your bank or another trusted source. Because AI can create convincing videos of real people, scammers can use **deepfakes** to impersonate trusted figures or organizations. These videos

may promote fraudulent investment opportunities, solicit donations or convince people to share sensitive information. Online scams originating through email, text messages and websites aren't new, but **AI can make them more convincing and harder to spot**. Scammers can use AI to create realistic phishing emails, fake job offers and text messages that look like legitimate messages from banks, employers and other trusted organizations. They can also create fraudulent websites that closely resemble legitimate ones, tricking people into entering passwords, financial information or other sensitive data. Spelling mistakes and poor grammar used to be telltale signs of a scam, but AI can make emails, texts and websites look more polished and professional, so appearances alone aren't enough to tell if something is legitimate.

Ways to stay safe

As scams become more sophisticated with AI, knowing what to look for and how to respond can help you stay protected. **Verify unexpected calls and requests.** If someone contacts you claiming to be from your bank, a government agency or another trusted institution, do not automatically trust the caller ID or the information they provide. Hang up and contact the organization directly using the official phone number on the website, mobile app or the back of your credit or debit card. Never share your account information, passwords or verification codes in response to an unsolicited call or text. During a suspicious video call, ask the person to perform an unexpected action, such as waving their hand in front of their face. Demanding a spontaneous action is one of the best ways to expose a deepfake video.

Examine emails, text messages and websites carefully. Check email addresses and website URLs for typos, extra characters or unusual domains. Never reply to a suspicious message, even to tell the sender to stop contacting you, as replying can confirm that your number is active to the scammer. Simply delete it, report it as spam and consider blocking the sender. If you get an unsolicited text message or email, do not click the link, as it may send you to a fraudulent website designed to steal your personal information. Also, be careful with online searches for customer service numbers, as scammers can create fake websites and phone numbers that appear at the top of search results. **Double-check social media posts.** Before sharing or responding to "urgent" donation requests, fundraisers or other campaigns you see on social media, check to make sure the organization is legitimate. Review the account's posting history and be especially cautious of new or unverified accounts. Rather than clicking on a donation link on social media, go directly to the organization's official website to donate. **Establish a family code word.** Voice cloning can make it difficult to determine whether an urgent call is coming from a loved one. Establishing a family code word in advance can provide an extra layer of security. If you receive a suspicious call claiming to be from a loved one, especially if they are asking for money or urgent help, simply ask them the code word to verify their identity. You can also ask a question that only that person would know. With any financial scam, one of the simplest ways to protect yourself is to slow down. As scams continue to become harder to spot, one thing that hasn't changed is that scammers rely on urgency to get you to act immediately. Whether you receive

an unexpected phone call, video message, email or text, take a minute to pause and verify the request through a trusted channel, such as the organization's official website, before taking action. **Block scams before they start** A strong defense starts with proactive steps. The best defense against AI scams is a good offense. Taking these proactive steps right now can strengthen your online security and can help reduce your risk.

- Limit your personal information online.** Review your social media privacy settings and restrict public access to personal details, photos and videos scammers could use to target you.
- Use strong authentication.** Enable multifactor authentication on your accounts whenever possible. Passkeys, biometrics and authentication apps can provide protection beyond traditional passwords.
- Keep your devices updated.** Install software and security updates on a regular basis to help protect your devices.
- Never grant remote access to your device.** Don't let unsolicited callers access your computer, phone or financial accounts remotely, even if they claim to be from your bank or tech support for your device.
- Monitor your financial accounts.** Enable transaction notifications and credit alerts to help identify potential fraud as quickly as possible. If you suspect you have been targeted by or become the victim of a scam, act quickly. If you sent money or shared account details, contact your bank or financial institution immediately by calling the number on the back of your debit or credit card. If you shared personal information like your password, change your banking passwords immediately and review your accounts for unauthorized transactions.

Keep screenshots, phone numbers, emails and messages from your interaction with the scammer, which may help your financial institution or law enforcement trace the fraudulent activity. **The bottom line** AI is changing how scams look and sound, making them harder to spot, even for tech-savvy consumers. The good news is that the best defenses remain the same: stay alert, verify unexpected requests, and take steps to protect your financial information. For more financial health tips, visit chase.com/ScamProof. *For informational/educational purposes only: Views and strategies described in this article or provided via links may not be appropriate for everyone and are not intended as specific advice/recommendation for any business. Information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, but JPMorgan Chase & Co. or its affiliates and/or subsidiaries do not warrant its completeness or accuracy. The material is not intended to provide legal, tax, or financial advice or to indicate the availability or suitability of any JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. product or service. You should carefully consider your needs and objectives before making any decisions and consult the appropriate professional(s). Outlooks and past performance are not guarantees of future results. JPMorgan Chase & Co. and its affiliates are not responsible for, and do not provide or endorse third party products, services, or other content.*

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A family built to run together

K-State’s runners have found that their greatest strength may be the people running beside them.

PAIGE MUELLER
sports editor

K-State cross country isn’t relying on one runner to drive its success this season. The Wildcats are running together, training together, and increasingly, winning together.

The Wildcats opened the 2026 season by doing something the program hadn’t done in four years: both the men’s and women’s teams won team titles at the same meet. K-State swept the Platte River Rumble on Sept. 4 in Ashland, Neb., with the men scoring 19 points and the women 20. It was the first time both teams had won at the same meet since Sept. 17, 2022.

The results were impressive, but the atmosphere around them may have said even more about what K-State has become. For transfer sophomore Max Larson, the close-knit atmosphere was one of the first things he noticed when he arrived at K-State from Tulsa.

“I think definitely my first thought would be just the kind of family home style that this team brings,” Larson said. “It’s very different from what I had back at Tulsa.”

After the Platte River Rumble, that difference became even more apparent. K-State runners and their families gathered for a breakfast tailgate at the course. The atmosphere has become a defining characteristic of a team adjusting to a new coach and higher expectations.

K-State hired Brent Ewing as an assistant coach in July, bringing a fresh voice and approach to the program. Ewing said his first impression of the Wildcats was their attitude.

“Very positive group, very optimistic, willing and wanting to learn and wanting to work hard,” Ewing said. “They just really bought in right away, and that’s not something that always happens so easily.”

That buy-in has translated into consistency, which Ewing considers the foundation for everything the team can accomplish.

“That’s the number one thing that I look for in my athletes,” Ewing said. “If we’re going to maximize what this group can do, or what any group can do, it starts with having consistent workouts.”

For sophomore Dylan Plath, consistency has become one of

the team’s biggest strengths.

“I think one of the biggest reasons the team has come together so well this season is that we all trust in each other deeply, but we also trust in our coach,” Plath said.

“We hold everyone accountable, and if somebody is starting to feel down on themselves, we are always there to pick them back up.”

Dylan Plath
sophomore K-State cross country athlete

That trust is easier to build when the runners have spent years together.

“Many people may or may not know, but all the guys on the team are from Kansas, and many of us only live 20-30 minutes apart back home,” Krudwig said. “I think everyone has a lot of pride in our state and our school, causing us to come closer.”

That familiarity has carried over into how the runners compete. Olsen said the team has developed a level of trust that allows athletes to focus on helping one another rather than worrying about their own position within the group.

“You feel like everyone really really knows each other and you’re able to cheer everyone on because you’ve seen everyone how they’re doing in practice,” Olsen said. “We’re all just really close this year, so I really appreciate that.”

At the Platte River Rumble, the team’s collective approach produced results. Larson won the men’s 6K, with Jackson Esquibel and Olsen finishing second and third. Plath finished fifth and Krudwig eighth as the Wildcats won the team title.

For Emma Baum, the same mentality carried over to the women’s race.

Baum finished second in her first collegiate cross country race, helping K-State win the women’s team title. But when Baum thinks about racing, she increasingly thinks about the people running alongside her.

“We’re running like 40 miles a week together, and so we really get to know each other,” Baum said. “And each person I was passing was a point. I’m still actually learning cross coun-

try scoring, so each person I was passing, I was like, losing a point, because I guess it scores like golf. So each person I was passing, I was just thinking, ‘I’m doing this for my team.’”

The women’s team has intentionally built that culture, senior Paige Baker said.

“We have an incredible group of women that love to work hard, have fun and support each other,” Baker said. “There is a beautiful lack of toxic competition.”

Baker said that bond also shows up during races, when the women run together and compete as a unit.

“This team cares for each other,” Baker said. “I cannot stress enough how grateful I am for the incredible support system we have created here at K-State.”

That support does not mean the Wildcats lack competitiveness. Instead, they use one another to push through difficult workouts and races. Baker said Ewing has challenged her more than any coach she has had, while still recognizing that not every practice will go perfectly.

“He knows that not every day can be sunshine, rainbows and great workouts, but he still expects us to show up and give everything we can at each practice,” Baker said.

Krudwig has seen the same progression. After struggling with injuries last season, he said Ewing’s approach has helped him build his mileage and consistency without pushing him beyond what his body can handle.

The team has also emphasized recovery. Krudwig said the Wildcats set goals around sleep, fueling and using the training room, and he believes those habits have helped them produce better workouts more consistently.

That attention to detail has given the team confidence, but the Wildcats say their biggest test of togetherness came at the

Gans Creek Classic on Sept. 25.

The meet did not produce another team victory — K-State finished 17th on the men’s side and 18th on the women’s side — but individual improvement across the roster gave the runners another reason to believe in what they are building.

For Plath, the most memorable part came after the race.

“Sure it showed the amount of work, time and effort we have put in all summer and season up to that point, but the part that stood out to me the most was after the race,” Plath said. “It was the moment where the team felt more like a family, and it was super special to be a part of.”

Olsen remembers the same feeling. At Gans Creek, Olsen broke 24 minutes in the 8K for the first time. But he said the team’s success mattered more to him than his individual result.

“I was more so focused on the team success that we had overall,” Olsen said.

Ewing saw that unselfishness on the bus ride home. After the meet, the team played music, sang and celebrated the performances together.

“They were equally as happy for the person next to them as they were for their own success,” Ewing said.

Those moments, Ewing believes, make the physical and mental demands of cross country sustainable.

“Otherwise it can get pretty mentally and physically draining if you don’t have that team component and that closeness,” Ewing said.

For Larson, that closeness has also changed how he approaches leadership. At Tulsa, he was running unattached in cross country. At K-State, he has become part of the team scoring and learned that leadership does not always mean being the fastest runner.

“Here I think I’ve experienced a lot more of an opportunity to just lead the team by being a friendly face and to be someone who shows up to practice and is excited to run and is excited to get out there,” Larson said.

The team has also developed its own language.

“We just have this extensive list of inside jokes that is just so funny,” Larson said. “I’m being linguistically socialized into this team.”

SEE XC ON B3 »



Photo courtesy of K-State Athletics

K-State women’s golf finishes 5th at Blessings Collegiate Invitational

BRADY HOWARD
staff writer

K-State women’s golf finished its three-day trip to Arkansas with a fifth-place finish Monday at the Blessings Collegiate Invitational.

The Wildcats finished the tournament at 38-over-par, with a 54-hole score of 902, four strokes behind fourth-place Kent State. K-State finished 11 strokes ahead of sixth-place North Texas.

The result came less than a week after K-State won its home tournament, the Powercat Classic, by 18 strokes. Junior Kelsey Chen carried some of that momentum into Arkansas, finishing eighth to lead the Wildcats at 3-over-par.

Chen closed the tournament with a 1-over-par 73 on Monday. After making the turn, she had her best stretch of the round, with three consecutive birdies on holes 14-16. She finished with 10 birdies across the three rounds, tied for ninth-most among the players in the field.

The finish marked Chen’s second consecutive top-10 result. She entered the tournament after a record-setting performance at Colbert Hills, where she shot 15-under-par to win the Powercat Classic and set K-State’s 54-hole scoring record at 201.

While Chen provided the top individual finish for K-State, freshman Amy Wang and junior Nanami Nakashima also remained near the top of the leaderboard throughout the tournament.

Wang finished tied for 11th at 8-over-par after shooting a 4-over 76 in the final round. The result was the best finish of her young college career. Nakashima matched Wang’s final-round score of 76 and finished tied for 15th at 10-over-par. It was Nakashima’s third consecutive top-15 finish.

The three players gave K-State three golfers in the top 15, but the Wildcats couldn’t get the same production from the bottom of their lineup.

Sophomore Keen Visavapat-tamawan made K-State’s biggest move on the final day. Her 2-over 74 moved her up nine spots on the leaderboard, placing her in a tie for 30th at 18-over-par. She finished her round with two birdies on the back nine. Senior Julia Ballester Barrio finished 39th at 25-over-par.

The depth of the lineup became an issue for the Wildcats early in the tournament. K-State opened Oct. 3 with a 9-over 297, placing fifth, with three players in the top 15. Chen shot a 1-under 71 in the opening round, while Wang and Nakashima each shot 74.

The Wildcats remained in fifth after Oct. 4 but saw their lead over sixth-place North Texas shrink after shooting 18-over 306 in the second round.

The Blessings Golf Club presented a different challenge each day. The 6,503-yard, par-72 course featured narrow fairways and firm, undulating greens. Sunday’s round was especially difficult, as the field averaged more than seven shots over par while the course dried out and the wind picked up. Head coach Stew Burke said the course highlighted areas the team needs to address as it continues its push toward the postseason.

“Overall, on what is an extremely difficult golf course, this was a lot better than yesterday,” Burke said.

SEE GOLF ON B3 »

KNOW YOUR OPPONENT

K-State opens Big 12 home slate with No. 22 Houston

PAIGE MUELLER
sports editor

K-State 3-1

The Wildcats return to Bill Snyder Family Stadium after a bye week for their first Big 12 home game of the season, a 2:30 p.m. Saturday matchup against No. 22 Houston. K-State enters the game looking to bounce back from its first loss of the season, a 31-26 defeat at Cincinnati. Despite the loss, the Wildcats remain ranked among the top 15 nationally in total offense, total defense, scoring offense and scoring defense.

Quarterback Avery Johnson continues to climb K-State's career record books, ranking third in program history in passing yards and total offense. Johnson has also started 30 consecutive games, the second-longest streak

in program history.

K-State's offense has been among the nation's most productive through four games, averaging 40.5 points and 480.3 yards per game. Johnson has thrown for 910 yards and seven touchdowns and added 291 rushing yards. The Wildcats have also averaged 240.8 rushing yards per game, giving K-State a balanced attack heading into Saturday's matchup with Houston.

The Wildcats' defense has been one of their biggest strengths this season, entering Saturday ranked first in the Big 12 and fourth nationally in pass defense. K-State is allowing just 106.3 passing yards per game and ranks fourth nationally in tackles for loss, averaging 9.3 per game.

No. 22 Houston (4-1)

The Cougars enter Manhattan on a two-game winning streak after rallying from a 17-0 deficit to defeat UCF 27-17 on Oct. 3. Quarterback Conner Weigman has thrown for 1,186 yards and 11 touchdowns with just 1 interception this season. K-State head coach Collin Klein praised Weigman for his efficiency, his ability to protect the football and his ability to extend drives with his legs.

Houston has been among the nation's most efficient teams on third down, ranking first nationally in third-down conversion rate. The Cougars also boast a top-10 rush defense, creating a matchup that will challenge K-State on both sides of the ball.

Houston will look to extend its

winning streak Saturday against a K-State team seeking to rebound from its first loss of the season and to protect its home field in the Wildcats' first Big 12 home game.

K-State and Houston have split their first two meetings, each winning at home. The Wildcats won the first matchup 41-0 in Manhattan in 2023, but Houston responded with a 24-19 victory in 2024. In the most recent meeting, K-State led 19-10 entering the fourth quarter before Houston scored twice in the final period. Quarterback Zeon Chriss delivered the game-winning score on a 41-yard touchdown run with 2:31 remaining. Johnson threw for 238 yards and a touchdown in the loss, while Houston held K-State to 89 rushing yards.



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Photo courtesy of K-State Athletics

XC

« CONTINUED FROM B1

For Baum, some of her favorite memories happen away from the starting line — dinners at the Ahearn Fund Student-Athlete Performance Table and bus rides to meets. For Olsen, it’s the bus rides, too.

“This team really does feel like a family at this point,” Olsen said. “I know that’s kind of cliché to say; I feel like a lot of people say that, but it really does feel like these are the people that I can depend on and talk about anything with.”

The runners also have plenty of interests outside of running.

If Plath and Krudwig had their way, they might spend a week trading workouts with the K-State golf team. Both said they would choose golf, with Krudwig specifically pointing to the chance to practice at Colbert Hills.

“I would 100% switch with the golf team for a week,” Plath said. “Golf is one of those sports where you can kind of just zone out at times and just go out and play, and that is why I like it so much.”

Baker, meanwhile, would take her chances with volleyball despite admitting she is not

particularly good at it.

“I think I would be most interested in trading my training with the volleyball team because I LOVE playing volleyball,” Baker said. “However, I am actually quite bad at volleyball, and one spike to the face by Addison Massey would definitely send me to the emergency room.”

And if Olsen needs someone to lighten the mood at practice, he knows exactly where to look: Krudwig, who he said always has a few creative jokes ready.

The group’s personality may be hard to quantify, but Krudwig has his own description.

“We are a more intelligent

group of guys, but we have our moments of being idiots,” Krudwig said. “We all have a built-in lock-in feature when needed, but normally we are a relaxed and funny group that is here to support each other and get better as a team.”

That balance — knowing when to laugh and when to lock in — is part of what the Wildcats believe has helped them get this far.

Ewing said the team’s goal is not simply to win a certain meet or finish at a certain time. It is to get everything possible out of the group.

“I want them to say that we

overachieved, that we maximized every possible outcome that we could have with this group,” Ewing said.

The Wildcats still have the Weis-Crockett Invitational, Big 12 Championship and NCAA postseason ahead of them.

Times, places and points will eventually decide the races. But for K-State, the biggest advantage may be something that never appears on a results sheet. The Wildcats have built a team that genuinely wants the person next to them to succeed.

And when the season gets harder, they won’t have to run through it alone.

GOLF

« CONTINUED FROM B1

The Wildcats’ final round was enough to hold onto fifth place, but K-State never seriously challenged for the top of the leaderboard. Alabama led the tournament from start to finish and finished at 4-over-par with an 868, eight shots ahead of host Arkansas.

Arkansas’ Maria Jose Marin won the individual title at 12-under-par. She shot a 5-under 67 in the final round to finish at 204 for the tournament.

For K-State, the tournament delivered another top-five finish and another strong showing from the top of its lineup. Chen continued her recent run of strong play, Wang recorded a career-best finish and Nakashima extended her streak of top-15 results.

Still, the Wildcats know their next step will be finding more consistency throughout the lineup.

“Moving forward, we need to make sure our bottom end is supporting the top end of the lineup,” Burke said.

K-State will play one more tournament before closing its fall schedule. The Wildcats will travel to Lihue, Hawaii, for the Rainbow Wahine Invitational, scheduled for Oct. 19-21 at Hokuala’s Ocean Course.



Photo by Henry Pfannestiel | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

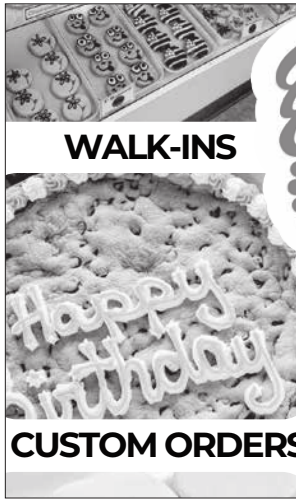
After a strong finish to hole 10, **Kelsey Chen** hits her first shot off the tee box on hole 11 at Colbert Hills Golf Course on Sept. 29.



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BIG EVENTS



When VAR becomes the story, something is wrong

PAIGE MUELLER
sports editor

Soccer has one moment that should be one of the simplest parts of the sport. The ball hits the back of the net, the players celebrate, the fans erupt and the scoreboard changes.

But for K-State this season, that moment has increasingly come with an asterisk.

It happened twice in the first half against Iowa on Sept. 3. First, K-State appeared to double its lead when Gabby DeMers found the back of the net, but a Video Assistant Referee (VAR) review overturned the goal after it determined a foul earlier in the possession. Seven minutes later, DeMers appeared to score again. The near-side assistant referee signaled a goal, but Iowa challenged the decision, and another review overturned it. K-State ultimately settled for a 1-1 draw.

The night was frustrating for more than just the two goals they lost. It was frustrating because it showed what college soccer can become when video review moves from being a safety net to becoming part of the game itself.

The Wildcats have seen this trend continue.

On Sept. 10 against Colorado State, Gabby DeMers scored in the 87th minute to give K-State a 2-1 lead. Colorado State challenged the goal, but the VAR review confirmed the call. In this case, the review settled the challenge without overturning the original decision.

But in their Sept. 18 match with Houston, the Wildcats had another goal overturned after a VAR challenge. On Sept. 24, K-State used both of its challenges on potential handballs inside the goal box against Arizona, but both no-calls stood. In the Sept. 27 match with Arizona State, VAR was involved in a penalty decision that gave the Sun Devils a chance from the spot, though Maddie Sibbing saved the attempt. Then, on Oct. 2, another VAR challenge led to a penalty kick for a handball against BYU, which the Cougars converted for the winning goal in a 2-1 K-State



Graphic by Evan Gnagy | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

loss.

K-State has felt the impact of those decisions throughout the season. After the Wildcats' loss to BYU, head coach Colleen Corbin pointed to the handball review that led to BYU's winning penalty, saying, "Unfortunately, there continue to be things outside our control that are impacting the game, especially with VAR."

At this point, VAR is not a footnote to K-State's season — it is part of the story. That is a problem.

I am not arguing that college soccer should get rid of video review altogether. In fact, other NCAA sports show there is a way to use replay without letting it take over the game.

Look at NCAA hockey. Video review exists, but it's tied to specific situations rather than giving coaches broad opportunities to stop play and ask officials to reconsider a decision. In hockey, reviews can determine whether a goal should count or review certain major penalties.

The NCAA has even narrowed review rules when it determined certain situations were creating longer reviews and more confusion. In 2023, for example, the NCAA removed "too many players on the ice" from the list of reviewable situations

after officials found the rule was producing longer reviews and incorrect outcomes.

That is the kind of balance soccer needs. Replay should be there when it can provide clear answers. It should not become an invitation to second-guess every subjective decision on the field.

Last season, the NCAA experimented with a much more limited challenge system in soccer. Coaches received one challenge and could earn a second only if their first challenge was successful. That system wasn't perfect — neither is soccer without video review today — but it provided a balance.

This season, however, that balance shifted. Coaches now receive two challenges regardless of whether the first is successful. The NCAA also expanded the situations that can be reviewed, including fouls or offsides before goals and certain plays leading to penalty kicks. Officials can initiate reviews on all allowable plays during the final 10 minutes of regulation and, when appropriate, postseason overtime. Division I games can also use a video match official to assist the referee.

In a May 2026 announcement, the NCAA said the

changes were meant "to help the officials get the call right while maintaining the pace and flow of the game," but those two goals can conflict. Every review creates a pause, every challenge creates uncertainty and every overturned decision changes the emotions of the players and fans who experience the original play in real time.

That becomes especially difficult when not every soccer decision is objective. Technology can help determine whether a ball crossed a line or whether a player was offside, but when a defender's hand is in a certain position or a foul occurs earlier in a possession, human judgment still comes into play. The monitor does not eliminate subjectivity. It simply moves the subjectivity from the field to a screen.

K-State's experience this season is a clear example. VAR has played a significant role in matches against Iowa, Colorado State, Houston, Arizona, Arizona State and BYU. Some decisions have gone K-State's way. Others have not. The bigger issue is how often the technology has become involved in moments that can change a match.

Soccer is already a sport where one decision can change

everything. A missed chance, a deflection, a bad bounce or a split-second mistake can decide a match. That unpredictability is part of what makes the sport compelling and entertaining.

The NCAA introduced video review to correct mistakes that should not decide games. Instead, college soccer is moving toward a system where more moments can be stopped, dissected and reconsidered.

At some point, we have to ask whether we are fixing the game or changing it.

The NCAA should go back to last year's system. Keep video review and keep the ability to correct obvious mistakes, but make it harder to stop the game. One challenge should matter. A successful challenge should earn another. Reviews should be reserved for situations where video can genuinely provide clarity, rather than adding another layer of decision-making to increasingly subjective plays.

K-State's season has shown how quickly VAR can become more than a tool for correcting mistakes. It can change momentum, celebrations and, in some cases, the result.

Technology has a place in college soccer, but it should not become its centerpiece.

Injury problem? Call Linkon Cure.

NATE LOWEN
staff writer

K-State football got an early-season break with its bye week after a loss to Cincinnati, leaving a terrible taste in the mouths of Wildcat fans and the team.

The 31-26 loss to the Bearcats may not have been the biggest takeaway, though. K-State also lost two key pass-catchers for Avery Johnson's offense.

What's the injury report?

Two players sustained injuries and were out of the matchup against Cincinnati early: former team leader in receiving yards, Jaron Tibbs, and second-string tight end Will Anciaux.

K-State coach Collin Klein provided updates on both players, and the outcomes could not have been more different. Tibbs was described as "will be fine," while Anciaux suffered a devastating injury that will keep him out for the season. Although the full extent of Anciaux's injury has not been announced, he was seen wearing a boot and using a scooter on the sideline.

With both players out, Missouri transfer Josh Manning was expected to step up and produce for a banged-up K-State offense. Instead, Manning struggled against Cincinnati.

Who will step up for Avery Johnson and this K-State passing offense?

Tibbs appears to be on the road to recovery, but even if he returns soon, he may need time to get back to 100%.

That means the Wildcats need a next-man-up mentality

Manning had an underwhelming performance against Cincinnati, catching one pass for 19 yards despite being targeted eight times in the 31-26 loss. The stat line tells the story: high volume, low production.

K-State brought Manning in to play a major role as a wide receiver in Klein's offense, but that opportunity has now shifted to players such as Derrick Salley Jr.

Salley Jr. came out of nowhere after failing to record a catch in K-State's victory over Washington State. Seeing a player who

may have entered the season as the team's third wide receiver step into a larger role is encouraging, but now it is time for one of K-State's top recruits in history to make his presence felt.

Reported missing person in the tight end room

With Anciaux out for the rest of the season, Linkon Cure is poised to receive a larger share of a historically productive K-State tight end room.

The problem is that Cure has yet to see substantial playing time in Manhattan.

Through his first two seasons at K-State, Cure has recorded just 60 receiving yards and has been as low as fourth on the tight end depth chart. Despite his lack of production, Cure has flashed his potential as a blocker, frequently seeing time on the perimeter and contributing to the running game.

But now, his opportunity has arrived.

Cure came to K-State as a five-star recruit, carrying significant expectations. With his size, athleticism and receiving



Graphic by Evan Gnagy | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

ability, the Wildcats expected him to become a major piece of the offense. Yet that has not happened yet.

You see how this looks, right?

If a five-star recruit leaves high school with enormous expectations but struggles to earn playing time and produce at the college level, the "bust" label can come quickly. Cure still has plenty of time to change that narrative.

The Verdict

Linkon Cure needs to create opportunities for both Johnson and the K-State offense.

Cure has the potential to become a major weapon in the passing game while open-

ing up the running game for a Wildcats offense that currently ranks among the top 20 nationally in rushing. He also has the opportunity to become Johnson's next reliable tight end target after Jayce Brown's departure to LSU.

The talent has always been there. Now, Cure needs the opportunity, and more importantly, he needs to take advantage of it.

It's time for Cure to see more targets. Over the next few weeks, he could begin his campaign to become the clear-cut No. 1 tight end for the 2027 K-State Wildcats.

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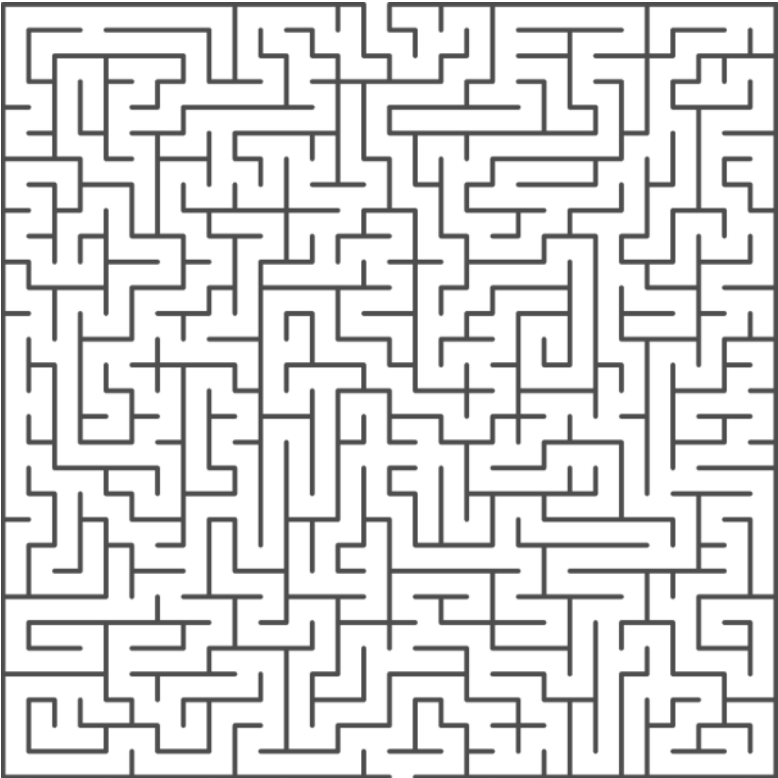


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