

THE STATESMAN

INFORMING STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS

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sbstatesman.com

USG senator files case against chief justice

By **Brianne Ledda**
Assistant News Editor

Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Senator Andrew Machkasov wants to overturn the Senate's Feb. 14 confirmation of USG Chief Justice Aravinth Pushparaj.

On Wednesday, April 3, the judiciary heard Machkasov's case against USG President Justas Klimavicius, USG Executive Vice President Abdelrahman Salama, Pushparaj and USG's Administrative Director, Rayna Simon.

Pushparaj was confirmed over a year after he initially took office and the vote was added to the agenda less than 24 hours before the meeting. The USG Code requires business to be added to the agenda at least 48 hours before taking a vote. The constitution requires the chief justice to be confirmed within the academic year he was appointed.

Machkasov argued during the trial that, by breaking these rules, the executive branch overstepped its power.



EMMA HARRIS / THE STATESMAN

Sasha Halliwell lipsyncs and dances to a Beyonce medley at Stony Brook during Act I of the LGBTQ+ Drag Show on Friday, April 5 in the Sidney Gelber Auditorium in the Student Activities Center.

"I filed the case, because I feel that due to overstep by the executive and lack of following the proper procedure, the vote was not held in accordance with the constitution and code of the USG," Machkasov said, adding

later that Salama capped the number of questions senators were allowed to ask during the confirmation process.

Pushparaj recused himself from the proceedings. He argued during his defense that the four

associate justices sitting on the case faced a conflict of interest.

Earlier this year, three justices sent an email to Pushparaj, expressing concerns over whether he was fit to hold office. The email called for his resignation

and pointed out that Pushparaj had not been confirmed.

The email was a point of contention throughout the case.

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Graduate students protest fee increase

By **Gary Ghayrat**
Assistant News Editor

At this year's Admitted Students Day, prospective students and their parents passing by the Academic Mall fountain got an unexpected glimpse of some on-campus activism. Around half a dozen graduate teaching and research assistants stood at the fountain on Saturday, April 6 to voice their dissatisfaction with recent student fee increases. They held up signs that read "SUNY works because we do!" and "Fees are wage theft."

The so-called broad-based fees include a health and counseling fee, technology fee, transportation fee and other fees that are charged in addition to student tuition, according to the university's website. Starting from fall 2019 semester, the fees for graduate students have been proposed to increase by \$90.25 per semester, bringing the total comprehensive fees to \$1,557.50 per year.

"\$180, that's almost groceries for a month or something," John Klecker, second year graduate stu-

dent in the chemistry department, said. "So I have to go back and re-budget my finances for the year ... like there's things I can and can't do, you know, because I have to pay these fees."

Some parents and prospective students attending the Admitted Students Day program looked on and some stopped to ask questions.

Stilianos Papazahariou from the High School for Math, Science and Engineering at the City College of New York, who is planning on majoring in biochemistry at Stony Brook University, said the protest was an unexpected scene during his tour around campus.

"I was expecting to see just the school, learn more about the classes, learn more about where I'd have to go," Papazahariou said. "But honestly seeing that the graduate students aren't being paid enough to live on it, it isn't really something that I was expecting."

Chief steward of the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) at Stony Brook, Caroline Propersi-Grossman, said she is paid around \$20,000 per year. The Ex-

ecutive Vice President of GSEU, James Searle, mentioned similar figures during his speech at the SUNY Board of Trustees meeting on March 20.

According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology living wage calculator, the required annual income before taxes for one adult living in Suffolk County is \$32,301. Propersi-Grossman said the increase impacts international students more because of the visa restrictions they have on off-campus employment.

"I'm sympathetic to the fact that the university needs money to operate," Kenneth Davidson, a second year graduate student at the department of ecology and evolution, said. "But us as graduate students, as employees, believe that funding for things like, support for Blackboard or paving roads or putting projectors in classrooms shouldn't be something that the graduate students are paying for because those aren't services we

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Neuroscientist discusses sleep

By **Ameya Kale**
Contributing Writer

Stony Brook University's department of neurobiology and behavior hosted Dr. Giulio Tononi, an expert on neuroscience and consciousness, for its annual Mind/Brain Lecture on Monday, April 1 at the Staller Center for the Arts.

The audience applauded as Tononi entertained and enlightened a nearly packed Main Stage with his research and current studies. The speaker admitted that "this lecture is impossible to give," simply because the research he has conducted over the years is so vast and intricate that compressing it into one lecture would hardly make sense for the casual listener. Nevertheless, he was optimistic about trying to explain where he thinks the study of consciousness is headed.

The first fundamental thing that Tononi defined in the lecture was his own view of what consciousness is.

"Everyone thinks differently about consciousness, but my definition of it has always been that consciousness is what goes away when you fall into a dreamless sleep," he said.

Tononi explained that once a person goes into dreamless sleep, there is no experience, no perception of surroundings or the environment; there are no memories of the past or the future or even the present. It is thus at this point that everything disappears, which corresponds to consciousness "going away."

"Consciousness is experience ... having an experience — any experience," he said. "Both terms are synonymous, and it is not about the self only or the world only. It is about having an experience."

Tononi is an award-winning scientist who studies consciousness, sleep and the mechanisms and functions of sleep. His main contribution to the study of consciousness has been the integrated information theory or IIT. This comprehensive theory aims to determine not just the quality and quantity of consciousness, but also what kind of consciousness it is.

The theory about consciousness is that experience emerges from a particular set of conditions which makes

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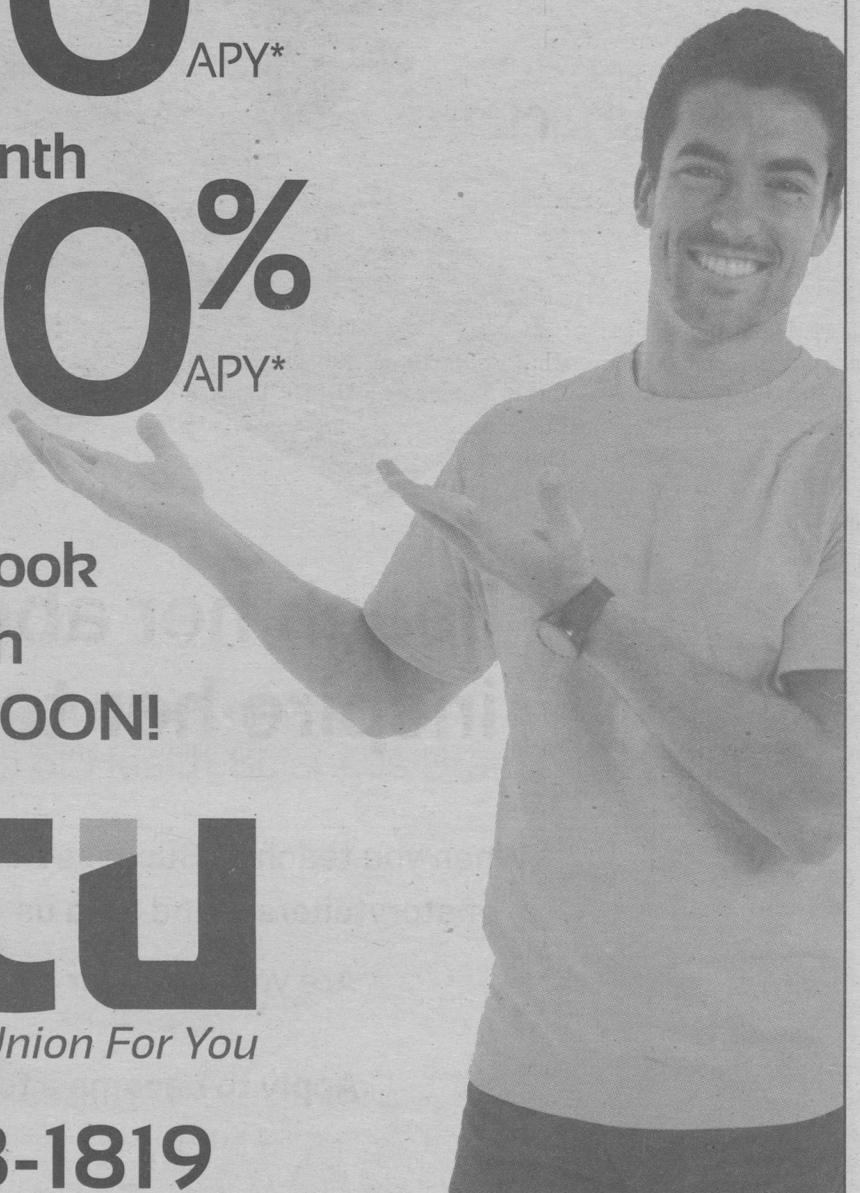
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USG justices oversee trial

Continued from page 1

Salama argued that the email showed the justices' bias against Pushparaj and constituted a conflict of interest.

"You believe that a certain person is incapable of doing their job," he said. "Now you're in a position of power of invalidating that person from doing that job."

The justices pushed back against this notion, pointing out that judicial bylaws do not specifically define what counts as a "conflict of interest."

Associate Justice Imad Chaudhry also pointed out that since the case was only discussing procedure and not Pushparaj's appointment itself, the email was irrelevant.

"That email is specifically talking about your leadership as chief justice," Chaudhry said. "What we're talking about now is procedure, specifically procedure, how you were appointed. We are not talking about your character. We are not talking about your leadership skills or anything like that. That is not in question. I think it's kind of not relevant to the point where it would be a conflict of interest."

Klimavicius said that he didn't know that Pushparaj wasn't confirmed until it was brought to his attention this semester.

Klimavicius claims he sent an email when he found out, informing senators of the mistake and asking them to resolve the

issue with a vote during its meeting the next day.

"It was my understanding that the chief was appointed and confirmed," Klimavicius said. "There was no reason for me to question it before, and I didn't think it was worth it for me to dig into appointed positions of the past to make sure that it's okay because I trusted [Pushparaj's] ability to serve as chief."

Machkasov also voiced concerns that Pushparaj's appointment was never heard by the Senate's Vetting and Legislative Review Committee.

Machkasov himself came to the confirmation hearing with 16 questions prepared. He was allowed to ask four.

Klimavicius said that during the confirmation hearing, the Senate voted down Machkasov's request to ask more questions.

Salama argued that there have been confirmations in the past that didn't go through the ad-hoc committee and that it is within the president's power to make confirmations without one.

"Constitutionally speaking, it is up to the president to have executive power and it is also, constitutionally speaking, up to the executive vice president to determine the procedures of how the meeting was run," he said.

He also argued that overturning the Senate's decision would invalidate its opinion.

The Judiciary Committee said that it would come back with a decision next week.

Annual grad student fees to increase by \$180.50



GARY GHAYRAT / THE STATESMAN

Graduate Student Employees Union members protest increased fees during Stony Brook University's Admitted Students Day on Saturday, April 6.

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use. Those are services that we need to do our jobs as teaching, research and graduate assistants."

Arthur Smith and his son Joshua Smith of Newfield High School in Middle Country Central District, stopped to talk to the graduate students and said they were sympathetic to the students' situation.

"I know there's a huge issue in the country right now with students going into debt for their education," Arthur Smith said. "So,

I wish it was better for everybody and more power to the grad students to get what they need."

Joshua Smith said that although seeing the protest won't weigh on his decision of where to go to college, he's glad he got to see the students protesting.

"If the people teaching me have to focus that much on their own economic stability, they won't have as much ability to teach me," Joshua said.

Propersi-Grossman said as part of a public employee union, they can't go on strike under New York

State law. But she said they can hold a sign up to bring awareness to "an unfair labor practice" and they're coming back to protest again on May 1, International Workers' Day.

"We shouldn't be forced to pay to work, and this is part of a national movement for graduate students for a living wage," Propersi-Grossman said. "It's part of a national movement for graduate students to not have to pay to work."

Stony Brook University Media Relations and the Bursar's Office couldn't be reached for comment in time for publication.

Renowned scientist Dr. Giulio Tononi explains study of consciousness

Continued from page 1

us "feel something." IIT insists that we must approach this problem from the opposite direction. This means that IIT starts from consciousness – or experience – itself, and using its axioms, aims to derive what kind of physical systems are capable enough to account for this "experience." Moreover, the theory also aims to understand what properties these physical systems need to possess in order to understand an experience.

The aforementioned axioms of the theory are about the properties of consciousness itself. The general assumptions of this theory are that experience must be about the experience itself, apply to all experiences, be evident without the need of proof, be complete and consistent and lastly, it should not be possible to derive one axiom from another. Based on these assumptions, IIT puts forth five postulates.

The first postulate is called intrinsic existence, meaning that consciousness must exist – that each experience is actual. The second posits that consciousness is structured and is composed of multiple phenomenological distinctions. The third is that consciousness must be specific with each experience being exactly the way it is. The fourth states that consciousness is integrated, meaning that each experience is irreducible to a certain point where there are disjoint sets

of phenomenological distinctions. Lastly, consciousness is definite. It is what it is, and it behaves the way it behaves.

Dr. Marshall Newton, a chemical physicist at Brookhaven National Laboratory, asked Dr. Tononi during the lecture about reductionism and the extent up to which phenomena can be reduced to physical descriptions, admitting that he was highly curious about consciousness. Dr. Tononi responded that each experience is a cause-effect structure with a one-to-one correspondence between the properties of experiences.

"I have always been fascinated about this topic, and this lecture gave me a stimulation to read more into this field and understand it better," Newton said after the lecture.

Dr. Tononi then talked about quantifying or finding a measure of consciousness and then comparing it to different states a person could find themselves in. He compared the indices of integrated information of different stages or types of sleep and juxtaposed them with results found in patients who were given different kinds of anesthesia. The index for measurement is called the perturbation complexity index, where behavioral responses are measured for each of the above conditions and then compared. The results go well with his theory, which requires humans to integrate information, and respond to it. The state in which humans respond to stimuli is also a significant

factor, depending on whether they are in a minimally conscious state, in slow wave sleep, under anesthesia or are fully awake.

Dr. Tononi is also keen on developing techniques sophisticated enough that can help scientists locate the border of where consciousness is, or to understand at which point do we firmly establish the existence of consciousness inside the brain. The lecture continued with the question of artificial intelligence and machine learning and how mankind could perhaps build a system which could exactly duplicate our behaviors in the future and behave exactly as we do, provided we give the exact inputs.

However, Dr. Tononi does not believe that building artificial intelligence like this will necessarily bring forth consciousness.

"The system would be able to perform all our jobs exactly like us, or perhaps even better, but having that intelligence does not guarantee consciousness," he said. "The system would just perform its function without experiencing it, thereby not being conscious of it."

Although this may be the case, his theory could potentially unfold a path to create truly sentient beings.

When asked about the lecture and what she thought of Dr. Tononi's work, Kennelia Mellanson, a graduate pharmacology student here at Stony Brook, said that "Dr. Tononi's work is absolutely fascinating, and it helps us to

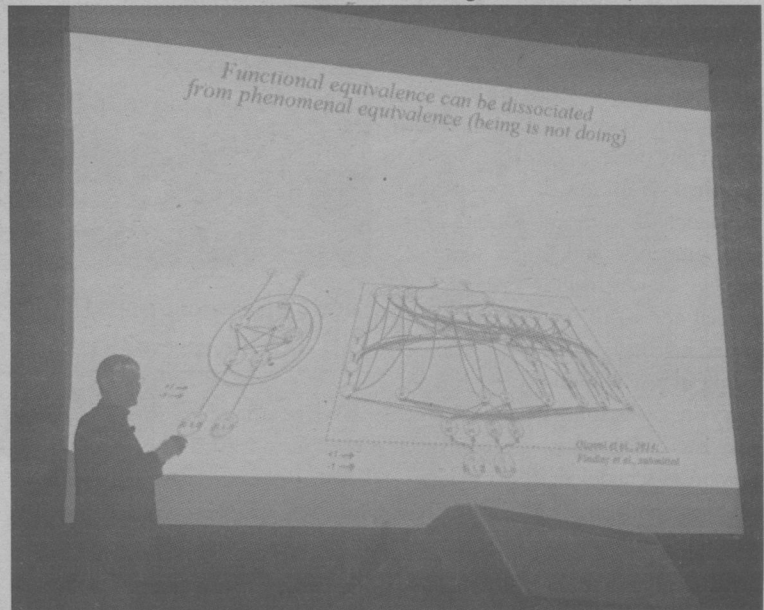
relate to the profoundness of the whole thing. He has found a ruler to somehow mark or measure consciousness, and how the correlation between consciousness and intelligence could change in light of these results."

Among the audience were local residents, who attend the annual lecture series every year.

"We are truly lucky to witness this lecture series," Rhoda Spinner, who lives near the university, said. "I attend these lectures every year, and it still makes me wonder that after all these years, despite all these advancements, there are still

so many questions unanswered. Coming here gives me a chance to know more and understand how the world has developed in this field."

Indeed, the topic of consciousness is one of the most pressing and highly-researched ones in the 21st century. Who are we? Why are we here? What is consciousness and where does it come from? These are just some of the questions that have always puzzled mankind, and perhaps we might land upon a definite answer, should Dr. Tononi's theory hold firm against all the mysteries.



AMEYA KALE / THE STATESMAN

Neuroscience expert Dr. Giulio Tononi giving a lecture on consciousness on Monday, April 1.

ARTS & CULTURE

Portuguese community unites after Mozambique storm

By Pedro Rodrigues
Contributing Writer

The Portuguese American Center in Farmingville, New York and the New York Portuguese American Leadership Conference (NYPALC) are running a campaign until April 30 to collect food, baby formula, clothing, blankets and other necessities to help the victims affected by Cyclone Idai which hit the mainland of Mozambique on March 15.

All the goods collected by "Together Mozambique" will be shipped the first week of May. A GoFundMe page has been set up to help the victims. So far, \$1,505 has been raised to buy additional products for those in need.

"We have been informed that since the port of Beira has been destroyed, the other part is working relatively slow because it cannot accommodate all the response," Isabelle Coelho-Marques, the president of NYPALC, said. "At this moment we are waiting on a date."

The NYPALC, a nonprofit organization with 67 members representing 180,000 Portuguese and Portuguese Americans in New York State, launched the campaign in New York behind the support of 13 Portuguese American centers and the Consulate General of Portugal.



PEDRO RODRIGUES / THE STATESMAN

The Portuguese American Center of Suffolk, in Farmingville, New York, is one of the 13 centers opening its doors to help with the effort to collect goods for victims affected by Cyclone Idai which hit Mozambique in March.

The Portuguese American Center of Suffolk is one of the 13 centers opening its doors to help with the effort to collect goods. The local Portuguese school and folk dance group the "Rancho" are also joining the efforts.

"All Portuguese clubs are opening their doors for whoever wants to

bring in goods," Maria Rodrigues, president of the Portuguese American Center of Farmingville, said. "NYPALC will collect and ship them in a container as we wait and see if Washington will pay for another container."

Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony that gained independence in

1975, has strong ties to Farmingville's Portuguese community.

"With what happened there at this time with the connections with most of us have, with myself included because I was born in Mozambique, we decided as a board this was something we really wanted to be involved in,"

Benvinda Santos, the Suffolk County Representative in NYPALC, said.

Beira, a port city in Mozambique, faced the brunt of the Category 2 storm, with winds that hit 109 mph. Seven hundred and fifty people were confirmed dead by the Mozambique authorities. Almost two weeks after the storm, the city has begun to recover.

"Many people are suffering and the imminent issues of water, food and general healthcare pose very real threats especially children," Annmaree Jorge from the Life Church Mozambique, which has been working in South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe for 20 years, said. "The Portuguese community is very welcome to play a role in aid and rebuilding of this once influential city."

Local high schools on Long Island are looking to support the cause. This campaign is pushing students to get the attention of their teachers and school officials to help the people in Mozambique.

"The minute we started talking to the young men and women of the community said let me talk to my teachers and see if I could help, so we will have some of the high schools who are starting to take a look at it," Santos said.

Republished from *The Osprey*.

HBO's "Barry" Season 2 is hilarious and unforgiving

By Rachel Parker
Contributing Writer

Season 1 of "Barry," the award-winning HBO dark comedy created by Alec Berg and Bill Hader, is the definition of binge-able, rife with ridiculous laughs and staggering moments of suspense.

The first three episodes of Season 2 do more than deliver; they exceed expectations and promise a thrilling, entertaining and thoughtful season.

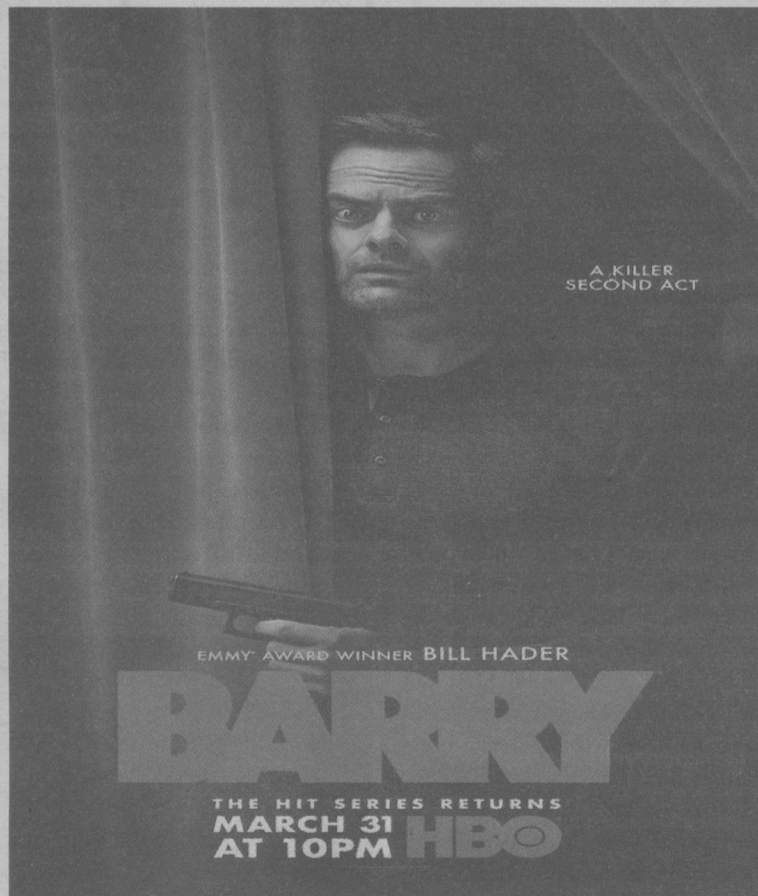
(The following episode reviews are spoiler-free, but will of course allude to some plot and character content.)

Episode 1 – "The Show Must Go on, Probably?"

Season 2 starts with a triumph; the first episode of the season, aptly asking "The Show Must Go on, Probably?" is 30 minutes full of brilliant quips and staggering flashbacks, leaving us with more questions than the season one finale.

When we last saw Barry — played by Hader — with last season's brilliant subtlety and a new sense of urgency, he was making a promise to himself and to us that he had committed his final murder. This promise manifests itself in manic energy, as Barry does everything he can to make sure his acting class' performance goes on as scheduled, despite Gene's (an always hilarious and lovingly infuriating Henry Winkler) depressive state over Janice Moss' disappearance and presumed death.

While in Season 1 we see an awkward and hesitant Barry stand out against the overly enthusiastic and



New episodes of HBO's "Barry" season 2, starring Bill Hader, premiere on HBO on Sundays at 10 p.m.

obsessive members of his acting class, Season 2 presents a parallel in Barry's desperate eagerness to put on the show while everyone else would rather have it canceled.

Barry's unraveling is further illustrated in a flashback we get of his time in Afghanistan, as Gene asks him to tell the class about the first time he killed someone. In a truly

funny but painful moment, Gene has a couple of the other acting class students run up on stage and reenact the story as Barry orates it.

Meanwhile, NoHo Hank (an uproarious Anthony Carrigan) is back and better than ever with lines like "Everyone's laughing at the hand stabbing now!" and "What is with the sour patch at-

titude?" as he tries to maintain power and familiarity in his organized crime regime, which is reminiscent of a Manhattan start-up, with bean bags, an open office layout and neon-colored decor.

The premiere episode of the season, written by Hader and Berg and directed by Hiro Murai, is chock-full of the wit we know and love, while also foreshadowing chaos. The pieces start to fall, secrets start to unravel and our hero at the center of it all is in a deep pit of denial.

Episode 2 – "The Power of No"

The second episode of season 2, directed again by Murai and written by Taofilk Kolade, brings our sweet, uneven couple to the forefront: Barry and the chipper teacher's pet Sally.

Among flashbacks, thrilling scenes with some unlikely duos and a funny and biting true scene about the roles available to women in Hollywood, Barry's fears of being viewed as a violent or evil person are directly paralleled to Sally's own past experiences with domestic abuse.

Meanwhile, Barry struggles with feeling defined by his time in Afghanistan, which, of course, only scratches the surface of his experiences with combat and killing people. D'Arcy Carden's Natalie, eternal errand girl to Gene for unclear reasons but hilarious all the same, provides a great deal of the comic relief in this episode, as does Hank's innocent, almost sweet attempts

to give Barry an assassin-themed pep talk.

Episode 3 – "Past = Present x Future Over Yesterday"

A few story arcs come to a peak in this episode — most notably, Sally's attempts to "use" the memories of leaving her abusive ex-husband to inform her art. While trying to comfort Barry about performing his piece about his first kill in Afghanistan, thanks to a beautiful, complicated performance by Sarah Goldberg, we realize Sally refuses to treat her own past with the same severity.

Barry attempts to change his scene to the first time he met Gene, or the first time he saved a life (with a borrowed speech from Braveheart that Gene reacts to with a resounding "What the f---, Barry?!"), but is told by Gene that he will perform the Afghanistan scene. Gene himself, in attempts to give the cabin where Moss was killed onto his estranged son, processes his grief erratically.

Gene's broken-hearted anger and Sally's need to process her trauma as little more than an acting exercise come to a head against Barry's inability to integrate his pain and performance in a scene that is the most suspenseful and powerful of the season thus far.

Season 2 shows fantastic promise with the ensemble truly shining alongside Hader's consistent, harrowing performance. The first episode of season 2 premiered Sunday, March 31, and you can watch new episodes on Sundays on HBO at 10 p.m.

MULTIMEDIA

LGBTQA'S 2019 Drag Show



Stony Brook's LGBTQA held their annual Drag Show in the Student Activities Center (SAC) on Friday, April 5. The show featured fan favorite queens, like Miss Patricia, Sasha Halliwell and Vidaa Skye. The drag queens and kings performed songs from Paramore to The Jonas Brothers for a packed SAC Sidney Gelbert Auditorium.

Pictures by Emma Harris
Assitant Multimedia Editor



OPINIONS

THE STATESMAN

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New stories are published online every day Monday through Thursday. A print issue is published every Monday during the academic year and is distributed to many on-campus locations, the Stony Brook University Hospital and over 70 off-campus locations.

The Statesman and its editors have won several awards for student journalism and several past editors have gone on to enjoy distinguished careers in the field of journalism.

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GARY GHAYRAT / THE STATESMAN

Stony Brook graduate students protesting increases in fees atop the fountain outside the Administration Building during Admitted Students' Day Saturday, April 7.

Raising fees for graduate students is wrong

By Annu Daftuar
Contributing Writer

As an international graduate worker on Stony Brook campus, I support the Stony Brook Graduate Student Employees Union's (GSEU) campaign to abolish graduate fees.

Graduate students at Stony Brook University are more than students — they're also workers. They teach courses, grade assignments and conduct research on the university's behalf and we should have a say in the decisions that affect their work at Stony Brook.

The SUNY system has created fees as a way to raise tuition without the consent of democratically-elected legislators in Albany. It's a staple of the last few years at Stony Brook, used as a means to cover budget holes and other fiscal "whoops" the school encounters. Interestingly, a recent independent audit at SBU showed the university has lots of money, but despite that, the graduate student fees continue to rise. This year, our fees will increase by about \$100.

Even worse than the fees themselves is the fact that we have no idea what they go toward. There is a lack of transparency about the fees because SBU does not provide an itemized accounting of where exactly the funds wind up.

Fees are an extra drain on the peanut-sized stipends, a mere \$20,000 to \$30,000 depending on the department, which Ph.D. students receive for the overwhelming amount of work they do for the university. They're an unnecessary extraction that helps force students many to live below the poverty line. Ph.D.

students end up paying almost half of their stipends for fees, and the demand for higher fees by the university administration this year will only add to the already exploitative nature of this relationship. It's time that the university recognizes that it depends on the labor of graduate student workers and starts treating them like an important part of the workforce.

While fees affect all graduate workers in disastrous ways, it hits

"It's time that the university recognizes that it depends on the labor of graduate student workers and starts treating them like an important part of the workforce."

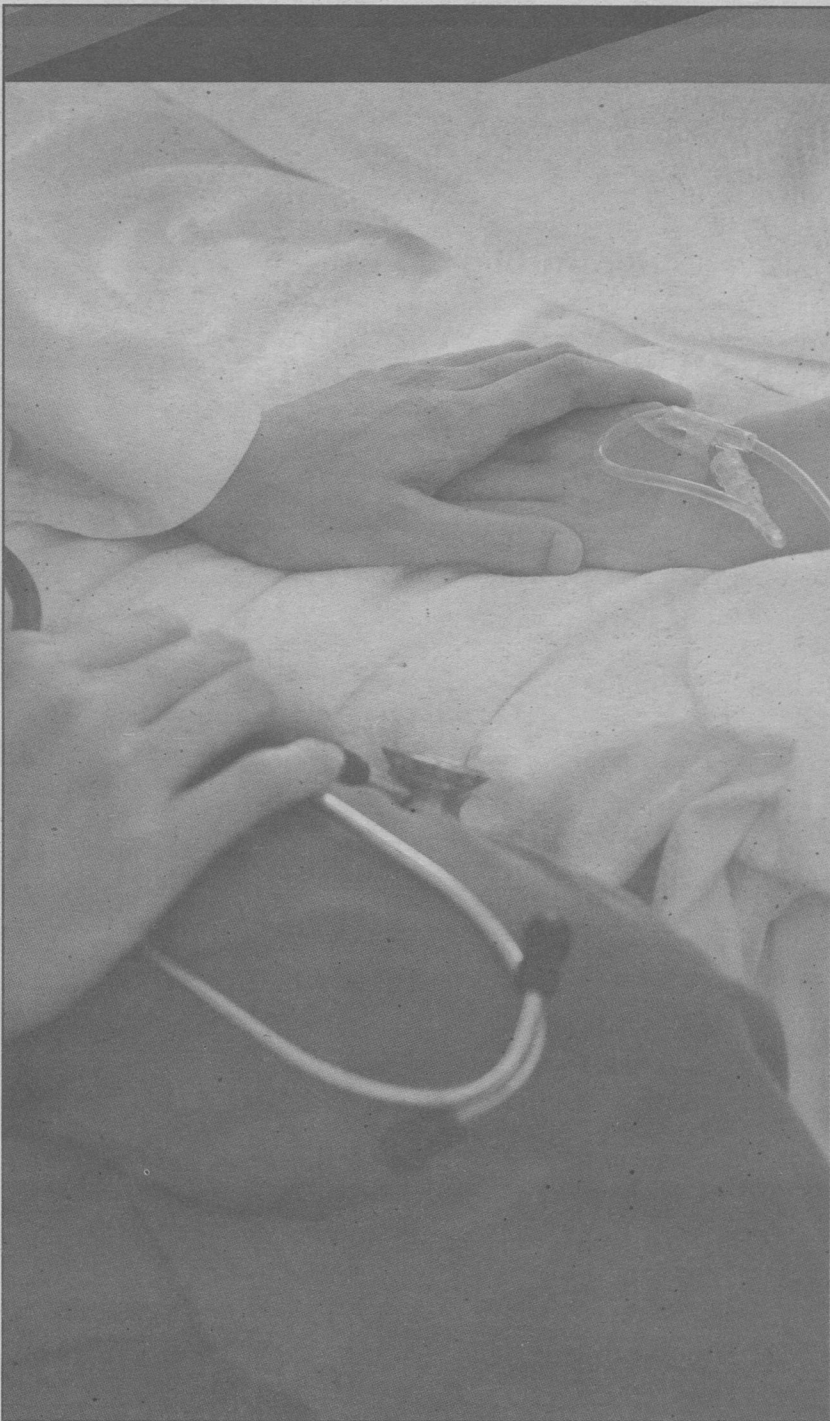
international graduate workers the most.

Full-time tuition for domestic master's students is \$6,503.50, and is about two times more, \$12,283.50, for international

master's students. While domestic graduate students have the option of taking up outside jobs to sustain themselves, international students are not allowed to do so legally. International graduate students maintain their legal status as students with visas that prohibits them from working outside the campus. They can only work outside the campus on either an Optional Practical Training or H-1B visa issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which changes their legal visa status to workers.

With small stipends in hand and a demand for higher fees, most international graduate students on campus find themselves in a precarious situation economically. They end up asking their family and friends back home for money to be able to survive. Further, lack of access to other resources like fellowships or federal grants also compromises the rights of international students. Most federal grants and fellowships are available to U.S. citizens only and international workers end up with absolutely no means to support themselves or their research.

The GSEU at Stony Brook University has been at the forefront for mobilizing the rights of all graduate workers, including the concerns and struggles of international graduate workers. Workplace rights of all graduate workers need to be respected and the active union on campus gives me hope. I feel supported in the power of collective bargaining and a binding contract. By aiming to politically mobilize against fees on Stony Brook campus, the union has set out to realize the dream of a democratic campus.



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— Linda Bily, MA Program Graduate

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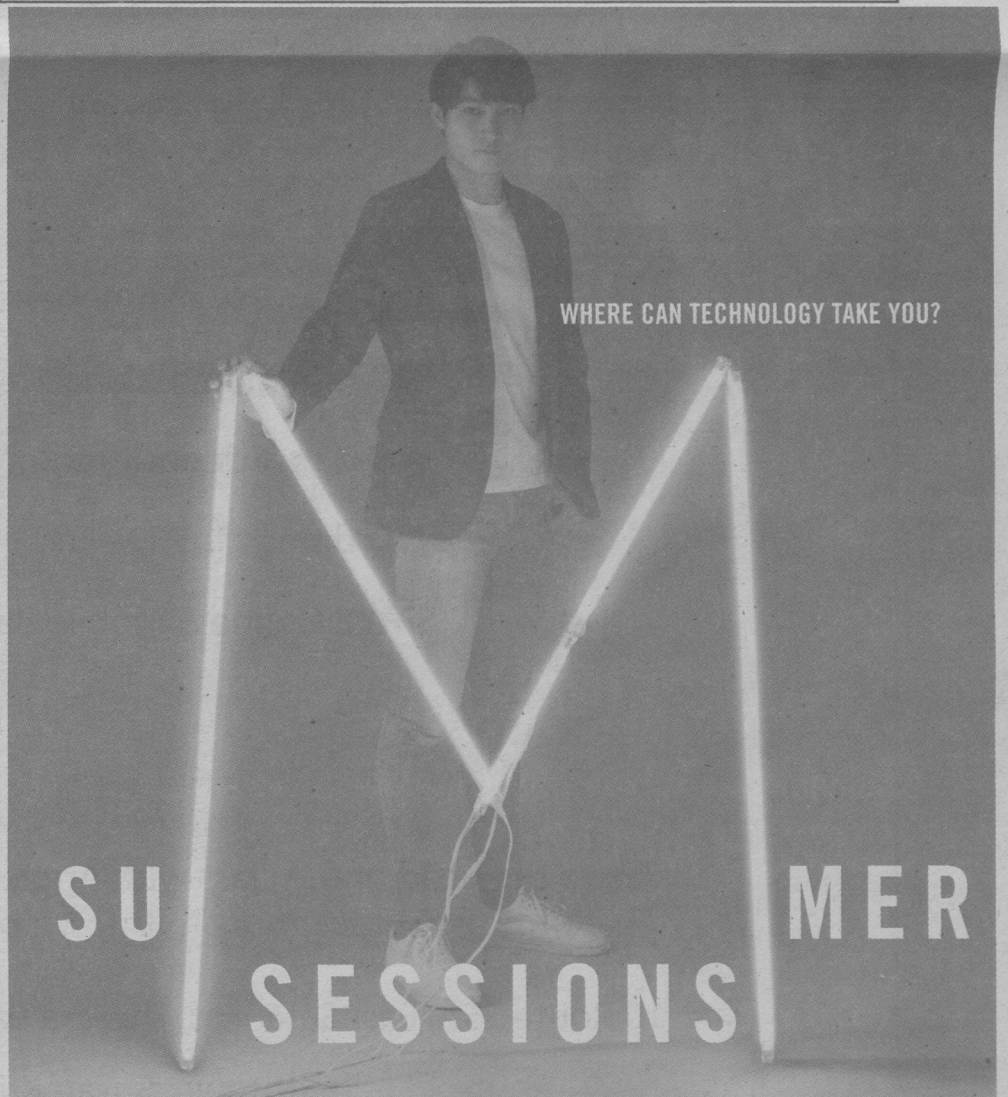
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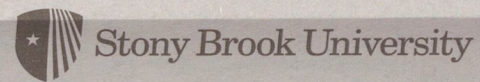
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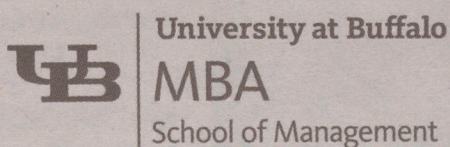
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SPORTS

Geno Ford introduced as new head coach at press conference

By Ethan Tam
Contributing Writer

In front of a crowd packed with students, reporters, players and fans at Island Federal Credit Union Arena, Stony Brook Men's Basketball new head coach, Geno Ford, held his introductory press conference on Tuesday, April 2. Both Director of Athletics Shawn Heilbron and University President Samuel L. Stanley Jr. also spoke, offering their full support behind the Seawolves' fourth head coach in Division I history.

Ford, who went 68-37 with two MAC regular season titles as the head coach of Kent State from 2008 to 2011, joined Stony Brook's staff in 2016 at the request of former college teammate and predecessor Jeff Boals.

Ford spoke at length about his plans to lead a young team that came minutes away from earning a regular season title against Ver-

mont in March. "We want to be the toughest team in the league," Ford said. "Last year, we led the league in rebounding. We did not lead the league in taking charges [or] loose balls. Those things will change. We really want to play a physical brand of blue-collar basketball. We'll play a little bit faster, we'll be down the floor pressing ... that's something we'll be a little more committed to doing moving forward."

In addition, he plans on creating a big-name schedule for the Seawolves' upcoming season. "Our goal, if we really want to be that national brand, [is to] surpass those types of programs [like Wofford] to get to where we want to," Ford said. "That means we've got to go schedule hard. We are going to look to play absolutely any Power 5 team we can get."

Heilbron believes that the men's basketball program can

thrive under Ford guidance and bring success to Stony Brook right away.

"I want to win right now," Heilbron said. "We are so close to being where we want to be as a program,

and our trajectory is only rising, and I truly believe our greatest successes lie ahead of us"



COURTESY OF STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Geno Ford at a Stony Brook University Men's Basketball game. Ford was officially introduced as Stony Brook Men's Basketball's new head coach at a press conference.

Symposium highlights the risks of head injury in sports

By Ryan Magill & Andrew Zucker
Staff Writers

Cuts, scrapes, breaks, aches, pains, sprains, fractures, tears — these are all terms that can be used to describe an injury that occurred on or off the field. The list goes on and on, appearing endless and only a few are easily treated. Doctors are usually able to tell what the problem is right away, and how to put their patients on the path toward full recovery. Break your arm? Put a cast on and let it heal. Tear your ACL? Undergo surgery and then partake in a grueling rehab process. Suffer a concussion or another form of traumatic brain injury (TBI)? Walk it off and run right back out.

This outdated approach to player safety in regard to TBI and concussions, and the dangerous long-term health repercussions that this approach poses, was the center of debate on March 28 when the Stony Brook University Program in Public Health and Stony Brook University Neurosciences Institute hosted a public symposium, "Contact Sports and Traumatic Brain Injuries."

The first portion of the symposium was led by Dr. Chuck Mikell, the co-director of the Stony Brook Movement Disorders Center and an assistant professor of neurosurgery at the Renaissance School of Medicine. Dr. Mikell, a former high school football player, discussed the basic science and medical processes of concussions and TBI as well as some of the long-term consequences of participa-

tion. Dr. Mikell specifically mentioned amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) as the two most prevalent and serious issues concerning those who have played contact sports.

Dr. Amy Hammock, an assistant professor of social welfare and a faculty member in the program of public health, found that what Dr. Mikell spoke about hit very close to home. "I feel like I learned a lot about the inflammation that occurs and can keep occurring for years after. There really is very little that can be done after the fact ... I have a son who is 5 years old, there is no way he is ever playing football."

Following Dr. Mikell talking about his personal experience with football, Dr. Anat Biegon, a professor of radiology at the Renaissance School of Medicine, discussed how the human brain responds and acts during episodes of TBI, including how these episodes incur long-term consequences and how children are put at greater risks for these same conditions due to their age and the makeup of their skeletal system.

Finishing off the guest panelists was Dr. Paul Vaska, a biomedical engineering and radiology professor at the Renaissance School of Medicine. Dr. Vaska changed the direction away from the issues and toward the solutions, discussing in detail some of

the ways companies and organizations are trying to minimize TBI and concussions in contact sports and everyday life. Two examples included creating better helmets to protect athletes and implementing eye tracking technology to help diagnose concussions and TBI. Vaska's department also studies Stony Brook student-athletes. The athletes, most commonly from the football and both men's and women's lacrosse teams, sign waivers prior to the start of the season allowing Vaska to image their brain following a concussion. Vaska stated they usually image the brains 34-51 hours after the injury occurs and then follow up with imaging three months later.

Dr. Hammock was not the only Program of Public Health faculty member to attend. Dr. Lauren Hale, a professor of family population and preventive medicine, had no issue saying what is on her mind about the support of collegiate athletics. "I probably have a bias against universities investing money in sports programs. This presentation reaffirmed my belief that it should not be a priority."

Dr. Andrew Flescher, a professor in the School of Medicine department of family, population and preventive medicine and a faculty member in the Program in Public Health who moderated and coordinated the symposium, ended by discussing the public health crisis. He talked about the risks and rewards of such activities as well as the social value that participation in contact sports has. He also discussed that a lack of viable information and a wealth of misinformation has prevented players and parents from making reasonable and informed decisions about playing contact sports for years.

Dr. Flescher represents a growing majority of people who have come to see both sides of the argument and has become torn by his occupational allegiance to the facts as a scientist and his emotional allegiance to the game as a lifelong New England Patriots fan. "I can tell you stats, who won the Super Bowl going back to Green Bay winning the first two. It is an exhilarating sport, but the thrilling moments are the most dangerous. I have serious cognitive dissonance about football."



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Stony Brook Football players raising their helmets. Many football players suffer from traumatic brain injuries that are not properly treated.

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