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## We Are All Houghton Project Challenges School to Listen to Past and Present LGBTQ+ Experiences at Houghton

ERIN MAGGIO ('21)

2020 has been a year riddled with controversy, what with the U.S. Presidential Election looming, ongoing discussions concerning the best handling of COVID-19, and protests over racial tensions still dominating the streets of cities across the country. Small, rural Houghton has not been an exception to tensions and polarization, as disagreements have been anything but tepid, especially concerning the We Are All Houghton project recently rolled out by alumni Josh Duttweiler ('15) and Amy Coon ('14).

We Are All Houghton, presented during the alumni art exhibition RECOLLECTIVE (held September 4, 2020 to October 3, 2020 in the Ortlip Gallery), consisted of light projections of quotes by LGBTQ+ alumni around notable spots on Houghton's Campus, including buildings like Fancher Hall, Luckey Memorial, and Wesley Chapel. Quotes came from a group of recently graduated alumni—Collin Belt



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('15), Mitch Galusha ('14), Sally Jacoby Murphy ('13), Sarah Jacoby Murphy ('13), Holly Chaisson ('16), and Emilie Powles Ocock ('14)—along with some who opted to remain anonymous, including current students.

This project incorporated an anonymous survey which encouraged any person connected to Houghton College, whose sexual orientation and/or gender

identity is “unaccepted by the college”, to answer and participate in. The survey served purposes twofold: one, “to allow those who would like to participate in the show in the Ortlip gallery to do so,” as select quotes would be projected in the gallery in hopes of amplifying additional LGBTQ+ voices from the school, and two, to present findings to the college after the show's closure, so “ad-

ministration can both hear from and better understand its students,” the survey form explained.

Along with the physical exhibit in the Ortlip Gallery, the project has a website, [weareallhoughton.com](http://weareallhoughton.com), as well as a page on Instagram (@weareallhoughton) which currently has 705 followers (as of Monday, October 5). The website explains the background and purposes of the

project, introduces the alumni involved, and links to the survey. The Instagram page portrays photographs of several of the projections as well as quotes submitted as part of the survey.

As the website explains, the project was largely in response to Houghton College's involvement in the Supreme Court Cases regarding interpretation of Title VII and Title IX. The Supreme Court, in August 2020, concluded that firing an employee on the basis of being gay or transgender constitutes a violation of the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This is pertinent because it interprets that Title VII protects LGBTQ+ Employees. Houghton College's involvement, which became known to a group of alumni in August of 2019, was as an amicus curiae. Essentially, this means that they provided insight or a perspective to the court that they might not have considered or been aware of. The position that the amici took, which included

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## Tuition Reset Will Make Houghton College Best-Priced Christian College in the Nation

VANESSA BRAY ('21)

Houghton College is set to become the best priced Christian college in the nation. On September 22, 2020 Houghton announced its plan to reset the college's annual tuition price. This reset will take effect beginning in the fall of 2021 and every returning and incoming student will be eligible to receive the benefits of this plan. The college's tuition will be \$15,900 for the 2021-22 academic year (\$7,950/semester). Under this plan Room, Board and Fee prices have been frozen and will not increase next year. The reset is said to reinforce Houghton's mission “To provide high-quality Christian education to students



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from all socioeconomic backgrounds and life circumstances—including those impacted by COVID-19.”

Jason Towers, who worked alongside President Shirley Mullen, Dale Wright (Vice President for Finance), John Oden (Executive Director of Advancement Services and Operations), and Marianne Loper (Director of Student Finan-

cial Services) to develop this plan confirmed that they were working on this plan prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Towers said, “This work was started well before the pandemic. . . In looking at graduation trends, we saw a correlation between a student's decision to continue for all four years at Houghton and finances. Some students with very

high potential were unable to benefit fully from a Houghton education and we wanted to ensure that cost was not a barrier for students in their choice of education. The COVID-19 pandemic has created financial hardship for many families and accentuated the need for simplicity in the cost of college. . . This new published cost helps to remove confusion around

what a student will pay and makes Houghton an option for more families.”

When asked if Houghton intends to honor this plan indefinitely, Towers had the following to say: “We are committed to this new level of transparency and affordability. Will future years' tuition prices include small increases to compensate for inflation? At some point, that is certainly possible, but any changes will be based on the new tuition rate of \$15,900.”

Responses to this announcement varied among the student body. An anonymous sophomore excitedly stated, “I think that the tuition reset is super generous especially when so many families are struggling financially due to the current state of global health. I strongly believe that as Christians it is our duty to care for the less fortunate, and this tuition reset is a fantastic way to

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provide a Christian Liberal Arts education to those who might come from families that are struggling financially during these times.”

Senior Phoebe Mullen stated, “I have to admit that my first response to hearing about the tuition reset was not ‘That’s great!’ but ‘What are they going to cut? Where’s the money coming from?’ If it’s going to benefit students overall, and there’s funding to cover the change, then I’m all for it. My friends are mostly seniors, though, and they’re annoyed we’re not still going to be here for the change!”

According to the statement released by Houghton College’s Public Relations, the college raised \$41 million for student scholarships through the generosity of donors to the IMPACT Campaign for Greater Houghton. Returning students can expect the new tuition rates to be partnered with a revised financial aid process.

Marianne Loper, Director of Financial Services, shared her excitement for the future financial packages that will be available to students. “I cannot even express how thrilled I am to share it with everyone and talk through the math of how it will truly save families money. I have had the opportunity to walk a few students through what their packages will look like for 2021-22. Every student has been surprised and animated about the numbers. It is not just the numbers but it is [the] ease and ability to comprehend it. Students will be able to clearly see how the math worked and could follow every step. It has been so encouraging to me and confirms this move was the right thing for the college and students.”

With the 2021-2022 FAFSA being available as of October 1st, both Towers and Loper encourage students to start applying early. ★

## The Boulder Rolls Back into Production in 2020

PHOEBE MULLEN ('21)

The *Boulder* is back. A lot of students and newer professors may find themselves asking, “What’s the *Boulder*?” The *Boulder* is Houghton’s yearbook, which came out almost every year for nearly a century. In 2019, the book simply wasn’t finished.

This year, the *Boulder* is back on, and we, the yearbook staff, are very excited to announce that things are going well. Our yearbook has had a rough last few years, and it’s very odd being editor-in-chief of a yearbook that many students don’t even know exists. Often, I’ll say I’m on the yearbook staff, and I’m met with a blank look,

and “We have a yearbook?” This makes sense, I suppose, given that my class ('21) is the only one left on campus that has had a yearbook while we’ve been students here.

However, the project has many supporters. “I’m really pleased to see the *Boulder* being revived again!” says library staff member Michael Green ('17). “The Houghton yearbook has had such a long history, and it’s great to know that tradition will continue. The 2020-21 book in particular will be a very valuable resource for future generations of students trying to find out what Houghton was like during this unique year. I know from creating my year’s book how monumental the task of putting everything together can be, so I’m really excited to see what this year’s staff comes up with.” Green was editor of the *Boulder* in 2017.

It’s worth noting that the yearbook’s name comes from the memorial boulder placed near the entrance to campus, across from Fancher and next to the Houghton sign. It stands to mark the grave of Copperhead, a Seneca man who returned to live in Houghton after his people were forced off the land. He died in 1864 after a tragic fire that burned his cabin down, and was buried in a spot of his choosing by the creek, on private land where the gazebo behind Gillette now stands. However, by the 1910’s, his grave was beginning to erode. Houghton students advocated in the *Star* for his remains to be moved up to campus and the new grave marked in a permanent way, so his body wouldn’t be washed away. His remains were reinterred in 1914; the boulder itself was placed the following year.

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Houghton College, was that the language in Title VII (which also relates to Title IX), does not and should not include protection for LGBTQ+ employees.

After hearing of this, a group of alumni wrote a letter to President Shirley Mullen to voice their disappointment, both in Houghton’s decision to sign on the amicus brief, as well as their lack of communicating about it to current students and alumni. President Mullen responded, saying “The reason that Houghton signed the amicus brief was to say that the petitioner’s claims should be reviewed in Congress... The question at stake is whether the very best way to provide protection for LGBTQ+ persons is to ground that protection in the definition of ‘sex’ as that was established in Title VII and Title IX.”

The exhibit was in response to the college’s involvement in these Supreme Court cases, as well as the experiences of LGBTQ+ students at Houghton at large.

Responses have been multitudinous. Mullen shared an open letter which was posted on the school’s website (see: <https://www.houghton.edu/blog/an-open-letter-from-president-mullen/>). This addressed the issue and also introduced the panel

which they scheduled into Homecoming weekend: Houghton Alumni Family Dinner Conversations: Learning to Discuss Difficult Topics in a Polarized Context, which was held on Friday, October 2. Duttweiler was glad that this panel was being hosted, but “was disappointed that Amy and [him], as the artists of the project would not be included in any further conversation.”

In terms of general reactions, Duttweiler and Coon expressed their overwhelmed feelings at how many positive responses they received from both participants and allies, saying they received many personal messages of gratitude for the project and, overall, received nearly 100 survey responses from LGBTQ+ current students, alumni, and staff/faculty. Duttweiler said, “their stories are heart-breaking. It’s a sobering reminder of the pain that the college’s policies have caused.”

Of the matter, Coon shares similar sentiments, but wanted to add that she was “feeling a little disappointed in the reactions of those who are looking for a theological debate,” saying the project is not about that but rather “about truly listening to those who are hurting and learning how to sit in those feelings. I hope when people hear the hurt of their community, they then ask themselves how

they can help and what they can do better instead of arguing about who is right and who is wrong.”

Many of the responses from current students did take this theological approach in showing their disagreement with the project.

Cory Messerschmidt ('22) believes that the project is a direct attack on the principles of the college. “The college has a God-given duty to shepherd its students...you have to truly love someone to share the truth with them, and the individuals involved with this need to hear the truth of the biblical gospel. This is a great opportunity to love them, but instead we’ve given them a platform for their attack on the college,” he said.

Another student, Blythe Gilbert ('21), had a similar attitude, focusing more on the aspect of steering LGBTQ+ people away from “homosexuality, or any variety thereof, [which] is forbidden in the Bible.” As Messerschmidt said that Houghton should shepherd its students to the truth, Gilbert emphasized his belief that Christians are called not just to love, but to lovingly correct people to help them move closer to Christ. “To be sure, Houghton should tolerate and welcome LGBTQ students. I agree, certainly, that they should not be afraid to speak. However, they should not

expect a Christian institution to be anything less than truly Christian.”

Students who expressed their support of the movement focused less on the theological debate and arguments, and more on their gratitude for the movement, along with acknowledging the need for support and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ members of the Houghton community.

Emily Warner ('21) values the way that the project has called Houghton to act, both now and in the future. “Houghton has claimed to care deeply for its queer community. I would love for that to be true. We Are All Houghton is holding Houghton to its word—demanding that Houghton apologizes and does what it needs to ensure that queer students’ experiences are better in the future. I sincerely hope that Houghton will follow through and make concrete changes to care for and support the Houghton queer community, without feeling the need to remind us how wrong they think we are along the way.”

Skye Chaapel ('23) and Caroline Zimmerman ('24) both pointed out how the project has displayed how the LGBTQ+ community is marginalized and excluded from the overall population on campus, and thus shows the “overwhelming need for [this] representation,” as Zimmerman said. The project, in giving voices

to these people, both in alumni and those currently on campus, chipped away at just that.

Another major focus of many of the supportive responses to the project was the fact that it showed the deep pain that has been inflicted on the LGBTQ+ community on campus. “There may be backlash and misunderstandings, but our classmates, friends, and people we haven’t had the pleasure of meeting yet are hurting. I just hope that from this we learn to not corner someone into some category or theological argument, but learn to listen to understand,” said Rachel Caine ('23).

If nothing else, it is clear that We Are All Houghton has given voice to those who have not always had the platform to share their experiences safely, and that Houghton’s “community” may have work to do to reconcile that term we value so much with those who have felt anything but welcomed into the community here.

Duttweiler and Coon plan to continue the project “as long as it is helpful” and are seeking feedback on how to best go about doing this in the future. ★



**BOULDER** from page #2

In 1924, the yearbook was founded, and *The Boulder* was chosen as its name. An announcement in the STAR that year reads, “*The Boulder!*” Doesn’t that sound solid? That is to be the name of our annual, and we propose to make it lasting, like the boulder which is one of the dear landmarks of Houghton.” The name commemorated both Copperhead and Henry R. Smith, Jr., a deceased professor of English literature, who had headed the project to reinter Copperhead’s body. The first volume of the *Boulder* is dedicated to him.

“We are dedicated to creating a yearbook that will creatively memorialize this strange year,” says Frances Mullen (’23). In her role as Design Editor, she created the new logo, and will be the primary force behind the book’s design and overall look. “I love photography and design because it is so soothing, and bad design/layout makes me crazy,” she says. Now a political science major, Mullen was part of an art and design program at her high school and so has a lot of experience in that department.

Business Manager Mary Vandenbosch (’23) got involved because she enjoyed yearbook in high school. She’s helping out with photography, but she is also the treasurer, the contact person for the printer, and will be the person in charge of selling the book once it’s been put together. “My role is to help promote the book to the

Houghton community. I’m really excited for student engagement in this; it’s such a great historical record.”

A senior writing major with an intense interest in history, I started advocating for the yearbook’s return a year ago, when I discovered the 2019 volume was never finished. I was a volunteer in the college archives my sophomore year and a bit last fall, just before the former archivist, Laura Habecker, left for a job at the college archives of the New York State College of Ceramics, at Alfred University. She is now also the Town Historian of Caneadea. It was Laura who first told me about the yearbook’s abandonment, and encouraged me to bring it back to life. The yearbooks are a rich record of Houghton history we didn’t want to see go.

Supporting Boulder staff include Elise Koelbl (’22), and Vanessa Bray (’21). Both writing majors, Koelbl is taking pictures for the book, and Bray, who originally volunteered to help write captions, is currently helping schedule photography appointments with faculty and staff. Anyone who would like to support the yearbook staff, primarily in the area of photography and assisting with layout, can still reach out. Vandenbosch adds, “*The Boulder* is a great opportunity for students to get involved, and we would love to see you join us.” ★

**Coping with COVID: Houghton MANRRS, “Adapting and Thriving”**

RYAN OZZELLO (’21)

Whether we like it or not, most of what happens to us in our lives is not of our choosing. Good or bad, we find ourselves having to adapt to our new situations if we want to continue to grow. Like a plant uprooted and replanted in different soil, if we don’t learn our new situation, we will miss the beautiful rose buds and delicious red apples of our lives for others and ourselves to enjoy.

Our MANRRS chapter at Houghton College has sought to adapt right alongside its students this semester so that it can continue to provide them with tangible professional development opportunities, as well as excellent internship and career prospects.

For those of you who may not be familiar with MANRRS, it is a national organization with a mission to promote academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in agriculture, natural resources and related sciences. Practically, this looks like equipping individuals from minority groups with professional skills and opportunities in the expansive agriculture industry through webinars, conferences, workshops, competitions, and career fairs.

In light of in-person restrictions this semester, the chapter here at Houghton is leveraging

Houghton’s beautiful and expansive outdoor space to help students connect with each other and with the club. Additionally, they are making the best use of the virtual world by attending various online MANRRS webinars, conferences, and career fairs. Now more than ever, students on campus have the greatest access to MANRRS resources.

To kick things off this semester, Houghton MANRRS hosted a scavenger hunt at the Field of Dreams where students not only had a great time, but also learned more about the professional and agricultural world. While racing to complete all of the secret location challenges and solve the final riddle, students learned more about Houghton’s solar array, technology in the agriculture industry, and even how to foster better team meetings in class or in the workplace.

Mary Vandenbosch, President of Houghton MANRRS, says that “the scavenger hunt was a great opportunity to showcase how Houghton MANRRS is fun and dedicated to educating students about important topics.”

Alongside being adept at creating fun and educational opportunities for students, the organizers of Houghton MANRRS are also very knowledgeable and skilled in practices such as public speaking, leadership, and career development. This past weekend during the MANRRS Regional Conference, Mary Vandenbosch took first place in the Region 1

Impromptu Public Speaking Contest, qualifying her to compete at the 2021 national conference scheduled for April in Atlanta, Georgia. Held virtually this semester, students were able to compete in areas such as public speaking and interviewing, and participate in workshops focused on topics such as leadership, career development, diversity, and inclusion.

Ryan Ozzello, past president and current treasurer of Houghton MANRRS, attended three workshops focused on diversity and inclusion where he was able to actively engage with experienced panelists on topics about identity, social justice, how to navigate the workplace from a BIPOC lens, and better understand imposter syndrome. Speaking about his experience he said, “I can confidently say that I have grown in my understanding of current issues and my role in supporting a more just society with regard to race and identity.”

Our MANRRS chapter has adapted and is prepared to continue thriving this year. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss active participation, including professional development opportunities on campus and the national conference in the spring. Please contact us at houghton.manrrs@gmail.com or join us at our general chapter meeting, Thursday, October 8th at 7pm in the Java Conference room. We will be discussing upcoming events and community service opportunities.★



The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton College since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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The Houghton  
**STAR**

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Students playing a Purple &amp; Gold game of cornhole on the quad.

COURTESY OF MARY VANDENBOSCH

## Campus Changes Please, but Puzzle

BURTON BREWSTER ('23)

Legacies are built over time. The Houghton legacy continues to grow as students, alumni, and faculty create changes and celebrate victories. This year's Homecoming weekend gives another opportunity for Houghton to gather and connect. The Houghton Homecoming weekend is an opportunity for alumni and current students to build a legacy and celebrate the direction of our movement as a community.

This year, despite the given circumstances of COVID-19 restrictions, Homecoming maintains the same goal. Phyllis Gaerte, the Director of Alumni and Community Engagement, said that even though the delivery and platforms are different, the goal is still "to bring together the Houghton College community – alumni, students, families, and friends – to celebrate our rich heritage, discover what is new and current, and to envision the future together."

The main difference between this year and former years is the virtual aspect. The decision to move to a fully virtual Homecoming weekend was made early in the summer after the guidelines for reopening came from New York State and the Houghton PREP team. Most events will not be in person, but the schedule remains similar. "We will have the Greatbatch School of Music Concert, our Homecoming Legacy Chapel that features our annual alumni awards, class reunions that will be held via Zoom, an art exhibition, equestrian open house, the Highlander 5K, and more," said Gaerte. She encouraged students to go to the Houghton website where links to the programs will be posted.

Programs like "Hands on Houghton" and the Legacy Chapel display aspects of the community outside the student body. "Hands on Houghton" is a way for Houghton to showcase their academic departments, and these virtual activities include art, ornithology, and outdoor recreation.

Students' reactions to this year's schedule display the optimism and hopefulness of the student body, as well as some caution about the virtual aspect. Mallory Horn ('23) said, "I think it's awesome to see how even in the midst of such a unique season, Houghton has still found so many ways for the community to safely celebrate Homecoming and to connect with one another. I'm most looking forward to the homecoming concert!"

Timothy Lund ('23) responded, "I have never been to Homecoming before but the thought of doing it virtually seems a bit bizarre. I think given the COVID situation, a virtual Homecoming is the only way to go about things without creating a health risk... but still it's going to be quite odd, to say the least."

Purple and Gold Week leads to Homecoming weekend, and the week's events also look different because of the current guidelines. Like Homecoming, the events are mostly virtual, and CAB has planned ways to engage students wherever they are. AC Taylor, the Director of Student Engagement, said "The ultimate goal of Purple & Gold Week is to help foster school spirit and a sense of belonging for students at Houghton." He said that the goal is the same this year, but it needs to play out differently. Links are posted for virtual events throughout the week.

One of the events that presented the greatest challenge to translate into a world with COVID-19 restrictions was the Homecoming dance. CAB is hosting a Houghton Photo Stroll instead, which AC Taylor said allows for us to "maintain the dressing up with friends and making memories aspect of the dance while addressing student health and safety concerns of crowd size, social distancing, and time constraints."

To finish off the week, SPOT will be hosted virtually on Saturday at 10:00 PM. SPOT is a long-standing Houghton College talent show that features any Houghton student. The hosts for this year, Jakob and Ingrid Knudsen, decided on the theme "Masquerade" before the pandemic, and Ingrid said, "When the pandemic came our idea seemed even more applicable and we just kept going with it!"

Ever since he was a first-year student, Jakob wanted to host SPOT. "SPOT was something that felt quintessentially Houghton," he said, "Students working together to show off their awesome talents and/or goofy sides," he said. When his sister came to Houghton, they decided they wanted to host together.

Challenges due to COVID-19 restrictions meant that Jakob and Ingrid had to get creative with advertising, so they used Instagram as a way to let people know SPOT is still happening and to promote student involvement. They were afraid that because of

COVID-19 they wouldn't receive many submissions, but according to Jakob, "Houghton has more than exceeded our expectations," and they're excited about the submissions students and faculty have submitted.

Students can't gather in the chapel for SPOT like before, but Ingrid encourages watching while it's streaming on YouTube with roommates or other friends in a socially distanced way. "It is happening, and we want you there!" She said, "This is going to be the most

unique SPOT, at least we think, in Houghton's history! You will always remember the show that happened amidst the pandemic in 2020, and this will be the only one!"

The goals of all these events include celebrating Houghton's community and uniting the student body and the faculty. While the format of these programs will look different, students can still participate in meaningful ways.★

## Homecoming Looking "Virtually" the Same Despite Pandemic Restrictions

HANNAH FRASER ('23)

Thanks to the pandemic restrictions that have been put in place, the Houghton campus has had to adapt physically in a number of ways. Yet, the campus isn't the only thing that needed to adapt. Students also are being forced to confront the new changes on campus, and the response is slightly mixed.

The Dean of Students, Marc Smithers ('08), headed the Emergency Management Team when the pandemic initially struck. Since then, the "Preparing a Residential Education Plan Team" (P.R.E.P. Team) has been made to handle the pandemic situation which Smithers is still a chair of.

Speaking of chairs, in the words of Smithers there was a lot of thought put into the furniture around campus. As he says, "There was intentional social distancing of all furniture, we removed furniture from Java 101, [and for] the campus center we made sure that all the furniture would be conducive to social distancing."

When asked about new classrooms Smithers explained that there are a lot of different spaces being used as classrooms which haven't been utilized in the past, such as the Chapel and the south end of the Dining Hall. But these classroom settings may change based on the needs of the students and professors.

Interestingly, some of the largest changes, according to Smithers, are being done on the outside. "We specifically want to encourage people to be outside more. We created the outdoor patio space through a generous gift, and tried to put canopies up, but those quickly blew away. We're doing all we can to encourage people to be outside." During the planning phases of this semester Smithers explained that The P.R.E.P. Team considered adding "Ventilation" to The Big Three, but ultimately decided against it.

Some big changes also took place in regards to the fitness areas on campus. In an interview with Matthew Webb,

the Director of Athletics, he said, "We have adjusted a lot, particularly relative to the use of our indoor facilities. Access to our indoor facilities is now more limited and we have a new "registration" system to allow access to our indoor facilities which is a brand new process for everyone." Webb continued, "We were actually thinking at one point we might not be able to open at all [but] my staff did a LOT of work in putting together a plan so we can be open!"

Interestingly, one of the most controversial changes is in the way signs have been handled in the Campus Center. "We have a lot of signage around campus to point out to people what our expectations are," Marc said, "and custodial helped us to identify where on campus those signs needed to go."

Some student reactions have been less than enthusiastic though. "I think a lot of [the changes] are good, especially for safety of everyone," Louis Schriver ('22) explained, "but in the [Campus Center] doorways that come from the side from Roth Hill the first [door] is an entrance but the stairs there are UP ONLY. So if you're actually following the traffic laws you need to walk into the building, walk to the other stairwell, and then go down, which is really annoying." Demetri Court ('24), a new London Honor's student echoed these same concerns when he said, "I think most of the [measures] are making sense and are not too intrusive, but the signs on the doors – and on the stairs as well – I got big problems with."

Overall, it seems like most changes have been met positively, as according to Smithers, "I have a lot of pride in our students and I think that that's been affirmed most every day that I've seen students back on campus. I'm just very appreciative." And, in the words of Regan DeWeese ('23), "I'm proud of the policy they've put into place. I think they have a good sense of what they're doing and I feel safe!"★



The new Larder courtyard.

COURTESY OF EVAN TSAI