# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Isla Vista Housing Crisis</td>
<td>Ashley Rusch &amp; Janet Wang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Exploring Greek Life Tensions</td>
<td>Makenna Gaeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Los Recicladores de Isla Vista</td>
<td>Fredi Weitzel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Sophomore Year: The Remix</td>
<td>Itzayana Gonzalez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Mental Health Matters</td>
<td>Muyun Liu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Ethics of College Merch</td>
<td>Chloe Kimmel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Snag VS Duffl</td>
<td>Katelyn Katz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Eryn Krouse Feature</td>
<td>Giselle Lewis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CREATIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Overheard on the Bike Paths</td>
<td>Dylan Buckley Delaney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Return of Partying in IV</td>
<td>Lukas Olesinki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Wandering Within the Q</td>
<td>Lucy Holley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>UCSB’s Death Star</td>
<td>Chloe Kimmel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Flags of Isla Vista</td>
<td>Brenton Haslam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>DIY Honey Lavender Latte</td>
<td>Mar Cornelius</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## THINK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Walk, Bike, Fashion Baby</td>
<td>Lauren Enslin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bring Back the Beat</td>
<td>Sam Plascencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>You’re Reading it All Wrong</td>
<td>Caitlin Henderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Otessa Moshfegh Review</td>
<td>Leah Skoyles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear WORD readers,

As we fill the streets of IV and UCSB again, there’s a familiarity in the details. The cracks in the bike paths, the Pardall Tunnel lights flickering as we pass through, the Hydro Flasks clanking against the metal chair frames as students leave Campbell Hall. Everywhere we look, little time capsules riddle our campus and beyond. The turn where we fell off our bike. The bush we peed in after a long night on DP. The park where we experienced our first breakup and the beach where we fell in love. These places are eerily stagnant—but we are not.

Things are not what they used to seem. We’ve grown up, each in our own little way. Some of us have adopted new routines, passions, and questionable haircuts (let’s not talk about the mullet). But there’s a mystery to the newness that creeps into places we used to exist comfortably in, and maybe that scares you. Maybe you’re hesitant to ask difficult questions, or to criticize newly visible structures of power. Maybe you’re clinging onto the last fragments of your naivety. But don’t be afraid of biting the hand that feeds you—it may be the best thing you’ll ever do.

Whether your Isla Vista journey is just beginning or rapidly coming to a close, growth shines through newfound perspective. In these very pages, WORDies have reexamined Isla Vista as we’ve known it—questioning, exploring, and investigating all this town has to offer. May we have a greater sense of ourselves and a clearer view of our surroundings. It’s all in the beauty of the déjà vu.

WORD Editors-in-Chief,
Janet Wang and Ashley Rusch
UNDERNEATH THE GLAMOUR of a neatly trimmed garden and year-round heated pool at the Pacifica Suites hotel in Goleta, all is not what it seems. Behind the 4-star hotel's amenities created for an upscale clientele, dimly-lit corridors lead to Maddy Castro's suite. At first glance, Maddy's quite spacious room resembles a typical hotel suite rather than a personalized living space. A painting of the Santa Barbara coastline hangs above a faded green couch, leaf-printed linen curtains drape across the door to the balcony, and a black coffee maker with various sweeteners and creamer pods sits to the side of the TV stand. Her suite features a separate living room from the bedroom, a balcony, and even two televisions. But on her hotel bed, Maddy's floral childhood blanket lays atop her comforter, just one of few items she brought from home to decorate her space. Maddy is not a leisurely hotel dweller on an expensive vacation. For now, Pacifica Suites is home, serving as one of many makeshift units allocated for UCSB's emergency housing solution during Fall 2021. But you can’t turn a hotel room into a home.

Maddy never thought she’d spend her senior year in a hotel room; elegant, maybe, but isolated from her friends and the traditional college experience. She had anxiously waited all summer for a
hanging update, but just two days before fall quarter move-in, Maddy received her assignment: a room in Pacifica Suites, over two miles away from campus.

The Housing Crisis Backstory

Maddy is one of many UCSB students pushed into a non-traditional living situation for fall quarter. On Aug. 27, 2021, Chancellor Henry T. Yang sent the first campus-wide email acknowledging “student housing challenges” only three weeks before move-in weekend. Yang claimed that the university did not increase student enrollment above pre-pandemic levels, instead highlighting the university’s efforts to provide additional housing options for students in single or double occupancy rooms in nearby hotels. Meanwhile, local news outlets and community members voiced their concerns regarding houseless students for the upcoming school year, drawing stories from anxious students awaiting placement. By Sept. 24, a housing email update pointed towards three circumstances affecting the lack of available housing: Santa Barbara’s desirable location, less dense IV housing, and students’ uncertainty regarding an in-person fall quarter.

Though amplified by the return of students on campus, UCSB’s housing crisis is not a new story. According to the UCSB Library archives, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors established a student residential zoning plan in the early 1960s, exempting Isla Vista from basic zoning guidelines and housing standards. Coupled with increased student enrollment and mass construction of new apartment buildings, the population in IV skyrocketed from 350 to 11,600 residents between 1954 and 1970. As a result, a permanent housing crisis emerged. In 1979, The Daily Nexus published a story describing hundreds of students without fall housing for the school year, prompting emergency administration action. A 1996 article echoed it.

Fast forward to 2010, UCSB established the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) in collaboration and agreement with Goleta and Santa Barbara County as a blueprint for future campus needs. The LRDP plans to develop housing needed to accommodate all additional students. More specifically, the LRDP anticipates a student enrollment growth of one percent a year, totaling a maximum enrollment of 25,000 students—all with sufficient housing—by 2025, (presumably including the grotesque fantasy of the Munger Hall mega-dorm). Despite the LRDP’s visioning, UCSB students found themselves in déjà vu housing deficit history, necessitating an unlikely solution—hotel housing for over 300.

Living on Edge

Maddy is a fourth-year Geography major from Fresno. During the remote school year, she struggled with mental health and motivation issues, ultimately withdrawing towards the end of Winter 2020. When summer rolled around and Maddy prepared to return, housing was the last thing on her mind. After all, she was a fourth-year and assumed she would get housing priority. When she realized housing wasn’t guaranteed, Maddy scrambled to be on every waitlist. In mid-August, hotel housing options opened up, and she secured her spot in Pacifica Suites. But king bed and all, living in a hotel is less than ideal.
Maddy Castro in her hotel dorm room.

You can’t turn a hotel room into a home.
Although Pacifica Suites is located along the MTD bus line, getting to campus requires an extra 30 minutes in the morning. Maddy’s no stranger to taking the bus, but it takes logistical planning that many IV residents never experience. Sometimes, she takes the bus five or six times a day. Maddy longs for the days when she lived at Tropicana Gardens as a sophomore, when campus was only a 10 to 15-minute walk away and missing the bus wasn’t a daily stressor. Much more frustrating, however, is her limited access to a laundry machines. From the hotel, she hauls her basket several blocks and under the freeway to the local laundromat, an ordeal both inconvenient and exhausting.

Worse, hotel life leaves Maddy with new levels of isolation. Since most of her friends have graduated, Maddy’s distance from campus prevents her from making new friends. While she tries to expand her circle by joining groups like the Geography Club and seeking an on-campus job, she resents her inability to experience a “traditional” senior year in Isla Vista. “I’m sad about not having the conventional meeting spots, like going to a dining hall, just having that sense of community. Here, everybody’s in their own little bubble,” she explained.

She’s made efforts to connect with fellow hotel-housed students through online forums like GroupMe and Discord, but is disappointed by a lack of genuine interaction. The group chats mostly serve logistical purposes, with residents mainly asking to borrow items like vacuums. On the flip side, several of the group chats she’s joined have made her uncomfortable. Maddy laughed at the absurdity of one Discord server in particular, through which she’s received at least three propositions to join an orgy on campus. “That thing is ugly and gross. I don’t want to have an orgy with you in the Engineering Building. You are down bad,” Maddy said.

While she finds humor through her frustration, Maddy doesn’t joke about the severity of the crisis. To her, Isla Vista’s housing shortage only highlights who has access to resources and who’s left to fend for themselves. One night she attended a kickback at the upscale Icon Apartments in Isla Vista, up above the Loop. Looking out over a gorgeous 360-degree view of Isla Vista, the mountains, UCSB, and the ocean, Maddy couldn’t help but cry as she imagined what could’ve been. Then, she opened her bus app to find the fastest route back to Pacifica Suites.

Behind the Wheel

On his drive to campus, fourth-year Oliver Chavez makes his way through his favorite albums in alphabetical order. Currently, he’s on the “C’s” and listening to The Cure’s discography. The music breaks up the monotony of his 2-hour drive from his home in the San Fernando Valley, which he makes several times a week. To make it on time to his 9 a.m. production class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Oliver, a Film and Media Studies major, starts his day three hours earlier. At this point, Oliver knows his route to school like the back of his hand.

“I can almost just tell you where like every turn and every curb and just like where traffic is expected to stop at every moment,” he said. Although Oliver returns home Tuesday after class, Thursdays through the weekend are a different story. As the lead guitarist of an indie-rock band, The Framers, Oliver needs to be in Isla Vista not only for classes—but also to play gigs on the weekend. After his classes end for the week on Thursday, Oliver spends Thursday and Friday nights on friends’ couches before returning home Saturday morning.

“I don’t stay at their place while I’m doing my schoolwork in the middle of the day. So part of it kind of feels like living out of my car. But only while I’m awake,” he explained.

Like Maddy, Oliver has lived in university housing since freshman year and thought
housing would be guaranteed. It wasn’t. Oliver did receive several offers in IV, but they were all incompatible with his plan to graduate Winter quarter. “The fact that they told us maybe like two months before this quarter started and when everybody already had plans,” he said.

Commute boredom, sometimes up to four hours in a day, takes the biggest mental toll. But Oliver acknowledges that he hasn’t gotten the worst of the housing crisis, especially compared to those who park their homes in Isla Vista.

**Getting Resourceful**

It was 3:00 a.m. when Kris Hotchkiss woke up to the sensation of water dripping onto his sheets. The tarp that sat over the roof of his van wasn’t enough to protect him from the first thunderstorm of the year.

The lack of available and affordable housing led Kris, a fourth-year transfer student, to construct a home for himself—on wheels. After no luck with housing options (other than a $1700 spot in a double), Kris took matters into his own hands by borrowing a van from his best friend, Rahyen Heilmann. The two spent four weeks together renovating it to accommodate a full-time UCSB student lifestyle. By fall quarter, Kris moved into his van with plywood flooring, cabinets, and a functional solar panel electrical system to support a mini-fridge and overhead lights. Several posters are mounted above a raised bed platform, where a small potted plant on a shelf also thrives.

For Kris, every day is a little different. In the morning, he heads to campus to charge his devices and power banks before class. Without reliable internet access in his van, he tends to stay on campus to do his homework, and tries to spend the least amount of time possible in the hot, cramped van during the day. He makes a point of getting outside to surf, read, and appreciate his new ocean view.

Kris usually uses school bathrooms, but sometimes resorts to using a bottle in the van in the late hours of the night. A rotation of friends helps by allowing him to shower at their Isla Vista places. Kris feels the support, but also a certain level of social insecurity inherent in van life. “I just feel a little self-conscious inviting people here. Like it’s super cool and I love it myself, but I just can’t help but think, well—what is this one person going to think about it?”

Maintaining the van’s amenities has also proved to be a difficult, time-consuming task. One night he left his fridge and fan on while he stepped out to get a tattoo. Much to his dismay, the battery was drained by the time he came back. The system has stayed down since then, leaving him without a working fridge and any light besides a lantern and his phone. Just an example of how exhausting it can be to manage van life on top of student life—his academic focus is also obstructed.

“I’ve had to dedicate school time and my free time to try to fix it, and it’s just frustrating. I feel like with living in the van, I have far less free time because I spend more time cleaning and fixing stuff up than I would in an apartment,” he said.

While Kris loves to cook, he’s limited by the space in his van and the food that he can keep—especially without a functioning refrigerator. To avoid dirtying too many dishes (no sink), he typically makes one-pot meals using his propane camping stove. Oatmeal is his go-to for breakfast—requiring only water and some other non-refrigerated ingredients. For lunch and dinner, Kris often utilizes UCSB’s Food Pantry for ingredients. Halfway through the quarter, he was also approved by the Financial Aid Office to receive a scholarship for a seven-day meal plan through UCSB Campus Dining. While the extra support has been helpful, Kris feels that he jumped through hoops to access it.

One experience particularly resonated. While registering for Fall courses through UCSB’s Gauchos On-Line Data Program (GOLD), the system prompted him to enter his living situation. Options included “on”
I don’t know who gets to fucking talk to Chancellor Yang but why can’t I?

Oliver next to his car used to commute from the San Fernando Valley to IV.
or “off” campus housing and “Isla Vista” or “university-owned” residences. But there was no option that suited Kris—a student left houseless for his final Fall quarter at UCSB. He was frustrated: how could the university know about his need for additional help if they didn’t give him the chance to list himself as houseless?

“They don’t get what’s going on. And they don’t know who to ask about what’s going on. I feel like I shouldn’t have to go out of my way—my life would have been significantly easier if the services reached out to me, but I had to go through word of mouth,” he explained. “Whether it’s intentional or not, it doesn’t matter because the bottom line is they’re not talking to me.”

According to Kris, non-traditional living situations are essentially being neglected and silenced by the university. And while his situation is unique, Kris’ feelings about the response to the housing crisis parallels both Maddy and Oliver. Across their varied living situations, they all agree on one thing: UCSB administration hasn’t done enough to support them.

An Insufficient Response

When Maddy clicked open an overflow housing newsletter from UCSB’s University & Community Housing Services, a gimmicky cartoon of Storke Tower named “Rezy Dent” stared back at her. These weekly newsletters, designed in exaggerated colors and clip-art decals, offered campus resources to hotel-housed students such as the Associated Students Food Bank and Campus Learning Assistance Services. But the main feature spotlights a letter from Rezy Dent, characterized as a housing mascot.

In an Oct. 11 newsletter, a graphic of Rezy Dent playing with a beach ball on the shore was slapped onto a summery yellow background. In the middle of the page was a bright purple speech bubble from Rezy’s face. “I have finally gotten a hang of the MTD bus schedule, and have been reaching out to other students staying at my hotel to try to get to know more people. We have even found time to study together over dinner at restaurants close to our hotel,” Rezy said.

Maddy was made livid by the newsletters’ condescending content—depicting a reality far from what she experienced. “How dare you come at me with like this cute little sticker like I’ll be happy? No, I’m angry. Don’t come at me with some bullshit,” she said after reading the letter aloud.

Every newsletter reminds residents of a looming date marking the end of temporary hotel housing: Dec. 12. “We hope your midterms and assignments are going well. Most importantly, we hope that you have safe Halloween plans and a great costume to wear!!!!” the University & Community Housing Services letter detailed. “Securing permanent housing for the rest of the academic year needs to be a priority for you from this point on. You are coming quickly down to the wire.”

If the university thinks residents like Maddy are lounging around in their hotel suites, unaware of being potentially houseless winter quarter, they’re wrong. In fact, Maddy has been constantly tracking notifications for various properties from Goleta to Carpinteria. Beyond these anxieties and frustrations, Maddy feels out of place at a university that failed to provide her with the bare minimum of basic needs.

“Not even having housing makes you really sort of feel like you shouldn’t be living here. And the fact that I struggled with that for so long, like every single year, has made me feel like man, do I really belong here?” she questioned.

According to Rebecca Segundo, Basic Needs and Rapid Rehousing Manager on the university’s Financial Crisis Response Team, all students who were on the housing waitlist in September were offered temporary hotel housing for Fall 2021. Since then, nearly a third of
all the students originally living in hotels have moved to campus housing or found housing in the community—but no recent data past 2020 exists regarding students in houseless or commuting situations. When asked about the Dec. 12 deadline, Segundo redirected related inquiries to Andrea Estrada, Director of News and Media Relations, who did not respond to requests for an interview.

On Nov. 16, the university announced that they would extend hotel housing for winter quarter, just under a month shy of the original move-out deadline. Still, frustrations are certainly growing regarding the transparency of the university’s decision-making. “I don’t know who gets to talking to Chancellor Yang but why can’t I?” Kris stated. “I pay $30k a year, and I can’t even get into the same office as people that work there that are advocating for me and making decisions for me.”

Overflowing Community Support

If the housing shortage has highlighted something positive, it’s that community solidarity is a powerful tool to lean on when an institution fails to provide. Kris spoke to the overwhelming support he’s received from friends, acquaintances, and even strangers in light of his unique circumstances.

“My friends offered showers. A transfer student from my same school offered their house and futon if I ever needed it. Everyone has been so incredibly nice and offered so much,” he said. “It’s so nice to feel like I have the support—and it’s way better than what the school is doing.”

Maddy also looks to community for help, acknowledging that anger can only go so far. Maddy wants to channel her frustration into something more useful—putting pressure on the university to do better for its students.

“You just need to pick up the pieces from here and move on, and not let anger consume you. It’s been consuming me for these past few weeks, really ugly sometimes. But regardless of whose fault it is, you just have to know your community, and work with your community,” she said. As she goes about her days in Pacifica Suites, she is comforted by the knowledge that her peers have her back. Stepping out over her customized Twilight doormat each morning (the only personalized item in the beige hallway), she holds onto hope that brighter days lie ahead—and that “Rezy Dent” won’t live in her inbox forever.
GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT

Exploring Growing Tensions Surrounding Greek Life

WORDS // MAKENNA GAETA
ILLUSTRATION // MAHROKH CORNELIUS
DESIGN // DANIELA GOMEZ
IF THE WAR ON GREEK LIFE feels like old news, the investigatory suspensions of four UCSB sororities this school year implores us to think again. Perhaps the culmination of existing tensions between pro and anti-Greek life sentiments, these investigations embody the growing intolerance surrounding these organizations—and beg the question of what the future holds for Greek life both at UCSB and nationwide.

Beginning Sept. 17, 2021, UCSB’s Pi Beta Phi chapter was placed on interim suspension on grounds of hazing allegations. Two days later, three sorority chapters followed suit: Alpha Phi, Alpha Chi Omega, and Kappa Alpha Theta. Investigatory suspension statuses aim to prevent potential further harm to the community, should allegations of behavioral misconduct prove true. As a result, the chapter on interim suspension is prohibited from interacting in any formal events with houses in “good-standing.”

“Issuing an interim suspension is the campus’s protocol when hazing allegations meet the threshold of a charge against the Student Conduct Code. It is done as a precautionary, protective measure while the investigation and adjudication process takes place,” UCSB spokesperson Andrea Estrada said in a statement. This year, rush was slated to take place the first week of fall quarter—but these sororities bid their potential new members adieu just days before rush started. The tension on campus is palpable.

For Vanessa Lin, a second-year Economics major in Kappa Kappa Gamma, one of the five remaining sororities in good-standing, this investigation process feels like more than just a protective measure. “Personally I don’t think UCSB handles allegations of misconduct within Greek life correctly. I think it seems a little suspicious that the university is willing to so easily put four sororities—which is nearly half of all sororities at UCSB—on suspension right before the recruitment process,” Lin said.

Lin believes that the suspensions mark the beginning of the end for Greek life here on campus. The abrupt loss of rush will not only decrease the percentage of students involved in these organizations—but also take controversy surrounding frats and sororities to new heights.

When a member of the university community “witnesses or becomes aware of concerning behavior,” the UCSB’s Student Engagement & Leadership (SEAL) strongly urges students to create a report via their online secure system, in person, telephone, or email. According to SEAL’s website, reports can be filed without knowledge or evidence of whether or not the concern is a violation of university policy. The idea behind this encourages students to speak up so the Registered Campus Organization Conduct Board (RCOCB) can determine whether an investigation is necessary or not.

But Lin is skeptical of the timing of these accusations. “I completely understand taking accusations seriously, but when four different sororities all get allegations of misconduct 24 hours prior to recruitment, it seems like these accusations are being
thrown around without any supported evidence,” Lin continued. These trials operate on a guilty until proven innocent system, and these sororities are being placed on suspension (and will remain on suspension) until providing evidence that exonerates them. On paper, it rings clear that the university has an indisputable intolerance for alleged hazing activities.

But is there a better alternative? Jemma Robson, UCSB alumni, and author of the Daily Nexus’ “Why Aren’t We Talking About Banning Fraternities At UCSB?” stands by the university’s precautionary stance. “It’s probably just best, if something’s in question, to put them on a suspension. I guess that’s not super kosher in the sense that it’s not ‘innocent until proven guilty,’ but I think that would get just kind of out of hand if a sorority or frat could just keep throwing parties or do whatever they’re doing that could harm more students in the long-run,” Robson wrote. For fraternities at UCSB, many of which have a long history of interim suspensions due to sexual assault allegations that were under investigation, this safety measure does feel well-founded.

Perhaps most reflective of the controversy surrounding this investigative process was my inability to get an interview from virtually any student or official affiliated with the affected four sororities. I was told over and over again about the nature of the investigation: how “ongoing” meant any statement could be used against their house, and how even the promise of anonymity didn’t ease their fears. And while my intent was never to scope out the validity of the hazing allegations, the declined interviews gave me new insight about how this growing contention has led to a dangerous lack of transparency.

The investigations push us to broaden the scope of our question: How does the suspension of four UCSB sororities all within the span of two days embody the war on fraternities and sororities nationwide? Greek life has historically been under fire for an array of criticisms, primarily talk of how these organizations perpetuate racist, classist, and exclusionary principles. For Robson, her decision not to rush a sorority can be attributed to these concerns, weighing in on the superficiality of dressing up as a rushee to impress active members and how looks (and even bodyweight) carry far too much importance in the process. “Mainly though why I think Greek Life should be abolished is on the frat side, with sexual assault,” said Robson, referencing one of the most prevalent issues surrounding Greek Life.
However, students are not keeping quiet in their opposition to Greek life. Charles Kernkamp, a fourth year Environmental Studies major, coordinated the 2019 Fuck Frats Fest in light of the slew of sexual assault allegations posed against fraternity Sigma Pi. This night of music not only raised money for Santa Barbara’s Standing Together to End Sexual Assault, but also provided a safe platform for survivors to speak. The event illustrates the growing solidarity against the harm that Greek life, a perpetrator for sexual violence, can inflict within the IV community.

“Time after time again, you hear of stories and are exposed to the rape culture that frats promote, along with instances of sexual assault that are downright atrocious. Horrible things go down at these fraternities and nothing happens,” Kernkamp said.

And despite this historical contention, the Abolish Greek Life Movement seems to have gained popularity during COVID, in which partying literally became a matter of life or death—and a multitude of frats and sororities nationwide turned a blind eye. All around the country, new clusters of outbreaks began to crop up, rooted in rush parties from our own campus.

“You’d see it all over social media, parties with hundreds of people at these fraternities. And so that definitely enforced my negative opinion of Greek life. It just enforced the whole environment of people that don’t care about rape culture, and people that don’t care about a global pandemic,” Kernkamp said. In the eye of the COVID storm, Greek life’s reckless behavior jeopardized the safety of our community. Many students, especially those who were prohibited from attending school in-person, are not quick to forget it.

Love Greek life or hate it, one thing remains true: the tides are shifting. As we enter a new age of progressive awareness, the investigations leave us with both the gift of conversation and the burden of polarization—an obstacle that UCSB will continue to grapple with as we contemplate what lies beyond the horizon for the future of Greek life on campus.

How does the suspension of four UCSB sororities all within the span of two days embody the new war on fraternities and sororities nationwide?
AS A KID, WAKING UP excited for the first day of school was an important moment. Completely unphased by homework assignments or the inevitable choice of career paths, the picture-perfect first day of school marked another year of getting older. But this year was different. As if taking classes online during a pandemic wasn’t enough, facing people on the first day of school felt more vulnerable and anxiety-inducing than ever. Hiding behind the comfort of my Zoom screen and jumping out of bed moments before class were choices I no longer had. Thrown into real life, I couldn’t put a filter on imperfections, and I certainly couldn’t wear my pajamas to class. In all honesty, I wasn’t mentally prepared to add “getting ready” to my morning routine again.

Along with many others, I was meeting peers who shared my interests in person for the first time—and I selfishly wanted to represent myself better than I had on Zoom. As I moved back to Isla Vista over the summer, I quickly understood how perceived appearances could drastically change representations of people on and off the screen. 

I did not want to become a perception that did not amount to what was on the screen. As trivial as it sounds, staring at myself in the mirror and the abyss of my tiny closet caused panic. Despite the issues of health and welfare that concerned me, I couldn’t shake this feeling of anxiety concerning what I should wear. I felt as insecure as my middle school self. When I vocalized how I was feeling, my friends rushed to agree with me. Online school somehow stifled my ability to be excited about choosing what to wear. Why, as a senior in college, did I care what people thought of me based on how I dressed?
During the pandemic, media shifted fashion—cultivating an image became what many obsessed over in their free time. Being the trendiest on and off the screen seemed to heighten levels of social status. Authentic or not, creating a brand out of your style (like influencers) seemed to be everywhere, especially through the use of the invasive components of social media. Being provoked to “buy this” or “thrift that” to look more hip through shockingly targeted advertisements was suddenly more of a chore than a pleasure.

TikTok specifically had flipped my reality and micro-trends of fashion on their heads, especially in the back-to-school routine. No longer were those around me wearing the comfy Isla Vista beachwear of Rainbow flip flops, baggy sweatshirts, and loose jeans I once knew as a freshman. Instead, trendy, bright, and form-fitting outfits strutted down the “runway” of Pardall Tunnel. The rookies of IV seemed to replace my beloved, relaxed IV style with their capricious micro-trends that scream hot for a second and gone the next. While I can appreciate the effort, my once simple task of dressing for the day turned into a living nightmare.

Feeling the pressures to conform to these micro-trends of TikTok made me feel all the more old and untrendy. I would be lying if I said that seeing younger peers rock amazing outfits while looking drab didn’t take a toll on my senior ego. As exciting as it is to get back to campus, I do miss the safety net of my cozy and comfortable IV beachwear that seems to be gone with the rest of my college days.

As trends come and go, I know how temperamental many of them are in the grand scheme of life. If the excess time provided by the pandemic has taught me anything, it’s that cultivating your self-expression through style should go hand in hand with acceptance and forgoing the ever-changing micro-trends. As I face the black hole of my closet at the beginning of every day, I must remind myself that what you wear is what you make of it. While my go-to outfit of beat-up Rainbows, baggy jeans, and favorite sweatshirt represent my fondest memories of IV, it also represents a time when my style did not dictate my confidence levels. So, if I can offer any words of advice, I’d say throw on your beachwear, super-trendy outfit, or whatever your heart desires—and be yourself authentically.
OVERHEARD...
ON THE BIKEPATH

PHOTOGRAPHY + DESIGN // DYLAN BUCKLEY DELANEY
“I’m going to San Diego, the whale’s vagina”
- GIRL ON SUENO

*Kicking over Byrd Scooters*
“Fuck you corporations”
- GUY NEAR CAMINO LINDO

“These bike paths are not good for my mental health”
- GIRL NEAR BUS LOOP

“Yo I got a funny joke; not having a bagel right now”
- GUY NEAR BAGEL CAFE

“Fuck Sands! Always go Devs!”
- SURFER BIKING TO DEVEREUX

“That noise was us pretending to shotgun white claws”
- GUYS ON FACETIME ON DP
“Yo some white people can be racist”
- GUY NEAR SEA LOOKOUT PARK

“Butt pain gives you a high”
- GUY ON PARDALL

“Dude it was like straight humming then it started tracking”
- GUY AT SANDS

“He took off his shirt and he was like insanely shredded”
- BRITISH GUY BY THE LIBRARY
“You don’t know how to fuckin’ bike!”

*zooms off*

- SOME DUDE IN THE PARDALL TUNNEL
LOS RECICLADORES
DE
ISLA VISTA
Voces Inauditas
de la Ciudad Universidad

THE RECYCLERS OF ISLA VISTA
Unheard Voices of the College Town
Skip to page 25 to read the story in English.
estilo de vida establecidos, atrayendo a las personas a las ciudades ricas y los centros suburbanos de áreas con pocas oportunidades económicas. Según la Alianza Global de Recicladores, existen “enlatadores” en casi todas las regiones del mundo, que aparecen en los distritos donde se han establecido valores de redención.

Con su densa población, relativa afluencia, y una floreciente cultura de fiestas que bombea latas y macetas, Isla Vista es una mina de oro para las personas que buscan ganarse la vida reciclando. Delia nos dice que, trabajando

“¡Nadie me manda!”

3 a.m. para comenzar su día del trabajo. Con sus hijos en casa durmiendo, junto con el resto de Isla Vista, Delia hace sus rondas, recolectando botellas y latas reciclables de los patios y contenedores del vecindario. Trabaja por cuatro horas, luego regresa a casa justo a tiempo para dar los buenos días a sus dos hijos cuando se despiertan. Después de prepararles el desayuno y llevarlos a la escuela, vuelve al trabajo.

Delia es una de los muchos “recicladores” en Isla Vista, que han optado por ganarse la vida recolectando y canjeando materiales reciclables. Esta profesión de “enlatado” empezó en California en 1986 como resultado del Programa para el Reciclaje de Envases de Bebidas, también conocido como “Bottle Bill.” El programa, financiado por el estado, puso valores de 5 a 10 centavos en botellas y latas reciclables como incentivo para que los californianos reciclen. El programa también presentó una forma sencilla para que la gente ganara dinero.

Desde entonces, las conservas se han convertido en una profesión y un una jornada de nueve a diez horas, gana “100 dólares, más o menos”, lo que equivale a casi $3000 por mes. Aunque gana menos del salario mínimo y solo se toma días libres durante las vacaciones cuando los estudiantes salen de Isla Vista, Delia disfruta el estilo de vida que ofrece el reciclaje. “Me gusta reciclar porque tengo tiempo para mis hijos, tengo tiempo para trabajar y [tengo] tiempo para mí ... ¡nadie me manda!”

Delia ha estado viviendo y trabajando en esta comunidad desde 1999. Ella emigró de su pueblo en Guerrero, México con su padre, quien también era reciclador. Durante sus 22 años en Isla Vista, Delia creció, se casó, dio a luz a dos hijos, se divorció de su esposo y aprendió a navegar la vida como madre soltera, momentos que la mayoría de los residentes de Isla Vista no pueden imaginar. Ha sido testigo de cómo varias generaciones de estudiantes de UCSB viven y dejan atrás el lugar al que ella llama hogar.

Quizás esta razón, la tasa de rotación excepcionalmente alta de la mayoría de
los habitantes de Isla Vista, impide que Delia establezca relaciones cercanas con los estudiantes. Ella dice que la mayoría de sus conversaciones con los estudiantes rara vez van más allá de un rápido “hola” y “cómo estás.” Le preguntamos si se siente bien tratada por aquellos con los que se encuentra en sus rondas. “Te encuentras con niños, bueno, te encuentras con niños que no son tan buenas personas, y te encuentras con niños que son realmente geniales ... pero las cosas suelen estar bien, gracias a Dios.”

¿Y su relación con los demás recicladores? También decente. Como la mayoría de los recicladores de Isla Vista, Delia trabaja sola. Pero ella dice que se lleva bien con los demás que hacen este trabajo, “¡gracias a Dios!” Vicente ha estado enlantado en Isla Vista por más de 18 años y regularmente envía dinero a su familia en México. Dice que sus días aquí son largos y difíciles, que “la vida es dura,” pero que las condiciones en México son peores. Juana, otra recicladora, se mudó a Goleta hace poco más de un año, también de México. Sin automóvil, recorre 4 millas en bicicleta con la recolección de su día al centro de reciclaje de Marborg todas las tardes. Como Delia, es madre soltera de dos hijos.

El Futuro Incierto de los Recicladores

Admiro a los recicladores de Isla Vista por muchas razones, principalmente porque se sacrifican mucho y trabajan incansablemente para cuidar a sus seres queridos; y siempre me he sentido incómodo, incluso culpable, de que mi única relación con ellos parece ser a través de mi basura.

Como estudiante de estudios ambientales y humano preocupado, estoy consternado al mismo tiempo por la cantidad de desechos que genera nuestra sociedad. Aunque el programa de redención de California no ha reducido la cantidad de basura que generamos nosotros, las clases media y alta, se han devuelto más de 300 mil millones de botellas y latas para reciclar desde el inicio del programa, gracias en gran parte a los esfuerzos de los enlatadores. Sin embargo, el programa ha tenido éxito en términos de brindar a las personas una vía para ganarse la vida.

Para muchos recicladores, la estabilidad de esta forma de vida está amenazada. Por ejemplo, COVID-19 trajo dificultades sin precedentes para los trabajadores de Isla Vista. Cuando la comunidad perdió a la mayoría de sus residentes y cesaron las fiestas en las primeras etapas de la pandemia, los materiales reciclables escaseaban. Vicente informa tener que trabajar más horas para alcanzar sus objetivos diarios. Si bien algunos de nosotros tuvimos el privilegio de quedarnos en casa, Vicente dice que nunca dejó de trabajar durante la pandemia y por mucho menos recompensa. Hoy, temerosa de contraer la variante Delta y no poder cuidar de sus hijos, Juana sigue insistiendo en usar su máscara, a pesar de que realiza todo su trabajo al aire libre. La conocí mientras recogía las latas de fiesteros desenmascarados en Del Playa.

Sin embargo, el futuro parecía sombrío para los enlatadores incluso antes del brote de COVID-19: China anunció recientemente más restricciones a su Política Nacional de Espada, introducida inicialmente en 2017, que estableció nuevos estándares de contaminación para los desechos importados y prohibió 24 materiales reciclables. Desde enero de 2021, China no ha comprado ningún material de los Estados Unidos. Según un artículo publicado por Miller Recycling Company, este cambio de política ha devaluado los desechos de plástico, aluminio y papel, lo que socava de manera efectiva la viabilidad del mercado global de reciclaje.

Como resultado, los centros de reciclaje en todo California y el resto del país se
han estado cerrando, lo que hace que el trabajo de los conservadores, que a menudo no tienen acceso a un transporte de largo alcance, sea exponencialmente más difícil, en algunos casos, imposible. Si el centro de reciclaje de Marborg en Goleta cerrará, es muy probable que desaparezcan los enlatadores de Isla Vista. Y podría, con una infraestructura doméstica muy limitada para el reciclaje y pocos compradores dispuestos, la incineración es actualmente la opción de eliminación más barata en los Estados Unidos. Dejando sombrío el futuro del programa de reciclaje de California y aún más sombrío el futuro de quienes dependen de él para sobrevivir.

¿Será el Reciclaje una Cosa del Pasado?

Mientras acumulaba la colección de su día en la parte trasera de su camioneta, le preguntamos a Vicente cómo se describiría a sí mismo en tres palabras o menos. “Soy un gran trabajador,” dice. Las altísimas pilas de botellas y latas hablan por sí mismas.

La ética de trabajo, el valor y la determinación de Vicente seguramente persistirán; La fe de Delia es firme. Pero el futuro de la industria del reciclaje es incierto. Tal vez las cosas sigan igual y los recicladores tengan un trabajo estable y constante, o tal vez, en los próximos años, el mercado para sus colecciones ganadas con esfuerzo, uno que ha proporcionado una fuente confiable de ingresos durante más de tres décadas, ya no exista.
“Nobody bosses me around!”

IT’S THREE HOURS PAST MIDNIGHT. As the last few party-goers straggle home, most residents are sound asleep. Isla Vista is quiet—a rare, unfamiliar scene to most of its residents.

Delia is accustomed to the silence. Most mornings, she is up long before the sun, leaving her house at 3 a.m. to begin her workday. With her children at home sleeping along with the rest of IV, Delia does her rounds, gathering recyclable bottles and cans from the yards and bins of the neighborhood. She works for four hours, then returns home just in time to squeeze her two kids good morning as they wake. After fixing them breakfast and taking them to school, she’s back to work.

Delia is one of many “recyclers” in Isla Vista who earn a living by collecting and redeeming recyclables. This “canning” profession came about in California as a result of the state’s Beverage Container Recycling Program, a.k.a. the “Bottle Bill,” in 1986. The state-funded program placed 5 to 10 cent redemption values on recyclable bottles and cans as an incentive to get Californians to recycle. It also presented a simple way for people to make money.

Since then, canning has become an established profession and way of life, attracting people to wealthy city and suburban centers from areas with few economic opportunities. According to the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers, “canners” exist in almost all regions of the globe, popping up in districts where redemption values have been established.

With its dense population, relative affluence, and flourishing party culture pumping out cans and plandles, Isla Vista is a goldmine for people looking to make a living recycling. I met Delia on DP, as she was completing her day’s final rounds. At 3 p.m. on a weekday, her bike basket was full of White Claw cans. Delia tells us that, by working a nine to ten-hour day, she makes about 100 dollars, coming out to nearly $3000 per month. Though she earns less than minimum wage and only takes days off during the holidays when students leave IV, Delia enjoys the lifestyle that recycling affords. “I like recycling because I have time for my children, I have time for work, and [I have] time for myself...nobody bosses me around!” she explained.

Delia has been living and working in this community since 1999. She emigrated from her village in Guerrero, Mexico with her father, who was a recycler, too. Over her 22 years in Isla Vista, Delia has grown up, married, given birth to two children, divorced her husband, and learned to navigate life as a single-parent. She’s witnessed multiple generations of UCSB students live in and leave behind the place that she calls home.

Perhaps this reason—the uniquely high turnover rate of most Isla Vistans—keeps Delia from establishing close relationships with students. She says most of her conversations with students rarely go beyond a quick “hello” and “how are you?” But Delia’s encounters with students often vary. “You run into kids who aren’t such
great people, and you run into kids who are really great…but things are usually fine, thank God,” she said.

And her relationship with the other recyclers? Also decent. Like most recyclers in IV, Delia works alone. Vicente* has been canning in IV for over 18 years, and regularly sends back money to his family in Mexico. He says his days here are long and difficult, that “life is hard”—but that conditions in Mexico are worse. Juana, another recycler, moved to Goleta just over a year ago, also from Mexico. With no car, she bikes four miles with her day’s collection to the Marborg recycling center in Goleta every afternoon. Like Delia, she is a single parent of two kids.

The Recyclers’ Uncertain Future

I admire the recyclers of IV for many reasons, primarily because they sacrifice so much and work tirelessly to take care of the ones they love; and I have always felt uncomfortable, even guilty, that my only relation to them seems to be through my trash.

As an Environmental Studies major and concerned human, I am simultaneously appalled at the amount of waste that our society generates. Though California’s redemption program has not curbed the quantity of trash that we, the middle and upper classes, are generating, more than 300 billion bottles and cans have been returned for recycling since the program’s inception, thanks in large part to the efforts of canners. The program has, however, been successful in terms of providing people with an avenue to make a living.

For many recyclers, the stability of this way of life is under threat. COVID-19 brought unprecedented difficulties for workers in Isla Vista, for example. When the community lost a majority of its residents and social gatherings ceased in the early stages of the pandemic, recyclables were scarce. Vicente reports having to work longer hours to reach his daily targets. While some of us had the privilege of staying home, Vicente says he never stopped working during the pandemic—and for far less reward. Today, afraid of contracting the Delta variant and being unable to care for her children, Juana is still adamant about wearing her mask, even though she conducts all her work outdoors. I met her as she was picking up the cans of unmasked partiers on DP.

The future looked grim for canners even before the COVID outbreak. China recently announced further restrictions to its National Sword Policy, initially introduced in 2017, which set new contamination standards for imported waste and placed bans on 24 recyclable materials. Since January 2021, China has not bought any materials from the U.S. According to an article by the Miller Recycling Company, this policy change has devalued plastic, aluminum, and paper waste, effectively undermining the viability of the global recycling market.

As a result, recycling centers all over California and the rest of the nation have been closing, making the work of canners, who often don’t have access to
far-reaching transportation, exponentially more difficult—in some cases, impossible. If the Marborg recycling center in Goleta were to shut down, it is very likely that the canners of Isla Vista would disappear. And it might—with very limited domestic infrastructure for recycling and few willing buyers, incineration is currently the cheapest disposal option in the U.S.—leaving the future of California’s recycling program bleak, and the future of those who depend on it for survival even bleaker.

**Will recycling be a thing of the past?**

As he piles up his day’s collection in the back of his truck, we asked Vicente how he’d describe himself in three words or less. “I’m a hard worker,” he said. The towering piles of bottles and cans speak for themselves.

Delia’s faith is steadfast. Vicente’s work ethic, grit, and determination will surely persist. But the future of the recycling industry is uncertain. Perhaps things stay the same, and recyclers have stable, consistent work. But perhaps, within the next few years, the market for the canners’ hard-earned collections—one that has provided a reliable source of income for over three decades—will no longer exist.
BRING BACK THE BEAT
WHY I TURN TO CONCERTS TO LET LOOSE

Field Daze performing at Zettechella, an IV music festival fundraiser.

WORDS // SAM PLASCENCIA
PHOTOGRAPHY // LUKAS OLESINSKI
DESIGN // DYLAN LASHER
ARTISTS AND FANS WERE SET with an unforeseeable future without live music at the start of the pandemic. With a sense of normalcy returning to our lives, concerts have made their slow and steady comeback. The return to live music has been overwhelming and exhilarating for me. There’s nothing like dancing around with people and enjoying their wholehearted presence—letting loose all while admiring the artist on stage remains the unmatched nature of live music.

In Isla Vista, a variety of local bands set their outdoor stage and soundtrack our weekend nights. These bands build energy-filled evenings of dancing beside your best friends before the dreadful thought of another Monday comes trickling to mind.

Drako Alva is a third-year student with a passion for music. Alva came together with friends Travis Rushing, Justin Dempsey, and Albert Yuan in early 2020 and created the band Field Daze—they’ve been hosting shows ever since. The band members all reside in IV and stay true to their theme by creating music about living in the area. Their essential indie rock tunes make crowds rejoice, jump, and even mosh to the beat all at once. According to Alva, the band’s music was made for the purpose of releasing and having fun.

Looking back at their first performance, Alva recalls the liveliness of the set since they were one of the first bands to play out in IV since the pandemic. He believes in continuing to play events and shows as they make their way through the quarter. “We’re already paying the consequences of people that weren’t diligent enough from the start. I don’t think our lives should be put on hold just because people don’t want to adhere to certain safety measures,” Alva said.

The pandemic surely isn’t over, yet events like performing for large crowds are alive. We’ve just adjusted to certain precautions in place such as proof of vaccination and symptom screenings. As the Special Events Coordinator for the Associated Students Program Board (ASPB), Kim Kryshak reveals her deeply-rooted fascination for attending concerts and pursuing a career in the music industry. She’s had the opportunity to host events in a way that still prioritizes the safety of the community—especially students.

In an effort to create a safe space for everyone, Kryshak recognizes the changes that need to be enforced for these types of events to continue. Although she did not feel comfortable going back to shows as soon as they started, she said putting on virtual events gave her a taste of live music she craved. Kryshak reminisces on the importance of live music in her life pre-COVID. “It makes me feel like I'm levitating. I just feel like there’s nothing else that could phase me at the moment—you’re always surrounded by like-minded people,” Kryshak said. “It’s just instant unity... My favorite memories have been
when I’ve been at a live concert because I’ve always been with people that I love and seeing music that I love.”

Back in early 2018, positive vibrations emerged from a band named Aqua Stallion. Their psychedelic-garage rock beats drew a fanbase, and they’ve continued to pursue their dedication to creating music. UCSB alum Liam Searson shares how the band just started as a group of young freshman with a common desire to start playing together. After intense deliberation, they decided on a unanimous vote to refer to the band as another phrase for a “powerful seahorse.” Since then, Aqua Stallion has established themselves as one of the more recognized bands in the local music scene.

The band officially consists of a full four-piece lineup. Searson, Michael Sharma, Audrey Meiman, and Charles Kernkamp have expressed how the pandemic shook things up for the band in the beginning. They were eager to let their skills be put to the test once they began playing live shows again. For a while now, Aqua Stallion has performed exclusively outdoor shows. For the most part, the band is making their safe return to live music. “If there was regulation keeping anti-vaxxers out, that’d be nice,” Sharma said.

The band had a rough time when shows were put at a halt. But they’re excited about the new music they’ve created since then. “The pure excitement of playing in front of an audience is what I missed most—a healthy mix of nervousness and adrenaline and pure joy, at least in my case,” Searson said. Aqua Stallion’s effort to jam while maintaining a safe environment for their audience is evident.

It will take time for concerts to return to complete pre-COVID normality, whether that means maskless or without social-distancing limitations. In the meantime, audiences will take one step at a time and
“THE PURE EXCITEMENT OF PLAYING IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE IS WHAT I MISSED MOST—A HEALTHY MIX OF NERVOUSNESS AND ADRENALINE AND PURE JOY, AT LEAST IN MY CASE.”

learn to grow with the changes. Being fully vaccinated along with wearing a mask is both simple and responsible due to the circumstances—so it’s a win-win to do your part while still partaking in events you love.

The return of live music is clear for students of UCSB, who have the opportunity to experience Delirium, an annual Halloween concert, or Extravaganza, the famed music festival. ASPB’s long history of hosting these hallmark events bring students together for a variety of performances by artists on the forefront of youth culture such as Denzel Curry, Young Thug, and more.

In its true essence, concerts are certainly making their mark in people’s lives. The return of live music has been prominent for artists, but on the back burner for concert-goers who remain hesitant. Yet, the experiences gained from these events remain highly sought after. Concerts will continue to stay around and live up to their hype that in turn form connections and everlasting memories.
THE RETURN OF PARTYING IN IV

PHOTOGRAPHY // LUKAS OLESINSKI
DESIGN // LUKAS OLESINSKI
FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE: a time of excitement, dread, and everything in between. Living in the dorms, eating at the dining halls, and walking onto campus are things that many of us dream about our entire lives. The college freshman experience is a unique, once-in-a-lifetime deal that is hard to replicate. Last year’s freshmen—the class of 2024—lost out on all of this and more, now struggling to find their footing without an inaugural experience to integrate them into all that is UCSB.

Having all classes moved to remote learning for the 2020-2021 academic year meant new experiences and expectations for everyone. But before the pandemic hit, many second-year students wanted something like a “movie scene college experience,” described Communication major Patricia Weathersby. She initially moved to IV during what would have been her freshman year and has lived there ever since. “I expected it to be a lot of fun, to come on campus, meet a bunch of new people, go out every day to hang out with friends and develop lasting relationships,” Weathersby said. Unfortunately, that became very hard to do at the height of COVID.

A traditional way for freshmen to meet each other—outside of the dorms and classes—is at events and programs put together by the school. Events like Orientation, the New Student Convocation, and the Freshman Summer Start Program were modified to happen remotely, so they didn’t have as big an impact last year. Besides these events, there were fewer opportunities last year for freshmen to socialize or feel like a part of the Gaucho community. “I definitely felt like I wasn’t even in college at the time. I was taking classes. I moved out of the house. I did everything I possibly could to try to feel like I was in college and nothing really worked,” Weathersby said.
While UCSB administration did invite the sophomores to be a part of this year’s New Student Convocation as well as some on-campus events, it wasn’t enough to make up for a whole year on a computer screen. “When you’re a freshman, everything is more catered to your experience, and being a second year, it felt like they were adding us on to the freshman thing. But we’re not freshmen—there’s still that separation,” Weathersby said.

For some, sophomore year may appear to just be sandwiched in between more significant years. But being a second-year is still a very crucial point in your collegiate career, as many students get accepted into their major or discover new passions and paths altogether. “You finally know something about your major and actually claim a bit of specialization,” Diego Perez, a Computer Engineering major, explained.

Others will start to live off-campus in and around IV, learning an entirely new meaning of independence. Traditionally, students would benefit from their first year on campus to bolster this new transition. “Freshman year was your introductory experience into college. But now that I’m a sophomore I have to actually start thinking about what it’s going to be like when I’m an adult.” Thomas Hale, a Computer Science major, said.

Add in the anxiety of living in a new place, meeting new people, and having to adjust to an entirely new ecosystem that is a college campus, and it can be a very overwhelming experience. But this just goes to show how strong the second-years have remained through it all.

This is the same class whose high school senior year activities like grad night, prom, and graduation also fell to COVID’s cancellation curse. At this point, it was hard to be excited for freshman year as education continued to be remote. “The enchantment went away because you’re just at home. It was a little bit disappointing because I didn’t really like remote learning,” Hale said. He started his freshman year at home and then was able to move into off-campus university apartments starting the winter 2021 quarter. But there have been some positive moments this year—especially with meeting friends face to face.

Despite a rough transition, Weathersby and Perez have taken the initiative to get involved on campus. For Weathersby, a memorable activity has been the Welcome Black event, where she was able to connect with fellow Black students—increasing her sense of belonging at UCSB. Perez has also found membership in a few clubs, such as Coders SB and Gaucho Racing, a club focused on building and testing electric vehicles for competitions. Finding clubs and organizations on campus that reflect one’s interests and passion have been a saving grace for second-year students struggling to connect to campus.

Even though the college experience for sophomores has been difficult and isolating, students are hoping to make the most of it—and the key to that is resilience. “Our [high school] senior year was taken away and our first year of college,” Weathersby acknowledged. “Our place is just to keep going, keep on trying and hopefully it will all be worth it in the end.” With around three more years to go, they’re definitely not letting any more time go to waste.
MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

The Community’s Ongoing Support

WORDS // MUYUN LIU
PHOTOGRAPHY // DYLAN BUCKLEY DELANEY
DESIGN // JULIA TOMASULO
TRANSITIONING BACK TO CAMPUS

Life has meant the end of a long era of never-ending Zoom calls and mountains of asynchronous classwork. Structured academic life felt like it would never return. But many of us failed to realize the end of remote learning was not a magical pill to cure all the trauma we endured. We still brought all that baggage with us, one of the most stressful and world-altering years undoubtedly imprinted on our psyches.

The initial news of a return to campus brought joy to many. One of my professors said that she cried when she found out she could come back to school and have an in-person class. It seemed like all our concerns about our family’s health issues, all the doubt, hesitation, and pain we felt about our future, would suddenly disappear when school reopened. But the reopening of school did not magically erase these mental health issues—they just became something different; the stresses from the post-lockdown pandemic come from different sources compared with the ones pre-pandemic.

Long removed from campus, the social patterns and routines we developed since freshman year are nowhere to be found. Reimmersing ourselves in campus life feels daunting.

“Anxiety around now interacting with students or having to go back to class, going back to socializing. That increases a lot of anxiety for students just because it’s been a year and a half since they’ve had to interact with roommates or try to make friends or go to campus,” Kristen Strong, the director of Acacia Counseling and Wellness, said.

Returning to the IV community also means having access to local mental health resources. UCSB’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) promises to provide a safe and affirming environment that affords students the opportunity to pursue mental health growth in a professional setting.

According to Dr. Janet Osimo, CAPS’ Assistant Clinical Director, its Mental Health Peer Office has a group of 11 students who provide mental health peer support. Their services include psychological education outreach through workshops, the Student Anxiety Program (SAP), providing tips on their website, hosting events about CAPS services, and providing mental health news and education through social media. The Mental Health Peer Office will also offer open drop-in peer counseling, and massage and egg chair usage as they did pre-COVID once indoor mask restrictions ease.

Acacia Counseling and Wellness is a mental health service in Isla Vista, specifically catered to serving college students. They offer individual therapy, group therapy, and psychiatry for medication, according to Strong. For long-term therapy, students can receive one hour of treatment per week. Students can participate in therapy as long as they want—and this kind of treatment is easily affordable since there is no copay for Anthem UC SHIP insurance students.

Although we may still face particular mental challenges enforced by our social, academic, and family life after the reopening of school, these series of challenges aren’t without remedy. It is never too late to prioritize your mental health and seek professional services.

Opportunities to explore our thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behavior, within the context of a therapeutic relationship, can give all us a space to heal from the isolation and challenges brought on by COVID-19. Developing realistic new coping skills and techniques to better manage daily stressors are other practical ways outside resources can help us manage our mental health.
But many of us failed to realize the end of remote learning was not a magical pill to cure all the trauma we endured.
Mental Health Resources

Acacia Counseling, and Wellness
Acacia aims to provide college students with a safe and supportive mental health care space. Located in IV, this service offers outpatient treatment options specifically geared towards college students. 
(805) 699-6668

Hosford Counseling & Psychological Services Clinic
The Hosford Clinic serves as a training site for students in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology (CCSP) and as a clinical-research facility for the faculty and students of the CCSP Department. 
805-893-8064

UCSB Student Health
Student Health also offers psychiatric services. They have psychiatrists and social workers who are available by referral from either CAPS or primary care clinicians within Student Health. The psychiatrists provide evaluations and, if indicated, medication and short-term supportive psychotherapy. 
(805) 893-3087

UCSB Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
All registered students are eligible for services at CAPS. They offer single-session therapy, short-term long-term counseling, and group counseling. 
(805) 893-4411

UCSB Mental Health Peers
Mental Health Peers are trained in basic counseling skills and provide students with peer-advising on mental health concerns and issues. The program aims to decrease the stigma associated with mental health. 
http://www.ucsbmhp.com/

Campus Advocacy, Resources, and Education (CARE)
CARE is a confidential advocacy and education office for interpersonal violence (sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking). They offer free and confidential services for students, staff, faculty, alumni, community members, and friends/loved ones impacted by interpersonal and gender-based violence. 
https://care.ucsb.edu/
Wandering Within the Q

WORDS + ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // LUCY HOLLEY

a short string of letters
cannot encompass the dynamic nature
of millions of rainbow hearts.
four letters spoken,
everyone else silently pushed
under the umbrella—
marginalized within the margin.
I am not an afterthought
wandering within the Q.

masqueraded as a straight line
for eighteen years,
because together the world and I
hid my existence from each other.
when we talk about erasure
it’s always bisexual,
without a whisper of pan.

a wave of the heteronormative wand
disappeared the existence of
a lovescape like mine.
clear cut labels and letters
supposedly for all,
yet none in my shape or size.
left me feeling like a fraud—
unsure of what I was faking—
hiding inside that untouchable
space between thinking and speaking
unknowable to myself
or anyone else

it was safer
easier to pass as straight
than to begin to dig
through the lies

when I finally dared
to look, to see my
self I saw
endlessly shifting,
overflowing shapes and colors
that were never going
to be contained
in any box label or letter

nonbinary and pansexual
identities hidden from me
until after my socialization
as a quite confused
straight passing ally

a short string of letters
cannot encompass the dynamic nature
of millions of rainbow hearts.
four letters spoken,
everyone else silently pushed
under the umbrella—
marginalized within the margin.
I am not an afterthought
wandering within the Q.

the oppressors stole from the magician’s book
“don’t look at yourself, or listen
why would you need to? of course
all hearts bleed the same
clear cut pattern”
they pull the gaze away from the self
occupying the mind with letters and labels
for the logic machine loves an answer

(but there is no real answer to the self beyond consciousness)

souls are energy, boundless, yet the systems at play in this world and their human accomplices gaslight young souls into believing the organic box they were born into came with a cis het packing label

they get you to buy into their othering game, for even if you dare to know that we are not all the same they then demand that you pick a new label to claim

for if you claim that you're not what they say is natural, then in order to preserve the foundations of their facade you must claim another label, any other, for the radical idea that a soul's lovescape exists independently of a socially constructed label would bring the portrait of heteronormativity crashing down in a way

I am not pansexual
I am not nonbinary because I am not a word not a label nothing more than consciousness living in this body through this human experience

yet the letter parade is not the source of the problem merely a reflection of the flawed nature of attempting to encompass the abstract nature of a soul in a social construct

we are all consciousness embedded in organic machines, the abstract nature of our hearts cannot be captured by a socially constructed label only experienced or witnessed.

a short string of letters cannot encompass the dynamic nature of millions of rainbow hearts. four letters spoken, everyone else silently pushed under the umbrella— marginalized within the margin. I am not an afterthought wandering within the Q. I am not pansexual I am not nonbinary I am not a word or a letter or a plus sign I am aware and proud that the human I am in this lifetime can best be described as pansexual and nonbinary I am aware that in this lifetime there is no one way my heart bleeds, my heart bleeds for souls that call to mine regardless of the body that houses them here.
THE LAYERED LANDSCAPE OF COLLEGE MERCH

Investigating the Ethical Standards of UCSB Merchandise

WORDS // CHLOE KIMMEL
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // GRANT RUSSELL
ON COLLEGE DAY of my senior year of high school, wearing my UCSB shirt was an undeniable declaration about the next chapter of life. Sporting college merch was, and still is, a part of identifying with and celebrating going to UCSB. But hidden under a UCSB crewneck is a deeper story about global networks developed around creating a profitable clothing system.

Whenever we buy a piece of clothing, we unknowingly participate in a chain of events with far-reaching consequences. Clothing brands have cleverly masked the realities of their incredibly labor-intensive industry, keeping them as far away from consumers as possible. In 1998, the UC school system began requiring ethical standards from partner brands to remedy this issue, but the cycle still falls short in guaranteeing the dignity and livelihood of workers abroad.

The Making of College Merch

The popularity of college merch emerged when college sports became televised across the nation in the mid-1970s. Colleges began to gain bigger audiences, and people wanted to identify with their schools and buy branded products, according to Liz Kennedy, Director of Ethical Labor and Sustainability for the UC. Fans and students would buy school-branded gear anywhere they could, and if they had any problems with it, they would come back to the campus bookstore to return it. There was no centralized merchandise hub for these branded products, so the bookstore took this role on campus. Universities began to recognize themselves as a brand, and the importance of trademarking and licensing clothes that had the school’s name became an issue of brand integrity, according to Kennedy.

With the rise in demand for branded products, bookstores within the UC started thinking more strategically—licensing only companies who could comply with detailed agreements, high-quality products, and the payment of some percentage of the selling price back to the campus, according to Kennedy.

Years later, big clothing brand conglomerates started to outsource products abroad, including those that happened to be partnered with UCSB, such as Adidas, Under Armour, and Champion. Supply chains of products started getting outsourced to locations around the globe that were chosen for their cheap labor. Large companies were then in a position to operate on a much weaker system of laws and workers’ protections. In the late 1990s, many students and faculty expressed concern and began questioning how workers abroad were being treated, demanding transparency through grassroots activism.

On the Ground Investigation

The Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) was one of the first groups to jump on board to demand more transparency. They were founded by the United Students Against Sweatshops, a university student activist movement created in the 1990s out of this concern that outsourced college products were not acceptable and needed oversight.

Today the WRC—operating independently from any clothing brands—monitors all University of California apparel supply chains. The WRC investigates workers’ complaints
about active violations, reporting their findings to the UCs (including UCSB) and their partners. The WRC maintains an online public disclosure database full of reports on factories abroad and the various issues facing its workers. They strive to hold corporations accountable publicly and create transparency.

University bookstores, including UCSB, find themselves uniquely positioned in the garment industry to spreadhead brand accountability. According to Vincent DeLaurentis, bookstores are buying, at times, millions of dollars worth of apparel for their universities, and as such, have a large say over the behavior of the brands.

“When a university comes and says we really don’t like the conditions that our apparel is being made, it doesn’t reflect our university values. So we’re going to cut our $10 million contract, then a brand really starts to listen, and then a brand starts to change the conditions in the factories,” said Laurentis, Director of Outreach at the Worker Rights Consortium.

UCSB’s bookstore operates similarly to independent businesses, with responsibility for their own revenue and marketability. Although the licensing codes of conduct are decided by the UC, individual campus bookstores have the responsibility of making deals for products. Bookstores have the challenge of getting brands to accept the ethical terms from the UC.

When it comes to the most severe forms of labor violation—like child labor or forced labor, in most instances—universities are able to pretty much eliminate those out of their supply chains, according to DeLaurentis. However, the WRC is a small inspector in a sea of factories built to prioritize production. According to DeLaurentis, at almost any garment factory in the world right now, the WRC could probably find some violations of worker rights—building safety violations or payment disparities.

“Regardless, you’re going to walk into a factory, and you’re going to find something like that because the industry is structured in such a way to set up incentives for factories to take advantage of workers in those ways,” DeLaurentis said.

“These decisions about ethical standards should be all made on campus and out of campus culture.”
Maintaining University Standards

The broadest claims being made in these codes of conduct are at the moment largely aspirational, according to Kennedy. It is unclear if or when bookstores like UCSB’s, intend to push brands to better wages and factory conditions abroad, in complete compliance with their own self-prescribed guidelines. Benefits must constitute a “fair/living wage,” which requires meeting the basic needs for the worker and two dependents, stated in the Licensing Code of Conduct. But according to DeLaurentis, WRC investigations make it clear that the vast majority of workers at these brand’s affiliate factories are not receiving those wages.

When they’re written in such a way as to be broad, the conduct gives the university potential leverage in how they deal with the brands and deal with the factories, DeLaurentis explained. These codes of conduct are tools of enforcement that allow the university to legally hold brands accountable to higher ethical agreements. They also ensure that the WRC can conduct investigations and find remediations when violations do occur.

The WRC continues to find workers’ rights at risk and in violation. DeLaurentis postulates that there needs to be these legally enforceable agreements, similar to the licensing agreement of the UC, at a governmental and international level. Agreements would allow real enforcement mechanisms that can require the brands to act in particular ways rather than relying on their goodwill.

Time and again, standards are raised when students and faculty actively push the university to fulfill its image as a progressive and ethical institution. “These decisions about ethical standards should be all made on campus and out of campus culture,” Kennedy said.

Significant tragedies shaped the responses of most universities and licensees. She noted the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh, where over 1000 people died when a factory collapsed, leading to mass public outcry. Kennedy remarks that the clothing industry and university licensing have been preoccupied solely with fixing human rights issues, but they haven’t spent a lot of time monitoring whether each licensee is measuring its own greenhouse gas emissions.

“We hear more and more from students that sustainability, not just social and human rights, but also environmental is more and more important,” Kennedy said.

While workers abroad may be protected in factories, the communities they live in are being pillaged by chemicals and ransacked of natural resources. According to Kennedy, there are currently no sustainability standards asked of brands beyond that they follow the environmental laws of the various countries that their factories are in. UCSB’s 2020 Zero Waste plan has no account for cutting down on the waste generated by UCSB products and merchandise. This waste may not be created on campus, but it is all done bearing the name of the UCSB brand.
University bookstores, including UCSB, find themselves uniquely positioned in the garment industry to spreadhead brand accountability.

UCSB’s Student Store
The UCSB bookstore takes ethical standards and sustainability as a factor in creating partnerships, along with quality, price, and marketability, according to Mark Beisecker, Director of the UCSB bookstore. As a result, brands have begun finding new ways to make their products more sustainable. “More and more vendors are using water bottles to be part of their fabrication. So it’s definitely something that we look for when we attend a trade show,” said Carole Dreste, Associate Director of the UCSB bookstore.

The collegiate market does not appeal to every brand. Beisecker explains that many partners have ended their contracts because they found the standards required in creating UCSB merch not worth their time. At the beginning of the implementation of the WRC, a lot of companies were opposed, according to Kennedy. They said conducting business would be too difficult and all their suppliers would be stolen. But none of that came true. It just helped everyone on the supply chain have transparency.

In spite of this, the UCSB bookstore has created long-lasting relationships with companies that are open and agreeable with the UC’s long list of licensing standards, with Dreste citing brands such as Champion and Under Armour. “A lot of the larger brands, they’ve chosen to just go all-in on us, because they see the value in both short term and long term. I would say that, surprisingly, some of the bigger, more recognized brands are really going full speed ahead with this and I think it’s a really good strategy for them because obviously then that opens up the door for us as well,” Beisecker said.

Despite the imperfections of the clothing industry, Beisecker knows firsthand that there are brands, like Jostens, going the extra mile to evolve new methods of developing their products. “We buy exclusively from them the undergrad regalia. And that’s sourced 100% from sustainable forests that they actually grow,” Beisecker said. “The gowns
are made from windfall from the trees that they produce in their fast-growing forest, right down to the zippers, it's all compostable.”

The UC system at large has the leverage to push brands even further to meet their claims that all products and apparel are made by companies that meet a basic standard from the Trademark and Licensing Code of Conduct: respect for the unique intrinsic value of each worker. Claims of ethics, human welfare, and sustainability still need to be pursued through actionable change.

“If students, faculty, and staff are asking questions, that sends a powerful signal to brands and bookstores,” Kennedy remarked.

From clothing to keychains, UCSB merchandise all comes from somewhere. These pieces of pride and memorabilia are a valuable way to show school spirit but should not come at the negative expense of the ethical and moral standards professed by UCSB. Consumers are not afforded the transparency around the impact of our choices on places around the world. Pushing for answers and creating a culture of accountability in UCSB’s relationship with brands and students can advance an agenda that centers on the global consequences created by clothing.
SCOOT OVER, DOORDASH

THE duffl AND Snag DELIVERY DILEMMA

WORDS // KATELYN KATZ
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // DYLAN LASHER
THE UNEXPECTED TRANSITION TO an Isla Vista plagued with COVID was accompanied by the rise of innovative start-ups. Among these businesses are Snag and Duffl: two popular third-party electric scooter delivery services known for their extremely quick delivery and expansive inventory.

According to the company’s website, Snag is a 10-minute delivery service for Isla Vista residents. Duffl, however, also delivers to other schools in California and has a broader definition, labeling itself as “your one-stop shop for groceries, snacks, and toiletries delivered sustainably.” Snag and Duffl, seemingly almost identical in service and presentation, have spent months attempting to win over the popularity of the Isla Vista masses. From collaborations with sororities and campus clubs to expanding their hours ever-so-slightly, the two companies pull out all of the stops to win popular vote. But at the end of the day, most Isla Vista residents have decided their favorite and feel strongly about their choice. The polarizing debate of the local favorite delivery service app barters the question: Which service aligns with your beliefs and values?

Each individual may have a different reason for casting their support—depending on which service they feel is faster or more sustainable. To make an educated decision on whether to buy your yerba or a late-night ice cream carton from one of the two services, it’s essential to know the facts, personalities, and inner workings of the two companies.

Seniors Jacob Duijrs and Mason Cohen created Snag last year in a small studio on the 67 block of Pasado with a few friends. “Every day felt like the Superbowl when we got orders,” said Jerry Lawson, an early Snag developer. “We didn’t know what we were doing, but it felt like we were on to something.” These three students and their team invested money into the project to fund their way into the mainstream Isla Vista market. Lawson noted that funding was, and still is, all internal from the Isla Vista community buying products.
In the fall of 2021, Snag partnered with Keg’n’Bottle, an IV liquor store, to become the primary service to deliver alcohol. Being the only IV delivery service to sell alcohol, Snag focuses on getting everyone the cheapest booze in the fastest time—competing with DoorDash and GoPuff. Many students choose Snag initially for this reason alone, especially in a tight pinch on a Friday night.

On the other hand, Duffl was originally a start-up that began at UCLA in 2019. When the company received $1.5 million in pitch investments and decided to branch out, Jason Douglas and Shadmehr GitiForoz, two UCSB seniors, knew they needed to bring Duffl to IV. Duffl is known for its orange delivery bags containing handwritten personal notes, curated for each individual order. This personal touch is a significant reason why some Isla Vista residents prefer Duffl over Snag, and it showcases Duffl’s values in an exciting way.

“We love what we do, and we love who we do it for. We think that’s reflected out to our customers. We hope the people at home are having a kick out of it, but when we’re at the store, and someone writes a hilarious bag, we eat that right up,” Shadmehr said. “We are all a group of friends working, and we all have a great time.”

Duffl prides themselves on their mission of being a net-zero carbon emission company. They dip into their budget to use expensive recyclable paper bags, and they have a limited selection of plastic products as well as eco-friendly products like bamboo toothbrushes. In the near future, Duffl is working with a few IV and UCSB clubs to establish eco-friendly, environmentally sustainable pushes in the town. Similarly, Snag teamed up with the IV Surfrider club, an ocean protection group, by collaborating on a fundraiser concert in spring of 2021. Snag provided a discount code for the event, and 10 percent of the proceeds went to IV Surfrider.

Choosing which service to support begs the question of whether or not each service has viability, or plans to maintain or develop upon their companies. The unfortunate reality of Snag and Duffl
is their arrival in the wake of at least 5 businesses closing due to COVID. Aladdin Cafe, where Snag now resides, had been a part of the Isla Vista landscape for six years before closing in 2020. Inherent in IV business is the added burden of pressures like higher retail rent with only a fraction of the Goleta market. While businesses have high revenue expectations in a dense location like IV, the school cycle leads to massive slows during periods like winter and summer break. College students are a uniquely challenging target audience, with barriers like less disposable income often preventing them from purchase. Hopefully, with each company devoting time and effort towards an upgraded menu of items and collaborations within the community, they will thrive even more in future years.

While Snag boasts about its IV roots and commitment to local businesses, Duffl prides itself on creating a small community of co-workers, although they didn’t begin in UCSB. Both businesses are backed by college students who genuinely care about the work environment as well as their loyal customers and love the back and forth rivalry. Ultimately, each individual will have a unique and exciting perspective on why they prefer Snag over Duffl, or Duffl over Snag. As the two businesses continue to grow and cultivate into Isla Vista culture, the polarization will only grow, along with the passion of each business’s loyal followers. Now, with everything laid out on the table... will your delivery bag be orange or red?
PARTIALLY BLIND BILLIONAIRE
Charlie Munger can’t seem to understand what the big deal is about needing a living space with windows. Munger Hall has received national headlines and mass backlash for its unique and daunting design which would house 4,500 students—most of whom would have no access to direct sunlight. The unlicensed architect promises his design is so great, students will want to spend as little time inside it as possible. He doesn’t see the issue with windowless single-occupancy bedrooms. “It’s quite endurable,” Munger insisted from his beachside mansion in Montecito.

Ego-driven mega-structures meant to warehouse thousands of humans are just the thing to get UCSB’s reputation back on track. The 1.2 billion dollar social experiment would house 221,000 people per square mile, making it the eighth densest neighborhood in the world, narrowly trailing a district in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This out-of-this-world design is the latest and greatest in spaceship architecture. With some bedrooms being over 200 feet from the nearest window, Munger Hall makes the Death Star look like Oceanside DP.

The boomer billionaire remarked that the “idiots” who defected against his marvelous design need to “open their eyes.” UCSB’s own Ministry of Truth announced that the design was almost as stunning as the 200 million dollar check Munger wrote for it.

Munger remarked that once the building was finished students would go so ape-shit for it they would never want to leave, not that they’d be able to of course in the event of a fire, landslide, or earthquake. W
AND OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE

Banners of Isla Vista

PHOTOGRAPHY // BRENTON HASLAM
ERYN KROUSE IS YOUR typical Gaucho. Cool, upbeat, laid back, ambitious—she embodies what it means to be a UCSB student. If you’re anything like me, then you may already know her. I googled “A day in the life at UCSB” long before I ever stepped foot on campus, and Eryn’s infamous vlog gave me (and nearly 2 million others) the perfect taste of IV life.

Eryn graduated three years ago and has a lot to show for it. She’s molded her good vibe and work ethic into an extremely successful travel influencing career. Brands like Sunbum, Roxy, and Jeep round off her long list of credentials.

We could all learn a thing or two from Eryn about how to channel a UCSB degree into our future careers—whether in digital media, microbiology, or economics. I sat down with her, Gaucho to Gaucho, to talk work, life, and everything UCSB.

The quarter system takes no prisoners. Eryn explained that with looming papers and mountains of readings, every week presented a new challenge during her time in IV. Striking a balance between self care and academic achievement can be a tough line for anyone to walk. Managing modeling and social media on top of it all, Eryn chose a disciplined approach to keep herself in check. “Because I was really strict on myself, and got everything done before it was due, I had that freedom to go out and to surf and to go on my modeling shoots wherever they were. I really pushed myself to get everything done on time,” she said.

And sometimes, doing what feels good for yourself doesn’t align with following the crowd. If blackouts and hangovers aren’t your thing, you’re not alone. “I personally wasn’t part of the IV party scene... the reputation that it has kind of scared me,” she said. Eryn acknowledges that being your own person can feel daunting, but she proves that having fun can look
however you want it to. “You really don’t have to fit into whatever people are telling you that you should do,” she said. “You can create your own reality based on what you like.”

Eryn stresses that learning, growing, and building the type of life you love doesn’t end when you walk across the graduation stage. Travel continues to open up her world. “What I really love about traveling is, I call it, the school of life. You learn so many valuable practical skills, like logistically how to get from A to B, but also how to treat people, how to interact with people with different languages and cultural customs,” she noted. “I think it’s such a valuable experience to be able to get out into the world and learn about the places that you’ve only read about in textbooks before.”

Eryn’s not shy about her growth as a content creator, either. Although she’s come a long way since her viral vlog, Eryn continues to grow in her filming, editing, and content creation skills. “From a technical standpoint, I can’t even watch my ‘day in the life’ video from UCSB. There’s so much wrong with it!” she remarked, laughing.

Eryn acknowledges that being your own person can feeling daunting, but she proves that having fun can look however you want it to.

Her Instagram feed may convince you otherwise, but making a career of travel and photography isn’t just sunshine and rainbows. The brands Eryn works with want personally tailored content that remains both true to her aesthetic and promotes their products—not to mention on tight, conflicting deadlines. “Trust me, I’ve had to make it work sometimes. Just make it work!” she advised with a smile. But even with a great work ethic and A+ time management, complete perfection isn’t always possible. “I get really bummed out if I have a deadline and I can’t make the content look the way I want to. I always want to be as authentic to my personal creativity as possible,” Eryn said.

Although Eryn still spends much of her time at the beach catching waves and seeing friends, she admits that nowhere compares to IV living. The saying is true—once a Gaucho, always a Gaucho. “I remember just thinking to myself, this life is not a thing anywhere else. And those moments I’ve treasured so much—just being able to load up my surfboard, go for a surf and it’s all UCSB kids out,” she reminisced. “It’s such a special little bubble and I honestly miss it every single day.”
honey-lavender latte

Illustration + Design // Mahrokht Cornelius

4 Tbsp. Coffee

1/2 Cup Water

1/2 Cup Honey

2 Tbsp. Dried Lavender

Milk of Choice
Bring water to boil in saucepan; stir in honey + dried lavender.

Let sit for 1 hour, then strain mixture + store in fridge.

Add 1 tbsp to strongly brewed coffee + add milk of choice! Enjoy hot or pour over ice.

Store remaining syrup in fridge for up to 2 weeks.
YOU’RE READING IT ALL WRONG
An Ex-Bookworm’s Woes

WORDS // CAITLIN HENDERSON
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // DANIELA GOMEZ

LET’S SET THE SCENE HERE: you were the kid who liked going to the library. You were the kid who would get lost in a YA novel’s pages, spending hours and hours hanging onto every last word of The Hunger Games or Percy Jackson and the Olympians. When you gained Internet access, you might have discovered fanfiction forum sites that your classmates could absolutely never, in a million years, ever learn about (until many years later, when it becomes a funny anecdote for an article).

However, somewhere in the mix, the magic you once experienced from reading at your own pace faded away. There was a day when you set down your last YA novel, and now “reading” is nothing but a warm memory. You keep trying to pick it up again, maybe buying a book with a pretty cover and thinking to yourself, “I would look so cool reading this in a coffee shop.” But it’s not working. Every time you try to pick up that sleek, chic-looking, indie bookshop find, you set it down. The sensation of reading is simply not giving what it used to give.

You talk to other self-proclaimed “bookworms” who seem not to be in this hump. You follow their recommendations, even make a reading list, but it never fully comes to fruition. Reading for fun is now nostalgic, not your present reality.

I couldn’t possibly be referring to myself here, but I hoped more young adults would relate to this hypothetical situation. When I asked a Facebook group of UCSB students to give me their thoughts on the subject, I was met with few, but impassioned responses from fellow disgruntled readers.

“I really love to read, and I used to do it a lot more often when I was younger. That was when I had more time. Back then, I could read at least one book a week, sometimes more—but I also had less responsibilities. These days, it’s like a miracle if I can even read one book in a month,” Melea Maglalang, a third-year Communication major said. “And a lot of the books I read now are pretty short compared to the ones I used to read daily back in like middle school or high school.”

I posted a survey to various social media platforms, and more than half of my respondents claimed they would “like to read more, but don’t.” These respondents
said they had no time, no attention span, or any particular book series that truly captivated them.

“It’s hard to get the motivation to read for fun when most of my time is taken up by reading for class,” one reply said.

To me, this sucks. We’re yearning to do something that we can’t or don’t have the motivation to do. I, too, wondered if having more responsibilities is what made reading for fun so much harder for me now. However, and this may be too vulnerable, my phone’s screen time reported an hour and 25 minutes playing Pokémon GO. I don’t even want to tell you how much time I spent on TikTok. Couldn’t I have spent that time opening up a good book? Reading was supposed to be something to help me relax and take a momentary exit from the crazy world we live in. Reading for fun doesn’t always mean contending with a new philosophy or digesting a dense theoretical concept, it can still be about demigod teenagers on a new quest to find the golden fleece (or maybe we can read about demigod adults now?)

I spoke to Alex Regan and Hannah Rael, who run the UCSB Reads program through the library. UCSB Reads decides on one book for students, faculty, and community members to read together, and has been up and running for 16 years. While the library holds events like film screenings or panel discussions, independent, student-led book clubs take part in the event as well. According to Regan, students may want to read and discuss books but don’t. The quarter system is rough, and there isn’t a ton of time to do what books require of you: to sit down, slow down, and digest the words one by one.

“Books can be a great launching pad for talking about issues that are so important to all of us about our lives. And reading fiction, there’s been a lot of research showing that reading fiction can really create empathy,” Regan said. “I just think it’s a really great starting point to talk about issues that are really important to us. You have a book about climate change, for example. And then before you know it, you’re talking about how climate change impacts your community, and your family, and your future, and maybe what impact you want to have on the world.”

UCSB Reads’ choice of book, starting Winter 2022 quarter, is Exhalation: Stories by Ted Chiang. The UCSB Library will be distributing 2-3,000 free copies of the book to students and classes. Chiang’s book is a collection of fictional short stories that cover science, ethics, artificial intelligence, and the nature of humanity itself. Personally, a collection of short stories may help ease me back into the habit of reading, rather than a dense novel like Dune (we’ll get there).

Reading for fun may not be the answer to all of our problems, but taking a step back and evaluating what’s important to us sure is.

“As important as it is to take care of our academic or professional responsibilities, we should also remember to take care of ourselves,” Magalang said. “Even if it is something small, like maybe you’ll only have time to read one chapter tonight, but in my mind, one chapter is better than zero chapters. I completely understand the feeling of ‘not having enough time,’ and it feels like a lot of pressure when there are so many things that you want to do but are constrained by the limited number of hours in a day.”

Melea’s right, maybe taking some baby steps will save us from impending illiteracy. I should re-read Coraline again.
IDENTIFYING WITH THE DEPRAVED

Ottessa Moshfegh’s Characters Are Deeply Unsettling

WORDS // LEAH SKOYLES
PHOTOGRAPHY // LUCY HOLLEY
DESIGN // ANNA MONZON
EVERY DAY, MR. WU follows the same routine: eat dishes of pork and vegetables for lunch at the little family restaurant, visit the videogame arcade to lust after the middle-aged woman he is in love with, and finally, retire to his bedroom in the neighborhood’s tallest house. When Mr. Wu isn’t doing any of these things, he is either smoking or fantasizing about the local prostitutes.

Mr. Wu is unlikeable, self-important, and vulgar—he’s also a character in Homesick For Another World, a collection of short stories by Ottessa Moshfegh.

All of Moshfegh’s characters are like this—depraved, lonely, and often playing the role of the victim. Yet, somehow I always find myself on their side, rooting for them and even pleading with them to do the right thing in their own story, all while knowing they will not change. With every short story I read in Homesick For Another World, I go through a small heartbreak because it’s hard to accept that no one will have their happy ending.

Interviews with Moshfegh reveal that she does not intend for her characters to be sympathetic or likable. In fact, she revels in misanthropy and shocking the reader with frequent descriptions of bodily excretions, famously describing her stories as like “seeing Kate Moss take a shit.” She does not come across as particularly modest—Moshfegh knows she’s a brilliant writer who has won her share of awards, with degrees from Brown and Barnard. However, she maintains a dispassionate demeanor, calling it like it is and unafraid to disenchant her fans, similar to the characters she conjures.

The unnamed antihero of “My Year of Rest and Relaxation” is similarly candid about her assets. She is rich, thin, blonde, tall, and lives in a beautiful apartment in New York City; however, she is also boring and bored. Her redeeming qualities are only surface level, and the more you get to know her, the colder and crueler she becomes. She has convinced herself that in order to rid herself of cynicism and apathy, she must sleep for a year straight, which she intends to do by taking cocktails of prescription drugs.

Since the story is written from the protagonist’s stream of consciousness, the reader is privy to every thought that crosses her mind. She is hateful and narcissistic, treating her only friend, Reva, with indifference, and revealing only her nastiest side to the world. She recounts the time she defecated on the floor of a swanky art museum after being fired for sleeping in the supply closet and continually tricks her quack psychologist into prescribing her sleeping pills. One of these pills, Intermiterol, induces three-day blackouts in which she carries out the role of the rich, beautiful girl in the city, attending bizarre parties and spending thousands at luxury department stores. We are fed only the slimmest piece of compassion when the protagonist reveals her sadness at her father’s death and the lack of support from her mother. She plays
the role of the martyr so well that, as the reader, you begin to resonate with her ugly thoughts. You share in her hatred of Reva and her constant complaining, even though in the grand scheme of things, Reva is her only source of emotional support and intimacy.

The novel is delivered as comic, but reading it doesn’t make you want to laugh. The cartoonish psychiatrist, Dr. Tuttle, and Reva’s penchant for self-help manuals provide some relief, but the veil of humor is too transparent—giving way to the deep depression and meaninglessness that haunts each character’s life. The protagonist’s illusion of beauty and privilege reveals much about the clutches of mental illness: it doesn’t spare anyone.

Moshfegh’s characters revel in the ugly and grotesque, yet somehow remain accessible because they serve as a reflection of our own darkest thoughts—the characters in ourselves that we do not dare reveal to the world. The reader is drawn in by the possibility of reconciliation as the characters yearn for betterment and connection, but is always let down in the end when Moshfegh unceremoniously lets their selfish, baser instincts get the better of them. It feels as though if you were to take your eyes off the page for a moment, these characters would come to life—and honestly, I’m not sure I’d want them to.
WORD MAGAZINE
INT 185ST
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This issue of WORD: Isla Vista Arts & Culture Magazine is brought to you by the student artists and writers in INT 185ST and its partner SEAL campus organization. We welcome new writers, designers, photographers and artists from all majors.

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