

# THE MINARET

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## Faculty Hold Conflicting Opinions Regarding Students' Return to Campus

**Re'nesia Mills**

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It is no secret that many have been concerned about students' return to campus this Fall, but faculty at The University of Tampa have expressed mixed views following the start of the Fall semester.

Several faculty members are in agreement with the decision that was made for students to be back on campus this semester.

"I'm excited," said Julie Umberger, assistant professor of nursing. "I think the university has gone above and beyond to provide as many safety features as they could for both the faculty and staff, as well as students."

Jennifer Blessing, assistant professor of psychology is holding all of her classes remotely this semester due to health concerns.

"I would prefer to be in-person, but I would also prefer to be healthy and safe," said Blessing.

While professors are concerned about the health and well being of their students, some feel that the university is doing all that it can to keep the campus community safe.

Liv Coleman, associate professor of political science and international studies, has been teaching classes outside under the tent located just outside of the Graduate and Health Studies building and says she has felt safe in doing so.

"I really like teaching under the tent," said Coleman. "I'm hopeful and optimistic we might actually be able to get another tent for next semester."

Faculty have noticed the efforts that the university has taken to create a safe environment for faculty, staff, and students, but some faculty are thankful specifically for the work of Ronald Vaughn, president of UT.

"The president has bled for this university," said Juliet Davis, associate professor of communication and program director of advertising and public relations. "He has no personal stock in whether this university fails or not, but he's dedicated, and that dedication inspires me."

Faculty members have expressed a great deal of support for the decision to bring students back to campus for the Fall semester, but some have expressed great concern.

According to Kacy Tillman, associate professor of English and writing, there has not been enough time to test the long-term impacts that COVID-19 has on college-age individuals.



*Photo by Austyn Keelty/The Minaret*

"We don't really understand everything about COVID-19 which means, by definition of this pandemic, we're going to be somewhat unprepared just because of the nature of the disease," said Tillman.

Another concern is that faculty were not allowed to decide whether they would conduct Fall classes remotely or face-to-face.

"The only way faculty were allowed to go remotely is if the faculty or a member of their family put them into the high-risk category for COVID-19," said William Myers, associate professor of political science and international studies.

There are also additional protocols that some faculty feel should be utilized this semester to further prioritize the health of the entire campus.

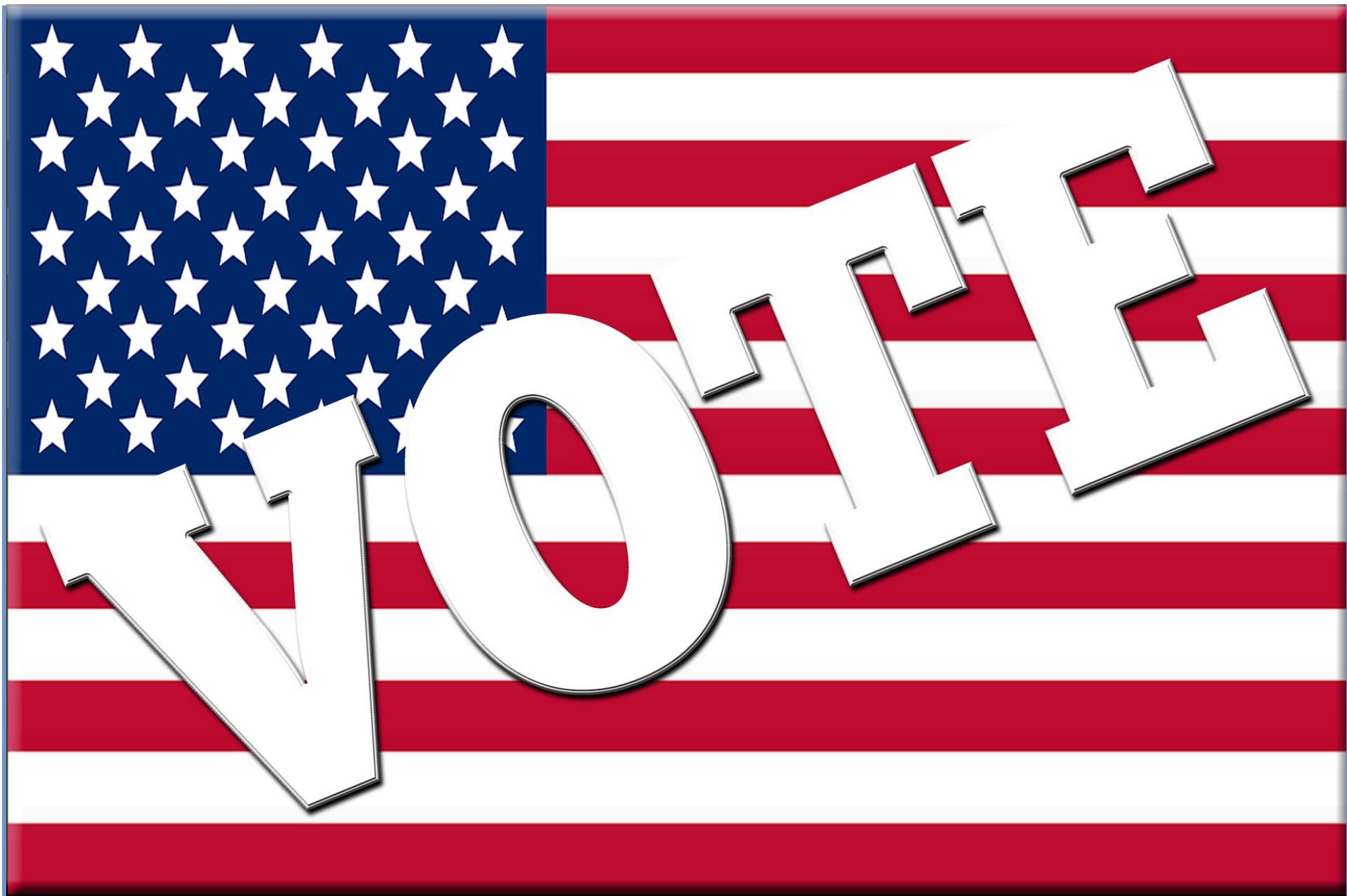
"The major thing missing is the testing," said Myers. "When the university started talking about what their plans were going to be, there wasn't really a testing plan; they said they were only going to test people that were symptomatic."

*The Spartan Shield Health Safety Plan* states that any students who display symptoms of COVID-19 are to contact the Dickey Health and Wellness Center to make an appointment. Students are then supposed to self-quarantine until they can get tested.

The plan does not require everyone on campus to take a COVID-19 test.

"Safe face-to-face requires a ton of testing and that's incredibly expensive, but other universities are doing it," said Myers. "If all we're doing is testing people that have symptoms, then that is not safe face-to-face"

As of Friday, Sept. 11, there have been a total of 111 positive COVID-19 cases reported at UT since the start of the semester. Eighty-seven of the positive cases were reported between Friday, Sept. 4 and Friday, Sept. 11.



## UT Enhances Opportunities to Vote in November

**Lily Shayani**

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Some may agree that 2020 has been a hectic year. With news circling around topics of COVID-19, the upcoming election may be the last thing on some people's minds. However, Senator Bernie Sanders stated that "this is the most important election of our lifetimes," in a New York Times article last April.

"Historically, young adults have voted at lower rates than older cohorts," stated Campus Vote Project. "However, we saw a modest increase in student turnout from 2012 to 2016 and a tremendous improvement in youth turnout

from 2014 to 2018."

Millennials and Gen Z will be the largest share of eligible voters in 2020, but because of their lower voting rates have not been the largest share of the electorate in previous elections, according to Campus Vote Project.

The University of Tampa has two main political clubs that students can easily become involved in: UT College Democrats and UTampa College Republicans. Both are student-run organizations dedicated to educating their peers on politics and spreading their party's message.

"This year's election is crucial in determining the future of the United States," said Claire Breden, president of UT Democrats. "Our international reputation has been tarnished, the current administration denies the severity

of climate change, black bodies are being murdered at the hands of the state, immigrants are being mistreated at the border, COVID-19 has left millions unemployed... This election will determine the future."

Throughout the next few months UT Democrats will be registering student voters in the Vaughn Courtyard on campus and hosting meetings via Zoom to inform voters on pressing issues.

When asked what first-time voters should know going into this election, she responded that many students were unaware that "a student attending college in Florida (that is a U.S. citizen), regardless of their home-state, can register and vote in Florida." To keep up on all events, follow @utdemocrats on Instagram.

The mission of UTampa College Republicans is to “educate students on politics, elections, and the Republican agenda, help elect conservative candidates, and to ultimately develop future leaders of the conservative movement.”

In preparation for the November election, the club will be hosting guest speakers running for election. Some of these candidates include Congressman Jeff Van Drew from New Jersey, District 2, and Christine Quinn, running for Florida’s 14th Congressional district. They will also be hosting watch parties for the Presidential debates and Vice Presidential debate, according to John Farinelli, president of UTampa College Republicans.

In addition, they will also be registering students to vote. “A first time voter should know that outside forces are always trying to persuade you to believe different things,” said Farinelli. “While a first time voter should be respectful and listen, they should be critical and question their talking points. Their vote is their vote, no one can force you to vote a certain way.” To keep up with UTampa College Republicans, you can follow their instagram @uterepublicans.

The university itself has also put certain things in place to encourage voting this year in conjunction with Student Government.

Much of what UT is doing is through social media. The hashtag #UTampaVotes2020 was created to get students engaged and excited about voting, according

to Juliana Fray, director of communications for Student Government.

In addition, Fray’s interview with Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections can be found on UT’s Facebook and Twitter pages. She encourages students to vote because “as a student at UT, the laws and ordinances of the City of Tampa affect our student population.” She reminds students that “politics is embedded in our daily routines– fight what you are passionate about.”

In addition to encouraging voting through social media, Ian McGinnity, director of the UT Office of Student Leadership and Engagement (OSLE), said they have been “concentrating on voter registration and then want to focus on voting and the different ways of doing so.”

Informing students of these different voting methods, especially mail-in (which is usually considered “early voting”) may be more important than ever because of COVID-19 posing as a serious threat in traditional voting booths.

There are many other ways that UT encourages voting, such as rewarding 40 ACE points to honors students who can prove they voted. A full UTUniversity of Tampa action plan can be found on [allinchallenge.org](http://allinchallenge.org).

## Important Dates

Early Voting: Oct. 24-31, 2020

Election Day: Nov. 3, 2020

For deadlines on absentee ballot request forms, check individual state guidelines.

**“This year’s election is critical in determining the future of the United States.”**

- President of UT Democrats, Claire Breedon



All photos courtesy of Pixabay



Photo courtesy of UT Office of Public Information and Publications

# Research Project Protocol Adjusted for Safety

**Julianna Walter**

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COVID-19 created an array of issues for education across the country. Particularly, The University of Tampa's Office of Research and Inquiry have had to come up with creative solutions to do their field work both remotely and hybrid mix. But many students and faculty are skeptical if UT would set them up with the appropriate tools to get the full research experience.

Eric Freundt, the director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI), believes that the university has been doing their best within the parameters of COVID-19 restrictions.

"As far as students who are doing independent research with faculty mentors or doing research through one of the grants that OURI provides, almost all of the students are able to continue working on their projects with faculty while still adhering to the health and safety guidelines including physical distancing and face coverings," said Freundt.

During the 2020 Spring semester, all classes at UT, including research, were transitioned to fully online. For many professors and students, this posed an issue of quickly having to change the direction of their projects. This Fall

issues the same problem as independent research is done either completely remote or in a hybrid mix, based on a case-by-case basis.

Sophia Pisano, a junior political science major working alongside Mary Anderson, professor of political science. Their project involves research on first ladies' agendas while their husbands were in office.

"Before COVID, we would have weekly meetings in the Sykes building," said Pisano. "However, due to the restrictions we meet over zoom once a week and work on our project throughout the week on our own time. Dr. Anderson has been great with being transparent with us and always making [herself] reachable."

Freundt said that the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiries understands that students are losing valuable experience by having to transition these classes into online courses. For each independent research project, the opportunity to present their findings at a conference is one of the most important pieces of the course and experience.

"Currently our research students are limited to attending virtual conferences," said Freundt. "Although these can be great opportunities for students to talk about what they've found, the quality of interactions online often doesn't replicate the experience of being in person at a conference, especially when it comes to networking, learning about grad programs, and meeting others in one's field."

Due to students missing out on valuable research opportunities, like these in-person conferences, the

research department has extended the deadline on research fellowships so that student's grant money for traveling may be used throughout the next year. This plan is to allow time for travel and large gatherings to become safe yet again.

Ryan Welch, assistant professor of political science at UT, currently teaches the senior research seminar in international studies, where his research with students has been interrupted due to travel restrictions. Welch is working on two separate independent research projects with two UT students, Katie Sturmer and Christina Pasca.

"I travel to several academic conferences each year to present my research in progress," said Welch. "Doing so allows me to collect criticism of my work from experts in my field [and] strengthen my research projects before sending them out for publication. When COVID shut down safe travel, it shut down many of those opportunities."

Students, whether in political science or biology research, are all encouraged to continue their projects to the best of their ability. The OURI, like the rest of UT, hopes that independent research will return back to its normal routine when health and safety are no longer a concern.

"I feel as if communication is key. The easier it is to get in contact with your professors the easier it is for the project to run smoothly," said Pisano. "It is important to be adaptable, we don't know how learning will change in these next month's so keep an open mind."

# ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

## The Show Must Go On for the Theatre Department



Photos by of Romelo Wilson/The Minaret

### Kennedy Haugen

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As students at The University of Tampa return to campus for the Fall 2020 semester, various programs are figuring out how to operate under COVID-19 regulations. This semester, the theatre department is experiencing massive changes when it comes to how shows are run.

“For the school, I think we’re required to do two shows a semester, so it looks different this year,” said Julia Mason, senior musical theatre major. “Specifically in how we’re running the shows, we’re not doing traditional musicals we’re doing more cabaret styled pieces where everyone can be socially distanced and not interact with each other.”

UT’s theatre department is slated to have three productions this fall: a virtual radio play of *Alice in Wonderland*, an in-person performance of variety show *Vaudeville Today*, and another in-person performance of *Sondheim on Sondheim*, a musical revue.

“It’s a very diverse sort of theater production schedule but it is allowing us to enable our students to perform,” said Michael Staczar, assistant dean of the college of arts and letters, and chair and associate professor of speech, theatre and dance. “And [it allows] us as audience members to

participate in the production either in person or virtually dependent on the show.”

Staczar said that for the shows that will be in-person this semester, only UT students, faculty and staff are allowed in the audience, to lower the risk of outside community members potentially infecting the space.

“For the radio play and the vaudeville play we just submitted video auditions,” said Ashley Clark, senior theatre major. “Like for the radio play you would just record yourself performing a piece of literature or something. But with vaudeville we would come up with our own ideas and pitches for that and submit them over video.”

“Students involved in *Vaudeville Today* are in charge of directing and coming up with their own skits, going to director Bob Gonzalez for feedback along the way,” said Clark. All rehearsals for the show are set to be done virtually until one to two weeks before opening night, Thursday, Nov. 8 at Falk Theatre.

“It is definitely a lot more different than it usually is, but I mean we’re still doing theatre, it’s still going on, which a lot of people in general in the world, a lot of theatre is stopping because of corona which sucks,” said Mason.

The theatre department has implemented several protocols for their upcoming productions. “There are

no costumes, the students will have to use and supply their own clothing for the shows and the dressing rooms are prohibited from use due to their lack of space,” said Staczar. The department has also had to opt for low tech productions to meet the minimum amount of people to work on the shows safely.

“We’re always just sort of two or three steps ahead, knowing this is how we have to do it to move forward,” said Staczar. “And I think everybody so far has been really comfortable with how the process is moving forward.”

According to Clark, the biggest adjustment for students in the theatre department, outside of the way productions are run, is the lack of interaction between people. Typically, the theatre is very heavy in physical performances and it is a very weird time for people who are involved, said Clark.

“It is definitely terrifying in the sense that I kind of don’t have a career when I graduate,” said Mason, “I don’t know what it is going to look like in 2021, my fear is that in terms of summer stock, which is summer theatres that usually people in college or graduates do. I’m worried that they’re going to hire the ensemble that auditioned last year and was supposed to do it last year.”

# Netflix's Top 10 Summer Movies

**Loren Adams**

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Being in a global pandemic, summer was different for everybody. Most of us were stuck in our houses because of CDC recommendations. Thankfully, streaming services such as Netflix provided a source of entertainment that people could enjoy from their homes.

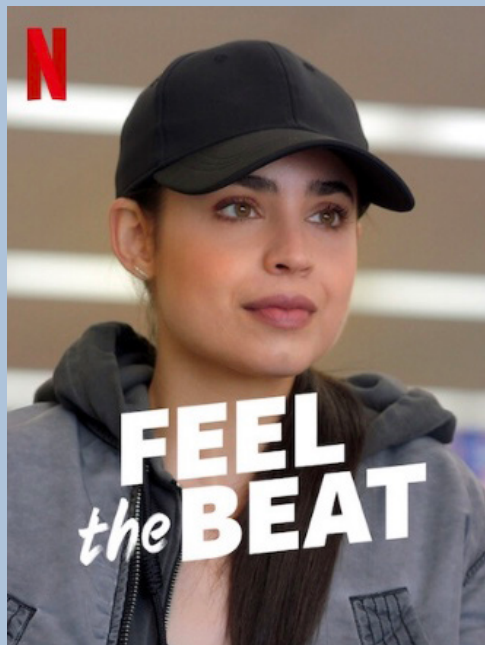
This year, Netflix has brought out a new selection of movies for families and friends to enjoy. From romance to animation, Netflix has added choices for every movie lover everywhere.

"Because the coronavirus has closed down theatres, the definition of 'summer movies' has changed, and thanks to the 'Top 10' feature, the world's most popular streaming is now providing a better idea of which movies truly have dominated the season outside of the box office," said Travis Bean, a Forbes contributor.

Bean further explained how he created a point system to determine how the movies are ranked.

"Basically, a movie is awarded points based on where it lands on Netflix's Daily Top 10," said Bean. "If a movie holds the first spot, it gets ten points and then you go down the line: nine points for the number two, eight points for number three and so on."

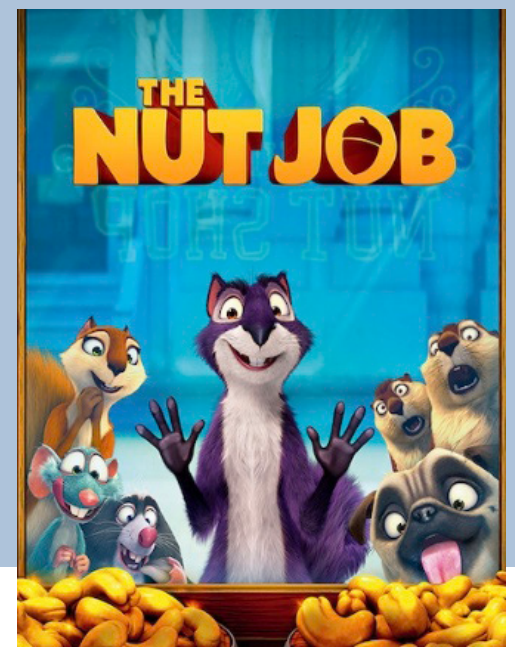
So based on this point system, this is the Top 10 Netflix movies for this summer.



## #10 - *Feel the Beat* - 79 points

*Feel the Beat* was released on Friday, June 19. The film is a drama filled with lots of dancing and humor. The film is about a young woman by the name of April who returns to her home in Wisconsin and is recruited to train a group of young dancers for a competition.

*All photos courtesy of Netflix*



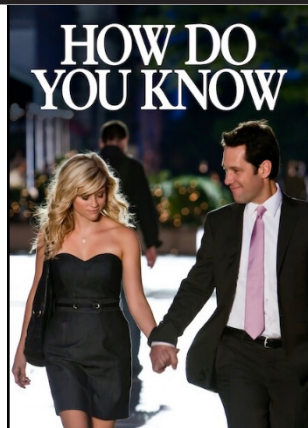
## #9 - *The Nut Job* - 87 points

This animated film was released in 2014. However, the seven-year-old film was just released on Netflix in June. This animation is about an exiled squirrel helping his former pack member survive by raiding a nut store.



**#8 - Fatal Affair - 98 points**

This thriller was released on Tuesday, June 16. The film is about a woman trying to mend her marriage and goes off to visit an old friend, only to realize he is a threat and a force to be reckoned with.



**#7 - How Do You Know - 102 points**

How Do You Know was released a decade ago but made its way to Netflix in July. This romantic comedy is about a young woman who takes the time to reflect on her life while in a love triangle.



**#6 - Despicable Me - 103 points**

This animated comedy film was also made a decade ago. In this film, a crooked mastermind uses three girls who are orphans for a scheme. However, he sees that their love for him is making him a better person.



**#5 - Desperados - 114 points**

This Netflix original is a romantic comedy and was released on Friday, July 3. It focuses on how a young woman finds herself in panic mode after she sent a fuming email to her boyfriend and hurries to Mexico to try and delete it.



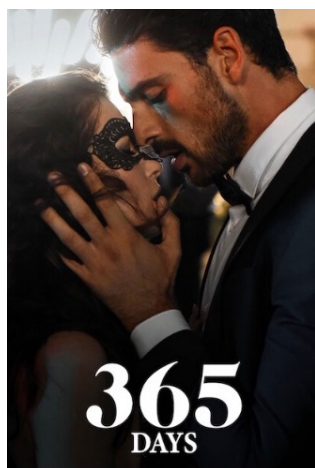
**#4 - Kissing Booth 2 - 131 points**

This Netflix original is a sequel to Kissing Booth from 2018. This sequel is focused on Elle, a senior in high school who's juggling college applications, a long-distance relationship and a new friend.



**#3 - The Old Guard - 179 points**

The Old Guard is also another Netflix original and was released on Friday, July 10. This action and adventure filled film is about a secret team of immortal mercenaries that are endangered and must fight for their identity.



**#2 - 365 Days - 188 points**

This film was released on Friday, Feb. 7, and is another Netflix original. This movie is about an Italian Mafia member who gives a young woman 365 days to fall in love.



**#1 - The Lorax - 189 points**

This Dr. Seuss film originally came out in 2012. According to Bean, The Lorax was the number one hit of July. This animation is an adaptation of one of Dr. Seuss's books which confronts the issue of environmental destruction.

# Social Media: A Critical Marketing Tool in 2020

**Lisa Strifolino**

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Local businesses across Tampa Bay are utilizing old and new social media techniques to keep customers engaged and discussing the role that it plays in their stores amid the COVID-19 virus.

The state-wide lockdown in Florida that was put into place in early April forced many customers to shift from in-store to online shopping. With this shift, local Tampa businesses such as Salt Pines, a men's clothing store that has a following of over 5.6K people on their Instagram page, have explained the importance of using social media to stay in contact with their customers.

"Social media is a tool that lets us stay in touch with our customers and engage with them," said Andrew Smith, founder of Salt Pines. "It has been a great way to familiarize the shoppers with our brand, and stay connected with them at the same time."

Smith expressed how helpful having an online presence has been in these uncertain times since quarantine began.

Sorrento Sweets, a local Italian bakery in Hyde Park Village in Tampa with an Instagram following of over 1.7K, has also shared similar feelings about the way that social media has come into play since the outbreak of the virus, and the way that it has helped them to keep their business up and running.

"Social media has overall been very helpful during the pandemic, and it has been a great way to communicate to our customers," said Stephen Reyes, who runs digital marketing at Sorrento Sweets. "People's preferences have shifted to online shopping because they feel safer at home during this time. This is how people shop now, so having this type of content online has become more helpful and more relevant than ever."

Reyes explained how there have been new social media techniques that he and his team have utilized in order to receive the most engagement from their consumers. One of these techniques includes reaching out to social media influencers who have a large following, so that they can post about the brand on their own platforms to give them as

much exposure as possible.

"People who we reach out to and are engaged with the platform become brand ambassadors," Reyes said regarding their social media technique. "With so many more people spending time online nowadays, the more voices online discussing your brand can always be a great thing."

Salt Pines has their own engaging social media technique that they said has been working very well for their brand.

"We've been doing a Free Tee Tuesday," said Smith. "It's a contest that we hold each week through our social media where we give away one Salt Pines t-shirt to a lucky follower who enters. The contest always tends to receive a lot of engagement from customers."

Sorrento Sweets and Salt Pines both expressed hope that their social media techniques will continue to engage customers in the online world during this pandemic.

You can keep up with these local businesses on their Instagrams: [@sorrentosweets](#) & [@saltpines](#).



Photo courtesy of [@SorrentoSweets/Instagram](#)



Photo courtesy of [@SaltPines/Instagram](#)

# THE MINARET

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**Missed our last issue?  
(September 11, 2020)**



SCAN FOR THE MINARET VOLUME 87, ISSUE 2



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

# The Disappointment of Being a 2020 Senior

**Robin Bakker**

*Opinion Copy Editor*

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I can't believe that 16 years of schooling has led me to graduate college early and I don't even get to walk across the stage to prove any of it. Instead, I get to see my name scroll across a screen to show that I finished school and can go out into the adult world.

Earlier in March, I felt bad for the seniors who found out that their last years were cut short and their graduation was cancelled. My first thoughts were actually how glad I was to not be in their position. I guess this is the work of karma now that my graduation is the same as theirs.

Freshman year, which seems like an eternity ago, I made the decision to try and graduate early. As much as I wanted to study abroad, I thought to myself that I would rather get schooling over with. However, over this past winter break, I started to look into going abroad again. My main focus was to go to London, and to avoid having to actually get a big-girl job.

I had found the perfect opportunity to intern in London. I could get some credit for it and it would only be a few weeks but I would have been able to go in the Spring just before graduation. My mom was all on board for me and even got excited about coming to visit. I had until September to finish applications and forms so I didn't worry about them until I went back home for quarantine when I had nothing better to do.

I had an interview and more forms to fill out before I was fully accepted to go. It was one of the happiest moments for me of 2020. And of course, I jinxed that. Just as I was approaching the deadline for sending in the deposit, I got the email from UT stating that all study abroad options for the full school year were cancelled. My heart dropped to my stomach. But, I read carefully and it also stated that if the program itself isn't canceled I could still go and just have it not be under UT.

I had some hope. I emailed my advisor for the program and she told me that I must have not gotten the email because my internship had also been canceled. When I was at a point in my life where nothing had gone right, it felt like it just kept getting worse.

I had no idea what to do. I am already taking 18 credits this semester but need 22 to graduate. I am surely not taking a whole semester just to take four credits, so I made the decision to take a winter class for the last credits and graduate early (if possible). I got accepted for an internship this semester and will hopefully get all the credits I need to finish school by January.

The only step after graduating is to be a part of the adult world. I am deeply terrified. This internship that I had lined up was supposed to be similar to what I want to do with my life. I was going to see if I just wasted the past four years in the wrong major. I was supposed to get connections in my field. It was going to look great on my resume.

I have always tried to stay positive on things and look for a bright side, but for this, I come up with nothing. I just see myself after a crappy virtual graduation with no idea what to do with my life and where I am going to end up.

They say everything happens for a reason, but I really wanted to do this internship in London. If I don't end up going to London in the next few years to make up for this, I'll be pretty upset at the universe.



# We Can No Longer Keep Up

**Emily Cortes**

*Staff Writer*

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The Kardashians announced the retirement of their reality TV show after 20 seasons.

“After what will be 14 years, 20 seasons, ... we are beyond grateful to all of you who’ve watched us for all of these years” is how Kim, Kourtney, and Khloe Kardashian signed off via Instagram announcing their final season will air in 2021. Whether you tune in for the show, rant on social media about how fake their bodies are, or even if you purchase a pair of Yeezy’s, you are supporting their brand. There’s a cliché saying in public relations that “all publicity is good publicity” and although ethically it doesn’t always hold true, with the Kardashians, it usually does.

To retrace this family’s dynasty, we have to begin with Kris Jenner’s first husband and father to Kourtney, Kim, Khloe, and Rob, Robert Kardashian Sr. He was a well-known lawyer in the Los Angeles area, and was friends with OJ Simpson. Robert would later represent OJ throughout his murder trial against his wife and a waiter from a restaurant she attended— he was returning her glasses.

Although Kris Jenner and Robert Kardashian were

divorced before the OJ trial began, the high profile situation brought attention to the family and friends of Nicole Brown, including Kris and her new husband, Caitlyn Jenner, then named Bruce Jenner. Through Kris Jenner’s celebrity network, her children quickly became familiar friends with other young adult stars. Kourtney got a small role on a reality TV series about California kids ranching for the day, and Kim became friendly with Paris Hilton, who she later styled and clubbed with.

It wasn’t until Kim’s infamous sex tape with rapper RayJ was released that Kris Jenner decided to capitalize off of her daughter’s moment in the spotlight. The Kardashians quickly got a TV deal with the E! Network and producer Ryan Seacrest. As Americans gradually became accustomed to Kim and Kris’ posh lifestyle and melodramatic antics, they also got to know the rest of the Kardashian-Jenner clan.

This larger than life family has not only grown up and raised their own families on TV, but they’ve been able to launch individual brands and partnership lines. They have tapped into every market, from makeup, to clothing, to lifestyle, and even the tech world, and their

“Mom-ager,” Kris, receives 10% of whatever each child makes. That’s how you run a family business.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Kardashians have impacted many aspects of our modern culture. People get plastic surgery to have “Kylie Jenner lips” and use waist trainers to be as slim thick as Kim. Yes, these things weren’t invented by the Kardashians, but most people didn’t pay attention to these things, until they saw how good the Kardashians made it look.

To quote my roommate, a fellow Kardashian fan, Connor Gibbons, “I think you should leave the party when it’s fun, you don’t want to be the last one at the party.” This alludes to the perfect timing to separate their brands from their reality TV branch. Each family member has evolved and now has an image and wealth to protect, aside from TV.

Kim and Kanye West have especially had a difficult time in the media lately, as they publicly battle his mental illness and protect themselves from the harsh commentary regarding his illness, that was not a part of the agreement when they began filming the show. The show was a tool to get this family into a position of power to have an impact on the world. Regardless of how they make you feel and if you support their brands or not, you’ve been a part of the modern culture they’ve helped shape, and they thank you.



Photo courtesy of [@kimkardashian/Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/kimkardashian/)

# Greek Life Welcomes Online Recruitment

By Eleanor Malmgren





All photos taken prior to coronavirus pandemic.

All photos courtesy of @UTFSL/Instagram

## Eleanor Malmgren

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On Friday, Sept. 4, The University of Tampa Interfraternity Council announced on Instagram that fraternity recruitment is to be pushed online as a response to COVID-19. Following this announcement, sororities were told by the UT Panhellenic Executive Board they had to cease all in-person events on and off campus.

Sorority recruitment at UT will commence on Friday, Sept. 18, and will end with bid day on Sunday, Sept. 20.

UT Panhellenic has planned to hold virtual recruitment since June, as a response to COVID-19. However, they expressed to the chapters that they possibly could hold a socially distanced bid day on-campus, with individual members coming at different times as to not break COVID laws. With this new update ceasing all in-person bid day events, sororities are trying to figure out how to hold a virtual, but fun, bid day.

As a member of a sorority at UT, I think that it's smart to have moved the majority of recruitment online. The first few rounds of recruitment are typically face-to-face, with

sometimes hundreds of people in the same room, which would be hard to have in-person and socially distanced.

With having access to Zoom and other technologies, I believe it was necessary for Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) at UT to make the switch.

I have friends in sororities at state schools who had non-socially distant bid days, sometimes without masks on. Seeing these pictures on Instagram made me nervous, and sure enough, the COVID cases climbed in the following weeks.

I understand that this is not an option at UT, and would result in an increase in COVID cases. But with methodical precautions, I believe that sororities could have held small socially distanced bid days on-campus.

Bid day is one of the best memories most sorority members have from their college experience. It's a day when you are welcomed into a new community with open arms.

"As nerve wracking as it was getting my bid day card, as soon as I opened it, it felt amazing," said Jenna Hill, sophomore member of Delta Gamma. "You can't really compare it to anything else. I feel bad for the new pledge class who doesn't get to share that experience."

With this new announcement, sororities at UT are

getting creative, trying to make it as special as possible for the future new members.

"It's not the easiest thing considering it's all virtual this year, but I've planned some fun bonding activities via Zoom so we can all get to know each other better on the new members first special day in our sorority," said Morgan Finger, junior member of Delta Zeta.

Fraternities at UT have also recently made the change to host all events over Zoom. Their recruitment week will commence Sunday, Sept. 20.

It's not an ideal situation – members of these communities want to find new members that will reflect their values and will click with other members. It will be hard to get the best impression from someone through a laptop screen.

FSL at UT is doing all they can to decrease the risk of spreading COVID-19. They've been advocating for students to wear masks and threatening members and chapters with consequences if they break UT's COVID rules. Although I believe bid day could be carried out in a socially distant and safe manner, I respect and trust this decision as they're just looking out for the safety of the students.

## Tampa Bay Rays Overcome Cold Streak

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The Tampa Bay Rays have the best record in the American League. They also just made history by starting all pure lefties. This comes right after a loss to the Boston Red Sox in the first game of their series. This is the first time this has happened in Major League Baseball in the modern era. It worked out against the bottom of the conference Boston Red Sox, winning 11-1 in their second game on Friday, Sept. 11. In the East Division, the Rays have a 3.5 game lead over the Blue Jays with 15 games left to play. Tampa is on a roll of confidence, going for more than a month without consecutive losses.

Before the game on Friday, Tampa was not feeling it from the offense. In the last nine games, they were averaging 3.7 runs per game and batting at .192 for all of September. In August, Tampa Bay Rays were averaging 5.3 runs per game and an OPS of .798, which explains why they're on top of their conference. One reason for the cold streak could be the loss of Yandy Díaz, who is suffering from an injury in the right hamstring, and the loss of Mike Zunino, who's injury is on the left oblique. Díaz does lead the team with a .428 on-base percentage.



Photo courtesy of Pikist



Photo courtesy of WordPress

“There’s no reason to start stressing and start freaking out,” said second baseman Brandon Lowe while interviewed by *Fox Sports Florida*. “It’s been a couple of games that have been bad, but I think we have proven that we’re not going to keep losing ball games.”

He was right; they rediscovered the offense that has been carrying them for most of the season. Nate Lowe hit two home runs and brought in four runs Friday night. With pitcher Blake Snell holding the Red Sox scoreless for five innings. He only gave up five hits and two walks and struck out five. Yoshi Tsutsugo also hit a home run, which stopped his three-game skid. The Rays entered the game trailing Oakland by percentage points for the American League’s best record; they come on top for now with that win.

The Rays manager stacked his lineup with pure lefties to counterattack right-hander, Andrew Triggs, making his second professional start. This helped them score 11 runs with 12 hits at Tropicana Field. They were the most scored by the Rays since they scored 12 against the Miami Marlins on Sunday, Aug. 30. Since the Blue Jays lost to the Mets 18-1, Tampa holds a 4.5 game lead in the American League East with 15 games left.

“We had a good time with it,” Lowe said. According to Rays manager Kevin Cash, the pure left lineup worked. He said they would not be repeating the all-left lineup for their next game. “Seeing what the offense can do, that was exciting,” Tampa Bay Rays pitcher Snell said on *Fox Sports Florida*.

When Boston’s coach, Roenicke, saw Ray’s lineup before the game, he thought there was some typo. He couldn’t believe what the Rays were doing.

# Hit or Miss: Limited Playtime in Professional Sports

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After a four month pause, sports are finally back; kind of. Professional teams are navigating and adapting to the obstacles that COVID-19 pose such as no fans, a shorter schedule, frequent medical checks and, for the National Hockey League (NHL) and National Basketball Association (NBA), being placed in a so called “bubble” where they are forced to be away from friends and family for a few months. Despite these difficulties, teams are making the most of their opportunities and performing at an extremely high level.

Some teams have benefited from the four-month hiatus and have been able to perform at high levels since their return. One example: the NBA’s Los Angeles Clippers. During the regular season, the Clippers were already expected to be one of the NBA’s best teams as they added superstar forwards Kawhi Leonard and Paul George during the 2019 offseason. However, during the regular season, Leonard and George both struggled with injuries and were never really able to get into a rhythm during the season.

Because of the depth of the Clippers, they were still able to finish as the second-best team in the Western Conference winning 49 games. The four-month break allowed Leonard and George to rest and rehab and gave them time to get fully healthy when the NBA announced the season would resume on Friday, July 31.

Since the playoffs began, the Clippers defeated the Dallas Mavericks in six games in the first round and currently have a commanding three games to one lead against the Denver Nuggets in the second round. In the playoffs, forward Kawhi Leonard is averaging 29 points per game along with 10 rebounds and five assists per game.

“The bubble is allowing us to build chemistry faster since we’re spending more time with each other,” said Leonard in a postgame interview after game 1 against the Dallas Mavericks. “We’re definitely enjoying this journey, but we still got a lot to build from and work on.”

Other NBA teams like the Miami Heat have found success in relying on their young players like rookie guard Tyler Herro. As they advance to their first Eastern Conference Finals since 2014, they upset the number one seeded Milwaukee Bucks.

Not having to deal with a toxic road atmosphere of the NBA playoffs has allowed the younger players on the Heat to relax and just play fundamental basketball.

“We have a lot of ballers, I’ve been trying to tell y’all that,” said Heat forward Jimmy Butler in a postgame interview. “But most importantly we do everything as a team. On and off the floor. And we’ll continue to do that moving into the conference finals.”

On the other hand, Major League Baseball began their 60-game sprint on Thursday, July 23. A normal baseball season is 162 games, so eliminating 102 games off of the schedule is a drastic change that impacts every team. Every game has meaning, and losses hold more significance.

One team that is not benefiting from the changes, are

the New York Yankees. The Yankees had extremely high expectations going into the season after an American League Championship Series (ALCS) appearance and signing the most wanted free agent, pitcher Gerrit Cole.

The Yankees started off the 60-game season strong winning nine of their first 11 games. However, unfortunate injuries started to pile on as star outfielders Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton were put on the 10-day injured list, along with their emerging young third baseman Gio Urshela and starting pitcher James Paxton.

In a shortened season, injuries are more impactful and can make or break a team’s season.

Yankees manager Aaron Boone expressed hope in a pregame interview.

“Injuries happen. We feel for the individual and want to get them the best care possible,” said Boone. “From what I am hearing they are on an upward slope and I am confident that we will get them back in the next few weeks.”

Baseball is a really streaky sport and is all about who is hot at the time, not necessarily who has the most superstars. Teams like the Tampa Bay Rays, Philadelphia Phillies, and San Diego Padres have all gone on 10-game winning streaks at some point in the season, putting them in playoff contention, whereas before the season they weren’t even being talked about.

The sports world has gone through some drastic changes in the last few months, but have been nothing short of entertaining. With the National Football League (NFL) returning on Thursday, Sept. 10, there is sure to be even more fireworks in the world of sports.



All photos courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

# Teams Say Goodbye to Mascots, Cheerleaders, Fans



*Photo courtesy of Business Insider*

By Jessie Tobin

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With the 2020 National Football League (NFL) season kicking off on the night of Thursday, Sept. 10, fans watching from home may notice that they are not the only ones missing in the stadiums. In the midst of the pandemic, the NFL will be adding new protocols that will limit the amount of people allowed on the sidelines. Along with some smaller rules that are intended to help reduce the chances of the coronavirus being spread.

The NFL and NFL Referee Association decided that anyone who is considered non-essential will not be allowed onto the field, this includes cheerleaders, mascots, and some reporters. Though, this does reduce the amount of people possibly spreading or being exposed to the virus. It also means that many people employed by the league must find ways to adjust to the changes.

"No doubt, this whole season will be different as it has the last six months, but we think the energy is there," said Peter O'Reilly, the NFL's Executive Vice President for Club Business and League Events in a *Fox 9 News* interview.

Some teams may turn to alternative forms of media to get their entertainment and fan base more involved. The San Francisco 49er's for example, will host a Pre-Game Live that will air for all 16 regular season games and will be located at Levi's® Stadium before every home game. Gold Rush Cheerleaders, will now be able to perform for 49er fans before the games begin rather than on the field.

"Look, it's smart, the league is doing everything it can to reduce the opportunities that someone is going to walk into the stadium with the virus, shedding the virus, and sparking an outbreak," said Mike Florio, a sports writer and radio host for *NBC Sports* on his podcast *ProFootballTalk*. "I know there's going to be people that are upset about it, but for the most part, football is still football. And if the league is doing what it can to ensure that there won't be an outbreak and the full football season can be played, I got no problem with it at all!"

Similarly to cheerleaders and mascots, no local, network or national reporters will have their normal spots on the field. Depending on the stadium and network they are covering, reporters will either be placed in the first row of the stands in an area production crews will call "the moat" or watch from home like everyone else.

"My role is going to be hugely different in that I'm not allowed on the field," Michele Tafoya, a sideline reporter for *NBC*, said on a recent conference call with the *StarTribute*. She added being off the field is going to provide a lot of challenges, but she is eager to see how it all works out. "I'm bringing binoculars to the game for the first time in my career. I want to be able to see things up close like I usually can."

Another question reporters have is whether or not there will be halftime and post game interviews with players and coaches. According to *Sports Business Daily*, *NBC* is still working out

it's halftime and postgame interview plans. Reporters like Tafoya, may be able to conduct interviews over the phone with coaches or meet in the stands for a socially distanced interview.

"My initial reaction to the change was how am I supposed to do my job?" said Lisa Salters, a longtime sideline reporter, in an *ABC News 11* interview. Salters talked about how she will now have to think outside the box and report in ways she hadn't had to before. "It's definitely going to be unique, and it's definitely going to be a challenge."

According to an *ESPN* article written by Kevin Seifert, some of the smaller changes being added to game time protocols include home and away teams having to stay six-feet apart after games, avoiding handshakes and jersey exchanges. Plus, to limit the possible spread of virus droplets, referees will no longer have whistles but rather a handheld push button whistle.

Teams, fans, and reporters will start to adjust to the new "normal" as the season progresses. The energy surrounding the live game will definitely not be the same without cheerleaders and mascots on the sidelines. But hopefully these new protocols set in place will ensure a safe and lasting football season.



Photo courtesy of @PatPatriot/Twitter



Photo courtesy of Pixabay

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