

THE DIAMONDBACK PRESENTS

# 2021 LOOKING BACK

THE SENIOR SEND-OFF ISSUE



TESTUDO



## TO MY FELLOW SENIORS,

*This year was weird. Honestly, it was more than weird — it was exhausting, frustrating and full of grief. Simply put, this senior year is not what the class of 2021 expected when we first stepped foot on the University of Maryland's campus.*

*But I hope you take a moment to celebrate yourself and to reflect on your years at UMD, whether you're eagerly counting down the days before you can step out into the real world or you're wishing time would slow down just a little bit.*

*The Diamondback's Looking Back issue is dedicated to commemorating the experiences that made the class of 2021 what it is, from the construction projects we sidestepped and the snacks we bought at the Commons Shop to the senior memories we sadly missed out on.*

*This year's graduation is a cause for true celebration. It's amazing what you all have done, and you deserve recognition. So, congratulations. I can't wait to see what you all do out there.*



DAISY GRANT  
2020-21 EDITOR IN CHIEF

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### THE DIAMONDBACK

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independent  
since 1971.

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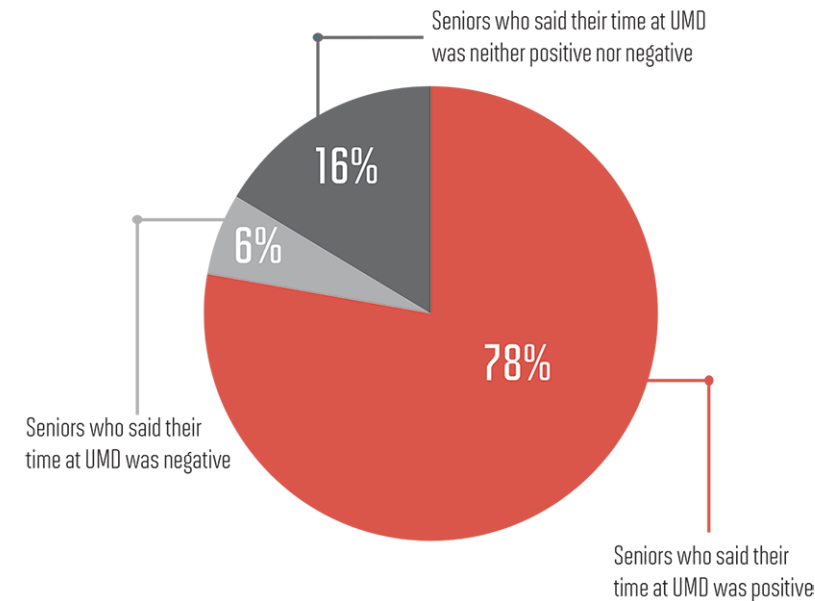


# SENIOR SURVEY

The Diamondback sent out an online survey on social media platforms this month to gauge seniors' feelings as they prepare to graduate. There were 68 respondents.

By Rina Torchinsky | @rinatorchi | Senior staff writer

Do you look back at your time at UMD in a positive or negative light?



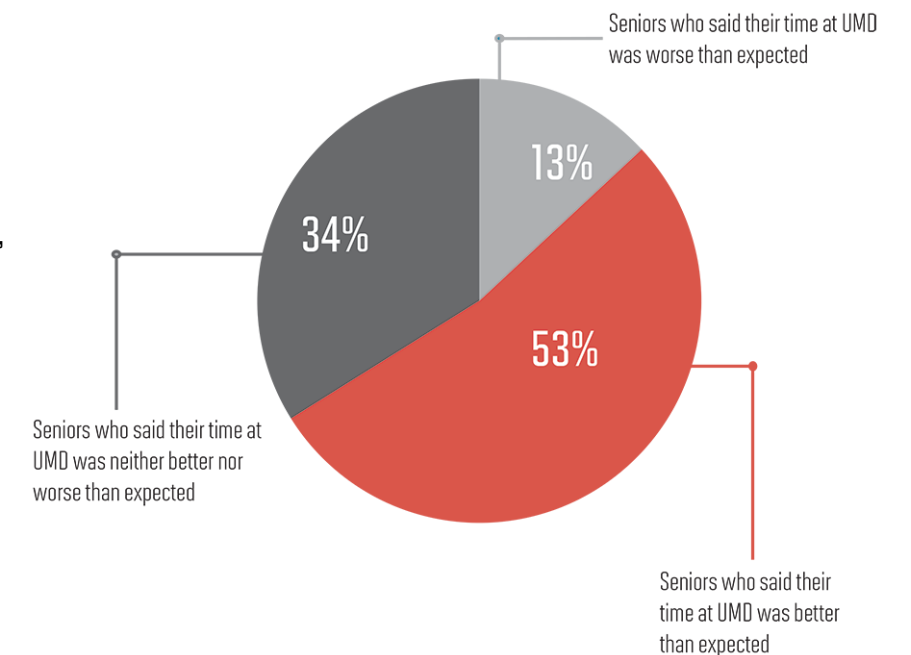
What will you miss the most about your time at UMD?

“BEING within walking distance of some of my favorite people”

“I WILL MISS hanging out on the mall on a nice day with hundreds of other students doing the exact same thing.”

“BEING a small fish in a big and intellectual pond. Also, Marathon fries!”

How did your time at UMD compare with your expectations?



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WHIRLWIND BROAD FULFILLING ENRICHING TRANSFORMATION/  
DISAPPOINTING OPPORTUNISTIC FANTASTIC, WITH SOME HARDSHIP  
WEIRD EXCITING COMPULSORY ENGAGING TERPMazing!  
GROWTH FULL SATISFACTORY OVERPRICED SHORT  
TUMULTUOUS OKAY UNFORGETTABLE  
REWARDING UNUSUAL INTERESTING



# SENIOR ARTISTS

*Seniors share how art has shaped their college experience — whether they are an art major or if art has simply continued to be a part of their life.*

By Amanda Hernández | @amandavhernan | Senior staff writer



SEVERAL of Shelby Goodman's paintings. ART COURTESY OF SHELBY GOODMAN

You're not really learning that self-expression part," the senior studio art major said.

For some student artists at this university, art programs have taught them basic techniques and design principles — but it's ultimately up to the artists to allow themselves to blossom into the artists they want to be. That path, however, isn't always straight and narrow, and now, senior artists are reflecting on how their passion developed during their time in college.

Nia Parks' art studio in Baltimore is anything but ordinary. Three large tables covered with vibrant paint colors, markers, paint brushes and newsprint adorn the small space.

And though some may call that space messy, it's where the mixed media artist makes her one-of-a-kind pieces.

Parks' work largely consists of mixing different mediums such as paint, old project scraps and found objects to create something new. She said the work reflects the "artistic freedom" she had to find while in the University of Maryland's studio art program.

"In art school, you're not really learning that creative aspect.

Parks ingrained herself in art during her elementary school years. When she started, she said that passion came from a place where she needed to find her voice. Her parents were divorced, and as the youngest child of six, she recalled it was difficult to have her voice heard and express her feelings.

Now, after spending her childhood in Baltimore and moving through college, art has become a vital part of who Parks is. "Every piece of art that I do ... it's an expression of your everyday life, it's an expression of who you are," she said.

Earlier this year, she won first place in the Sadat Art for Peace competition, which is held annually and allows students to submit art that encapsulates peace and reconciliation.

This year's competition focused on the Black Lives Matter movement, and in her piece, Parks highlighted the history of



police brutality and violence in this country.

"As an African American artist ... I definitely felt compelled to participate this year," she said. "There's room in abstraction to evoke thoughts for other people."

One day, Parks hopes to have her own solo art show, but until then, she plans to work on networking with other artists and curators, visiting more exhibitions in Baltimore and getting more eyes on her work.

It took Parks six years to reach graduation due to personal reasons, she said, but during that time, the growth was unimaginable.

"I learned a lot about presence like showing up and being engaged," she said. "Having to make sure I show up, and not



SHELBY GOODMAN outside the Iribe Center on April 18, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

just kind of relying on talent, but showing up and being present in the moment, and taking advantage of every opportunity."

\*\*\*

Daniel Merkowitz-Bustos began his pursuit of the arts through videos he made as a child.

It wasn't until high school that he started to take art more seriously and added photography to the mix. And when the time for college came around, he decided to major in computer science and studio art — a path he chose because he likes "creating," whether that means coding programs or making artwork.

Entering college, Merkowitz-Bustos wanted to pursue digital art but instead decided to make sculptures after a class he took. To make his sculptures, Merkowitz-Bustos uses a process that requires welding, cutting metal and casting.

"It's really hands-on, and it's a really unique opportunity," he said.

Although his work largely consists of metal sculptures, Merkowitz-Bustos is also expanding his mediums. He most recently worked with tulle, a fabric commonly used to make ballet tutus or wedding dresses, to explore the duality of masculinity. He said he has incorporated tulle into "darker, tougher" sculptures to examine this idea.

"I'm kind of just trying to distill this idea of a man can be ... anything he wants to be," he said.

Merkowitz-Bustos wants to focus on careers in computer science and sculpture, but he hasn't decided which path he'll choose. If he knew for certain he would succeed as a sculptor, he would jump right into art, he said.

"As I create more, I discover more what I'm trying to say," he said. "None of these themes or rhythms are completely concrete in my work yet, but it's just things I'm thinking about and discovering as I continue to make [art]."

\*\*\*

Shelby Goodman decided to major in public health science — but her field has collided with her artwork.

In one of her classes, she was tasked with designing an Instagram campaign to tackle suicide among men. Her knowl-

edge of design principles and other visual art techniques made it easier for her to craft an overall visually appealing campaign, she said.

"Being able to use my ability to create artwork that's aesthetically pleasing and visually captures the audience's attention is really meaningful to me," Goodman said.

Goodman is also from Baltimore, and she began her art journey around the age of eight or nine. She would watch step-by-step YouTube videos that instructed viewers how to draw animated characters.


In high school, she focused on photography and oil painting, but she took a particular interest in working with oil paints, which extended into college.

Goodman often paints for hours on end, sometimes spending over 10 hours a day in her Baltimore home's basement studio. Her older paintings decorate her basement's white walls, juxtaposing the paint stains in the carpet.

"[The studio is] a part of the fun," she said. "It really tells its own story."

With graduation approaching, Goodman plans to take a gap year or two before heading off to school to be a physician's assistant — but she said her art background lends itself well to her interest in public health.

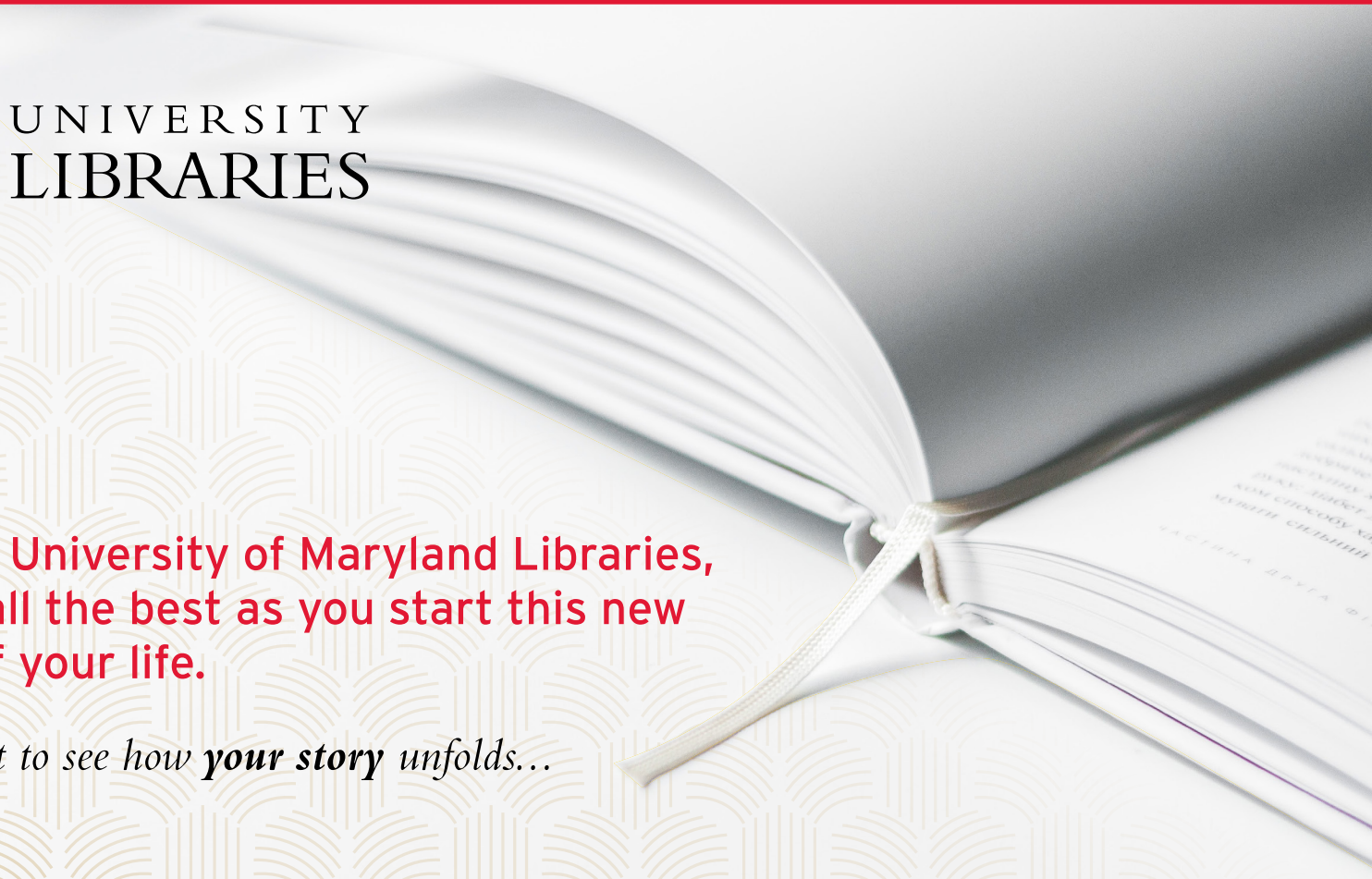
"Being able to incorporate both into my life has been really rewarding to me because when I create a piece of artwork I feel like there's like a personal aspect attached to it," she said. [diversionsdbk@gmail.com](mailto:diversionsdbk@gmail.com)



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*We can't wait to see how **your story** unfolds...*





# “NOT WHAT I EXPECTED”

*Seniors reflect on leaving college during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

By Jenn Attanasio and Christine Zhu | @attanasio\_jenn and @christinezhu142 | Staff writers



GABRIELLA MELENDEZ outside South Campus Commons on April 16, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

Gabriella Melendez said she’s felt every emotion as a senior whose last year of college has taken place during the coronavirus pandemic.

For the most part, the year has been emotionally draining, she said. And even when she and her roommates are enjoying their time together, they remember what they’re missing out on in their senior year, like getting on the Jumbotron at basketball games and attending NextNOW Fest or Art Attack.

“You have this idea of what your college experience is going to be, especially your senior year,” said Melendez, an English major. “And when the result is this, it takes a lot not to just break down and cry and just mourn something that should’ve been.”

The pandemic has left seniors at the University of Maryland resigned to the fact that they will be unable to finish their college careers in a pandemic-free year.

And now, as they head toward graduation, the seniors are reflecting on their unprecedented last year of college: what they missed, what they wanted to do and what they cherished.

Anne Zappas said she never expected her senior year to end this way when the pandemic began last year.

While at school, she has formed a “bubble” with her roommates and friends, allowing them to get closer in a way that wouldn’t have been possible before the pandemic. Still, she has had difficulty coming to terms with how her time at this university will end.

“I was relieved that I had the opportunity to come back, because I know that some schools didn’t allow people back in August,” said Zappas, an information systems and management major. “I sort of tried to become as flexible as possible and sort of begrudgingly make the best of it.”

Grace Deleon, a behavioral and community health major, was studying abroad in Europe last spring when this university suspended all spring study abroad programs.

She said she’s had the classic college experience she’s always wanted: clubs, work and friends. But she wishes she’d slowed down and been “more intentional.”

“Walking to class with friends or sitting in the library studying — we can’t do that for a while now,” Deleon said. “I wish I had soaked up more of those little moments.”

In a similar vein, Melendez misses bumping into friends

between classes. She said she has realized she took those small interactions for granted, because of how easy it was to catch up.

Recently, she ran into someone she hadn’t seen in a while, and her immediate desire was to hug them and ask how their day was. But she couldn’t.

“Just being able to see people and see how they’re doing ... that’s definitely something I miss,” she said.

For Simran Bhattacharyya, an international student from India, the isolation was different than most — many of her friends and family are halfway across the globe. Her dad is in the U.S., she said, but she hasn’t seen her mom or other family members since the pandemic started.

“That had an effect on my mental health,” said Bhattacharyya, a psychology major.

The disruption of plans has been a common thread among seniors.

Because a lot of Bhattacharyya’s friends aren’t on campus, she hasn’t been able to meet up with them as much.

“I’m a very social person, so it’s been hard to find things that I enjoy and compensate for the things I’ve been missing out on in my senior year,” Bhattacharyya said. “It’s not what I expected it to be.”

Ayman Amdad has tried to socialize in a safe way. He and his friends like to go sit outside and eat at Looney’s Pub or other places around the city.

“It sucks that COVID kind of ruined the last semester, but UMD, with their COVID testing and everything, is really doing their best,” said Amdad, an environmental



GABRIELLA MELENDEZ pre-pandemic. PHOTO COURTESY OF GABRIELLA MELENDEZ



ANNE ZAPPAS on McKeldin Mall on April 15, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

engineering major.

And through it all, some seniors are still worried about their future.

Kathleen Hamilton-Campos, an astronomy and physics major, is waiting to hear whether she’s gotten into graduate school — something she’s wanted to do since she was 5 years old.

Melendez has also applied to a few graduate schools, but she said she’s unsure what will happen after graduation. Not knowing is the worst part, she said.

“Before the pandemic, I was a person who planned everything,” Melendez said. “So to have this situation that completely flips the table and you’re not exactly sure what to expect, it makes it scary.”

As for Deleon, she’s hoping to continue at the Association



ANNE ZAPPAS pre-pandemic. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE ZAPPAS



SIMRAN BHATTACHARYYA outside South Campus Commons on April 16, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

of State and Territorial Health Officials, where she works as a social and behavioral health intern. But this transition from college isn’t what she wanted it to be.

“I spent so much time trying to get to the finish line and trying to graduate and kind of start my life, and now I’m here,” Deleon said. “And it’s nothing that I expected.” These changes have forced seniors to adapt.

Aside from small graduation parties, the usual commencement celebrations — such as the senior bar crawl — are off the table due to the pandemic. But the class is finding its own way to spend their last few weeks as college students.

For instance, Zappas said she plans to have more “family dinners” at home with her roommates. Hamilton-Campos wants to come to the campus to go bowling in TerpZone more often, she said — something she’s recently done for the first time.

These little moments are some parts of the pandemic that seniors have cherished.

Hamilton-Campos, for example, has seen her socializing increase during the pandemic.

“Everyone is kind of starved for some sort of socialization, so we’ve been planning a lot of game nights and workshops,” Hamilton-Campos added. “It’s been nice because that’s a really good excuse to see my friends in a less formal setting.”

And as for Melendez, even though the year was not at all what she expected — or hoped — it would be like, she was still able to spend time with her friends.

Melendez and her friends considered taking a semester off given how different campus life would be. But in the

end, they wound up graduating this semester — all because of each other.

“Even if it’s not going to be the most traditional college experience, we would all be together and try to finish it off at the same time,” she said.

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SIMRAN BHATTACHARYYA pre-pandemic. PHOTO COURTESY OF SIMRAN BHATTACHARYYA





CUSTOMERS exit the Commons Shop on April 18, 2021. For many University of Maryland students, the convenience store is a reliable source of tasty treats and a key part of treasured campus memories. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

It's the first day of 2021 that feels like spring, and a group of freshmen are clustered around the picnic table outside the Commons Shop at the University of Maryland.

One girl, dressed almost entirely in powder blue, is wearing a pair of her mother's old capris. She's eaten half of a strawberry popsicle. A boy is sporting the Maryland state flag on his mask. Around them, cherry blossom petals whisk the air, filling it with sweetness.

Four years ago, I was on the other side of this vignette: candy or chips in hand, a group of people I didn't yet know standing around me.

And yet, inexplicably, one constant has remained with me: the Commons Shop. I've lived near the shop for four years, and it feels as close to home as a convenience store can. It's located down the stairs next to the South Campus Dining Hall. Inside, a menagerie of items, both

trivial and essential, awaits.

I'm biased, but I've always thought a particular warmth infuses the shop — the kind specific to late-night establishments.

And I'm not the only one who feels sentimental.

For Halle Parigian, who graduated in December as an English major, the shop was more than a convenience — it was a ritual. During her sophomore year, Parigian lived in Prince Frederick Hall, minutes away from the quaint shop. After her class ended at 4:45 p.m., Parigian and about seven friends would meet at the dining hall, sometimes for as long as three hours. Afterward, they'd hit the Commons Shop.

"We'd always do the same route, we'd start at the beginning, go all the way to the back, to the frozen, vegan food," Parigian said. "And then we'd loop back around, acting as if we didn't know what we were gonna get."

This is what they got: a bag of salt and vinegar chips or the occasional spicy pickle for Parigian, and vegan chicken nuggets for her roommate. They spent so much time in the shop that Parigian felt the people at the counter recognized her.

Earlier this month, I caught Taylor Gallihue, a senior sociology and women's studies major, on her way out of the shop. She'd just bought popcorn and Flamin' Hot Cheetos in anticipation of a movie night. Her usual, she said, was a caffeine-free mango iced tea.

When Gallihue lived in Anne Arundel Hall, she would frequent the shop after dinner or late at night. That's when she and her friends discovered the iced tea.

"Now it's like a meme, we kind of drink it all the time," Gallihue said.

And it's not just people who are graduating or graduated who hold the shop in high regard.



A NEON SIGN advertising bagels outside the Commons Shop on April 18, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK



A NEON SIGN advertising sandwiches outside the Commons Shop on April 18, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK



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Celia Cook is a junior English and psychology major living in Queen Anne's Hall this year. A self-identified picky eater, Cook said trips to the dining hall have become stressful. But at the Commons Shop, Cook's stresses melt away. She likes the sparkling apple juice at the back of the store.

For Cook, the Commons Shop is a spot for comfort — and, sometimes, romance.

Last November, right before Thanksgiving, Cook met another student on Tinder, and asked if he wanted to go on a walk. He agreed. They met up on a chilly evening and did a "Tour de France" of campus. As the date stretched past midnight, neither Cook nor her date quite felt like ending it. So Cook suggested they stop at the shop for some hot chocolate. They ended up getting Pop-Tarts instead.

The shop also has food for heartbreak. During Cook's sophomore year, she and her then-boyfriend broke up at the North Campus Dining Hall. After, they took a somber walk and officially split ways at McKeldin Library. Cook continued alone and found herself back at the Commons Shop. There, she purchased "as much ice cream as possible," continued to a friend's place and "dissolved into tears."

As a close observer of the Commons Shop's fare, I've often wondered at the logic behind which items stay and which items go. The shop has a wide variety of both ordinary and esoteric products. In the past year, the selection of ramen and flavored Pocky has exploded.

Clarence Patterson, the general manager of convenience shops on the campus, said the

items in the stores are chosen intentionally — and there are, indeed, more variations of ramen than in years past. The old flavors, Patterson said, felt "tired." He wanted to branch out — and he encourages the people who work at the shops to get creative with the products they choose.

As for his personal preferences, Patterson's a fan of Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

The Commons Shop is, as my friend and fellow senior history major, Oscar Saywell, puts it, "an oasis." When Saywell was a junior, he switched from a full meal plan to a subsidized one. With fewer opportunities to go to the dining hall, Saywell refocused his energy on the shop around the corner.

"I would just frequent it when I was snacky at night... Pringles, something like that. And it fills a hole, you know?" Saywell said. He soon became "obsessed."

But it's not just the brief dopamine hit generated by specialty items at the Commons Shop that does the job — for students, it's mostly about who they're with. On late nights, the people are the most compelling part: the employees, huddled in conversation or solitude behind the counter; the groups of students clustered around snack kiosks, whispering and wasting time until their responsibilities call them back home.

"Whether it's hanging out at the dining hall or going to the Commons Shop," Parigian said, "all of that is centered around the friends that I have."

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# SLICES OF LIFE

*No one could have predicted the past year. But despite all the turmoil and fatigue, seniors are graduating this May with a handful of quintessential college experiences — including finding what makes them happy.*

By Angela Roberts and Clara Longo de Freitas | @24\_angier and @claralfreitas | Senior staff writers



FELIX RINGLAND AND DIEGO MENDEZ outside South Campus Commons on April 12, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

## BEST BUDS

Before committing to the University of Maryland, Felix Ringland and Diego Mendez weren't too close, even though they went to the same high school and had some mutual friends. But when the living and learning program they'd both chosen — Global Communities — sent around a list of prospective roommates, they recognized each other's names.

"One of us texted the other, I forget who," Ringland said, "But it was like, 'Hey, wanna room —'"

"It was definitely me," Mendez cut in. Ringland laughed. "I was like, 'Yeah sounds good. And then we didn't talk at all for, like, the rest of the summer.'"

But when they moved into Eltkon Hall in the fall, they became friends immediately.

Three years later, they're still living with each other — and most of their friends are people they met in Global Communities.

"Once we got going, the train never really stopped," Ringland said.

It helped that they were all soccer fans, though they have different allegiances. Ringland and Mendez are both Arsenal loyalists, and they live with a Liverpool fanatic and a Manchester United supporter.

"If there was an opportunity for things to go south, that would be it," Ringland said.

Ringland and Mendez say their friendship has changed over the last four years as they've grown up. Ringland studied abroad for a semester in Copenhagen, "so Diego had a couple months to flourish on his own," he said, making Mendez chuckle.

After graduation, Ringland will head to New York City to work at a marketing firm. Mendez will be working for PepsiCo but

doesn't know where he'll be stationed. It could be New York, he said.

"We're all crossing our fingers," Ringland chimed in. "We're hoping to triple down and go for roomies part three."

## THE TWINS

Nina and Neil Agrawal didn't want to go to the same college. But the twins both wound up deciding — individually — to come to College Park.

Still, the siblings have carved out their own places on campus. They've found their own friends, joined different clubs and, though they're both in the engineering school, they have different majors — Nina studies computer engineering and Neil studies aerospace engineering.

But when they were living on campus (they've been back at home since the pan-

demic broke out), their worlds still collided.

"Oh! Tell them that story when I didn't text mom," Nina told Neil.

"Wait, what?"

"Do you remember that time when I didn't text mom 'good morning,' and she freaked out?"

"Yeah!" Neil said as Nina burst out laughing. "So, this one's crazy"

In the middle of class one morning during his freshman year, Neil said, his phone started going off. It was his mom — Nina hadn't texted that morning in their family group chat, and she was convinced that something had gone wrong. So, Neil dashed across campus to Nina's dorm and banged on her door until her roommate answered — and told him that Nina was in class.

"I was like, 'Well, I guess I just wasted 40 minutes of my time trying to figure out if this girl is dead when really she just forgot to text good morning,'" he said. "That's probably not the quality of story that you want in this edition, but that's the story I'm gonna give you today."

In the end, Nina and Neil said they don't feel like their relationship has changed too much over the last four years. They probably would have gotten closer if they had wound up going to different schools, Neil said.

"Just because we've spent so much time together, I have no reason or want or need to get closer to you right now, I'll be honest with you," he said as Nina cracked up. "And I mean that in a nice way"

"You know, when you don't know a single minute of life without your twin ...," Nina started. "Well, actually, no, he's a minute older."

"Yeah, I don't know a single minute without her," Neil said.

"Well, you know one minute," Nina reminded him.

"One minute," Neil said.

And they broke out into laughter.



NINA AND NEIL AGRAWAL after their high school graduation. PHOTO COURTESY OF NINA AND NEIL AGRAWAL

## PUPPY LOVE

They thought it was behavioral issues at first.

In Molly Oertel's second semester of her sophomore year, she started training a young black lab for Terps Raising Pups — the school's chapter of the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind. But as the puppy got older, he stopped wanting to walk anywhere. He started running into things and when he played fetch, he couldn't find his toys.

She soon found out why: he was losing his sight.

"So, he was like a guide dog gone blind," she said. "And that sounds like a sad story, but it actually turns happy."

Oertel got more involved in the club and eventually started leading her own puppy classes. That's how she met a lot of her friends, including Ethan Taylor. During her sophomore year and his junior year, her puppy, Robert, and his puppy, Eagle, became best friends, so they became best friends. Then, they started dating.

Two years later, Oertel and Taylor are still dating. They also still have Robert and Eagle, along with Taylor's second puppy, Jimbo.

Robert still runs into things a lot; all he



MOLLY OERTEL AND ETHAN TAYLOR with two of their dogs, Robert and Jimbo, on McKeldin Mall on April 12, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK



BETHEL AFFUL on McKeldin Mall on April 16, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

can see are shadows in the sunshine. But after he lost his sight, his hearing and sense of smell became heightened. Oertel says he hates Dunkin' Donuts — when the door to the shop near Terrapin Row opens, he'll run away with his tail between his legs. And when a pan starts sizzling on Oertel's stovetop, Robert will hide in her bed. Still, he lives a pretty charmed life. "He's a happy guy now that I know how to handle it," Oertel said, as Robert lay panting in the grass beside her.

## BUILDINGS TELL STORIES

Part of the reason Bethel Afful decided to be an architecture major is because she's a storyteller.

"Every building is a story or has a story attached to it," she said.

To tell the story of her time as a college student, Afful explained the design of a building with four parts, one for each year.

The first part of the building would be small, with narrow hallways and isolated areas. As a freshman, the campus overwhelmed her. She was shy, so she didn't know how to make friends.

That changed in her sophomore year after she joined SketchUp, a comedy group on campus. She wasn't confident about her audition, she said. It was the first time she put herself out there.

The group gave her her first college party. They were just hanging out in a house playing board games, she said, but it was fun. She had found her first college friend

group.

That's why the second part of the building would "open up into this huge atrium." Afful had found her footing on campus.

"The person I was in freshman year and the person I was in sophomore year were not actually two completely different people, she said. "[But] one was really shy and nervous, and the other was confident"

But the third part of the building would be different, more tumultuous than the first two. Her junior year was tough, she said. Architecture got harder, more demanding. She felt like an imposter in her classes.

That's why this part of the building would have less open space, and there would be a lot of seating. This would be a place to rest, reflective of the stress she endured in her third year.

"I was maintaining my friendships, but I also felt personally that I was not my happiest in junior year," she said.

The fourth aspect of the building would be a courtyard, emblematic of her senior year, she said. Afful's in a good place now — she has so many loved ones and feels freer.

Afful is going to be an architect for a healthcare architecture firm. As she decided what she was going to do in her post-college life, she knew she had to do something that would make her happy. Now, that means designing hospitals and medical centers.

"But I mean, who knows what's gonna happen in five years? Or 10 years, 15 years," she said. "The world is huge, you know?"





Graduating athletes remember career highlights and look to the future.

By Ashkan Motamedi | @coolswagjay | Staff writer

REESE MONA shoots a free throw during Maryland's 68-57 win over Michigan State on March 11, 2021 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana. Mona received a full scholarship for his senior year and played in the 2021 NCAA Tournament. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

Last summer, Reese Mona was sitting in on a team Zoom call when he read a text from Maryland men’s basketball coach Mark Turgeon: he’d received a full scholarship for his senior year.

Going into his senior year, Mona had been hoping for that elusive moment. And when it finally came, he erupted in excitement.

“I called my parents right after, and they were speechless too, just so happy,” Mona said. “I knew they were choked up and were all emotional.”

It’s moments like these that Mona says he will cherish the most when looking back at his basketball career. And as his senior year comes to an end, he realizes that it is time to hang up the uniform.

For many college athletes, senior year represents the last time they will play their sport competitively. And this year, athletes are once again turning away, leaving behind the sport they grew up playing and looking ahead to the future.

“I do believe I got the most out of my career,” Mona said. “I can walk away not having any regrets.”

• • •

Mona has been playing basketball since he was eight years old. Other sports came along the way — soccer, football and baseball, for example — but basketball was

always his favorite growing up.

Within a few years, Mona’s passion for basketball grew. He eventually joined Maryland as a walk-on in 2017, and in his senior year he played an average of just over six minutes per game — the highest in his four years.

Looking back on his career, a few moments stand out to Mona. He won a title at St. John’s College High School and a Big Ten regular season championship, started on Maryland basketball’s senior night and played meaningful minutes in a March Madness game.

“When I was a little kid, that’s what I dreamed of is playing significant minutes in an NCAA Tournament game,” he said. “And for that to happen was really awesome.”

But he recognizes that his time playing competitively has come to a close.

Mona has begun to focus on the next chapter of his life. He has already earned his undergraduate degree in finance and will earn his Master’s of Science in Business and Management in May.

Mona has accepted a job to work at Morgan Stanley as a part of a financial advising group.

And he hopes other incoming seniors get to cherish every moment.

“Early morning practices, practices on the weekend — try to enjoy every second, every moment, every practice,

every game because when it’s over and you’re not playing professionally, it’s your last game. It’s done,” he said.

• • •

Anthony Sountis was introduced to wrestling in seventh grade — only he didn’t know that at the time.

He was playing football and tackled another kid by grabbing their leg and throwing it over their head.

“And one of my friends [says] dude, that was a wrestling takedown,” Sountis said.

Sountis was encouraged to go speak to the wrestling coach and give wrestling a shot. He instantly fell in love with the sport and decided to stop playing football to focus on wrestling.

Sountis transferred to this university after wrestling his freshman year at SUNY Oswego, a Division 3 school.

He remembers during the pre-season of his sophomore year when the coaches gave him a belt for working the hardest during practice. It’s one of Sountis’ favorite moments of his wrestling career.

“I was able to not only come in and then make the team, but also, make that impact and impression,” he said.

It’s not just those specific highlights that will last with him the most — it’s the relationships he made as well.

“The best experience was the people,” he said. “I have some of the best friends that I could ever ask for.”

Now, Sountis is hoping to pass another goal. After

graduating with a kinesiology degree, he plans to enlist in the U.S. Navy.

“Everything wrestling taught me is going to make me succeed in that,” Sountis said.

• • •

On April 3, Sam Burgio knew her volleyball career was over.

The volleyball had dropped and hit the gym floor one last time, as Maryland volleyball’s season came to a close with a loss against Northwestern.

“I started bawling my eyes out because [volleyball] has been a huge part of my life and watching it come to an end was very difficult,” Burgio said.

Originally a basketball player, Burgio started playing volleyball when she was 11 years old. When her mom recommended she go to a volleyball camp, her passion grew.

“[Volleyball] had a huge impact, I think it played a very important role as to figuring out who I am and what I want to do with the rest of my life,” Burgio said.

If there’s one thing Burgio is going to miss about volleyball, it’s being around her teammates, she said.

“It’s a sense of security to always have friends that you see for hours every single day, traveling with them, eating with them,” Burgio said. “We literally do everything together.”

Burgio’s favorite accomplishment playing volleyball wasn’t a statistical one — it was a personal one. Throughout her career, she prioritized being a teammate first, even as she piled up impressive stats.

“I had the high [statistics], I had other things going for me,” she said. “But I was able to not get caught up



SAM BURGIO passes the ball during Maryland's 3-0 win over Iowa on March 13, 2021. ERIC HARKLEROAD/THE DIAMONDBACK

in that but instead just be able to be there for my team.”

Burgio is graduating in May with a degree in sociology. She plans to return home after graduating to volunteer at her church with People Against Trafficking Humans. She also plans to get married to a former Maryland baseball player.

And now that her career is over, she gets to experience

a newfound flexibility.

“Playing volleyball for so long and competitively for so long, I haven’t really had a lot of opportunities for actual jobs,” Burgio said, “So I’m going to try things out.”

• • •

Michael Doetsch remembers the energy of the crowd during a home meet against University of Pittsburgh. He had earned a decision victory, and the crowd erupted.

It was this moment full of adrenaline that stood out most to Doetsch.

“It wasn’t necessarily the win that I was hyped about,” Doetsch said. “It was the crowd.”

Doetsch started wrestling when he was six years old, following in the footsteps of his father, who had also wrestled in high school. He also played football but realized he was too small to keep playing.

“I absolutely love playing football, but I knew I was never going to have the size frame,” Doetsch said.

As a wrestler, he wanted to get into a good college so that he could keep playing the sport. This convinced him to try harder in school, he said.

But if there is one thing Doetsch will miss about wrestling competitively, it’s the relationship he had with his teammates.

“I’m going to miss being pushed that hard in workouts and stuff, being pushed to the brink of exhaustion,” Doetsch said.

Now, Doetsch is focusing on the next chapter of his life, including getting his real estate license.

“It does suck, but I felt like it was time to move on,” Doetsch said.



MICHAEL DOETSCH celebrates a victory over Pittsburgh's Dallas Bulsak on Dec. 20, 2019. TYLER ECKER/THE DIAMONDBACK



# TOP 10 TEAMS

The University of Maryland’s class of 2021 has seen a bevy of high-level athletics. From national championships and Big Ten tournament titles to a pandemic rocking the sports world, there has been no shortage of action surrounding Maryland athletics. Here are 10 of the best Maryland sports teams over the past four years.

By Shane Connuck | @shane\_connuck | Staff writer

## 1. 2019 WOMEN'S LACROSSE (22-1, NCAA CHAMPION)



MIDFIELDER SOPHIA ANTONOPOULOS celebrates during Maryland women's lacrosse's 12-10 NCAA championship win over Boston College on May 26, 2019. JULIA NIKHINSON/THE DIAMONDBACK

Two days after its best offensive showing in the last 15 years, Maryland women's lacrosse's defense stepped up in the NCAA Championship, with goalkeeper Megan Taylor holding Boston College to its lowest-scoring total of the season. As the clock hit zero, coach Cathy Reese's team had completed a 22-1 campaign and claimed its 15th national title. The Terps were consistently among the best teams in the country, going undefeated in Big Ten play and ranking in the top five in both scoring offense and scoring defense.

## 3. 2018 FIELD HOCKEY (22-3, NCAA RUNNER-UP)



FORWARD BIBI DONRAADT battles for the ball during Maryland field hockey's 2-1 NCAA quarterfinal win over UConn at the Field Hockey & Lacrosse Complex on Nov. 11, 2018. FILE PHOTO

No. 2 Maryland was in a stalemate with No. 3 Princeton for over 77 minutes during the 2018 NCAA tournament semifinal game. In overtime, Big Ten Freshman of the Year Bibi Donraadt split two defenders and nailed a shot, sending coach Missy Meharg's squad to its 14th national championship game. The team ultimately lost to North Carolina in the championship, its third loss all year. Still, Maryland finished the season as one of the best offenses and defenses in the nation — falling to a Tar Heels squad with the best goal differential in the nation.

## 2. 2018 MEN'S SOCCER (13-6-4, NCAA CHAMPION)



COACH SASHO CIROVSKI and the Terps pose with the trophy after their 1-0 win over Akron in the NCAA championship game at Harder Stadium in Santa Barbara, California, on Dec. 9, 2018. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELICA BANKS/DAILY NEXUS

In the 57th minute of the 2018 NCAA men's soccer national championship game, Maryland captain Amar Sejdic nailed a penalty kick to push the Terps ahead of Akron, 1-0. That was all Maryland needed to secure coach Sasho Cirovski's third national title. The victory ended a perfect postseason for the Terps, who allowed no goals during the NCAA tournament. Four of the five players in that defensive line are currently on MLS rosters, a testament to its ability to protect the net.

## 4. 2020-21 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (26-3, SWEET 16)



MARYLAND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL celebrates with confetti after its 88-61 win over Penn State to become Big Ten regular-season champions on March 6, 2021. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

On March 13, 2020, the Maryland women's basketball team had just won the Big Ten tournament before the NCAA canceled the tournament due to COVID-19. But March 13, 2021, was a different story for coach Brenda Frese's squad. The top-seeded Terps, who had lost two games all season, blew out the Iowa Hawkeyes and soon earned a No. 2 seed in the NCAA tournament. The team had one of the best offenses in NCAA history, led by the prolific Ashley Owusu and lights-out shooting of Katie Benzan. In the Sweet 16, Maryland was punished for its one poor showing of the season, falling to Texas.

## 5. 2019-20 MEN'S BASKETBALL (24-7, BIG TEN REGULAR SEASON CO-CHAMPION)



THE MARYLAND MEN'S BASKETBALL team celebrates around guard Anthony Cowan Jr. after winning a share of the Big Ten regular-season title with a win over Michigan, 83-70, on March 8, 2020. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

On a December evening in 2019, Anthony Cowan Jr. launched a deep 3-pointer. His shot sank through the net, sending the Maryland crowd into a frenzy. The shot helped catapult the No. 3 Terps to a victory over Illinois, storming back from a 15-point deficit. This game was one of many memorable moments for Jalen Smith, Cowan and the rest of coach Mark Turgeon's 2019-20 squad. The season culminated with a win over Michigan to secure a share of the Big Ten regular season championship, before the cancellation of the end-of-season tournaments.

## 7. 2019-20 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (28-4, BIG TEN TOURNAMENT CHAMPION)



GUARD TAYLOR MIKESELL celebrates one of her six 3-pointers during Maryland women's basketball's 74-62 win over Purdue in the Big Ten tournament on March 6, 2020, at Bankers Life Arena. JULIA NIKHINSON/THE DIAMONDBACK

Ashley Owusu stood on the platform at the center of the court with her smiling teammates after No. 6 Maryland women's basketball blew out Ohio State, 82-65, to claim the Big Ten championship. The Terps' star freshman guard had just scored 17 points and added 11 assists. While this win for coach Brenda Frese's stellar squad turned out to be its last because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it capped a season where the Terps ran through Big Ten play with a 16-2 record — and a campaign that culminated in a 17-game win streak.

## 9. 2019 FIELD HOCKEY (17-4, NCAA QUARTERFINALIST)



MARYLAND FIELD HOCKEY celebrates a win 5-1 over Richmond on Aug. 30, 2019. GABBY BANIQUEU/THE DIAMONDBACK

On a cool evening in October 2019, Maryland field hockey hosted Michigan State for its senior night and home finale — and a chance to clinch the regular season Big Ten championship. And it did. Coach Missy Meharg's squad pulled off a 5-1 rout of the Spartans and capped a nearly perfect regular season, with just a pair of 1-0 losses coming against Duke and Michigan.

## 6. 2018 MEN'S LACROSSE (14-4, NCAA SEMIFINALIST)



MIDFIELDER CONNOR KELLY with Maryland men's lacrosse coach John Tillman in 2018. FILE PHOTO

The only thing in the way of No. 1-seed Maryland's fifth straight trip to the final four was the hottest team in the country. Facing Cornell in the NCAA tournament quarterfinals, a six-goal run in the second half powered the Terps to a 13-8 defeat of the Big Red in Annapolis. They eventually fell to Duke University in the NCAA Semifinals.

## 8. 2018 WOMEN'S LACROSSE (20-2, NCAA SEMIFINALIST)



THE MARYLAND WOMEN'S LACROSSE team celebrates winning the Big Ten regular season championship on April 26, 2018. FILE PHOTO

After the 2018 Big Ten women's lacrosse tournament title game was tied 3-3, attacker Megan Whittle broke the game open for Maryland. She netted back-to-back goals, sparking a five-goal run. The Terps wouldn't look back from there, leaving Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a 21-12 win, their third straight Big Ten championship. The team ultimately lost to Boston College in the NCAA semifinals.

## 10. 2018-19 WOMEN'S GOLF (NCAA REGIONALS)



VIRUNPAT OLANKITKUNCHAI drives the ball during a match in 2019. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARYLAND ATHLETICS

Maryland women's golf hadn't reached the NCAA tournament in seven years. But after a number of impressive showings throughout the 2018-19 season, the Terps ended up securing a trip to Opelika, Alabama, for the NCAA regionals, where they placed seventh out of 18 squads.



# CONSTRUCTION PARK, MARYLAND

Seniors recall the struggles of living amid constant development projects.

By Nicole Noechel | @NoechelNicole | Staff writer

During my four years at the University of Maryland, the campuswide construction has annoyed me to no end. Some projects are small and relatively benign, but others block off entire walkways and turn 10-minute commutes into 20-minute hikes.

I know I'm not the only student who feels like I live in one big construction site. So in celebration of seniors moving on from their time in Construction Park, Maryland, I set out to see what projects seniors have found to be especially irksome during their time here.

David Pape, a fifth-year senior aerospace engineering major, is a driver for Shuttle-UM, and he said he remembers when his

route along Paint Branch Drive changed constantly.

One week, the road would be northbound only but in the southbound lane, he said, but the next week, the road would be southbound only in the southbound lane. The following week, the road would once again be northbound only, but this time in the northbound lane.

"It was weird and unpredictable," he said.

The changes came as a result of the construction of the Iribe Center, a computer science and engineering building, Pape said. The building underwent construction from April 2016 to 2019.

I don't venture to the STEM side of campus very often, but I avoided this area



THE IRIBE CENTER, seen under construction from Route 1 in 2017. The center opened in 2019. TOM HAUSMAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

when the center was being built. The scent of unwashed computer science and math majors mixed with the smell of new asphalt was a wholly unappealing thought.

I'm glad that computer science students have a better-looking building now, though, because I took a class in the old building, and it was depressing, to say the least.

Redevelopment hasn't only impacted shuttle drivers. Anyone who has driven in College Park knows how busy traffic can be when lanes are blocked off in places or closed entirely — especially on Route 1.

An ongoing \$29 million project is bringing amenities such as bike lanes and expanded sidewalks to the about 1.5-mile stretch of Route 1 from Bagel Place to the Bowlero bowling alley. The redevelopment project has closed lanes.

Since this project started, I've taken to playing Pokémon Go during my commutes. There are a ton of Pokéstops along Route 1, and if I'm going to be stuck in traffic, I figure I might as well get some enjoyment out of it.

Meanwhile, Hannah Blosser, a senior communication major, has tried to avoid as much of the construction as possible.

"It's like every day a new spot of Baltimore Avenue in College Park is under construction," she said. "You never know what's under construction and what's the point and how much it's going to impact a student's day."

Senior government and politics major Liz Castillo knows all too well how much of an impact annoying construction projects can

have on your day. She spent two years living in Anne Arundel Hall, just down the street from Cole Field House, which has been undergoing construction since 2015.

Construction would start at 7 a.m., Castillo said. To make matters worse, the dorm often had heating and air conditioning issues, she said, so she would open her window and awaken to the loud, banging noises.

"You'd just hear jackhammers, you'd hear hammering," she said. "It would just be really disruptive on campus."

I've watched Cole Field House come to life. The building is just across the street from the journalism building, where I spent most of my days before the pandemic. I can attest that the constant sound of jackhammers isn't ideal when you're trying to study — especially when you have the attention span of an elementary schooler, like I do.

It's good to know that I'm not just being dramatic. Other seniors seem to have the same amount of disdain for the construction, so it's nice to be able to commiserate.

The open campus we saw on our college tours sometimes seems like a mirage compared with the construction site we've grown accustomed to.

While I've enjoyed my four years at this university, and I've made unforgettable memories throughout the campus, I, like many other graduating seniors, am excited to move on and find somewhere to live that looks a little more... finished.

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CONSTRUCTION WORKERS stand on the Cole Field House construction site on December 5, 2018. JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK



