

## Debate Team: More Than Just Arguing All Day

By Sophia David '21, Features Reporter

Everything you do influences the way you do everything else. Perhaps this concept is best shown through our school's acclaimed debate team. At first glance, debate is an educational extracurricular activity, and there are some obvious skills that students who participate in the program develop, such as public speaking and critical thinking. However, a deeper look into debate reveals the impact, for good or for bad, it has on other activities and everyday life.

Harper Will '21, a debate team member, noted that arguments in the club frequently result in "screaming matches" or incoherent words fueled by emotion. She has found that this has helped her learn "how to remain calm when people disagree" with her. It is easy for people to become so impassioned by a desire to get their way that they lose the logical aspects of their argument. This does not help people win arguments, but instead, makes them appear as immature and irrational. Jade Halpern '20, another debate participant, added, "[Debating] makes you realize that not everyone you disagree with is a terrible person." Anna Volp '20 shared, "I think I have become more indecisive because whenever I'm about to make a decision, I always think about something that counters the decision."

Unlike the other members of the debate team, Ryan Jokelson '21 did not find that debating had any impact at all on his methods of arguing. He explained that he has always loved to argue, saying, "I argued a lot with people before I was doing debate. My dad and my uncle and my grandpa are all lawyers so growing up we would argue about stuff all the time." He explained that debate is simply a good outlet for his argumentative nature. Rather than debate altering his everyday arguments, his everyday arguments are what have made him such a strong debater.

In my conversations with the members of the debate team, I discovered another key benefit: participants learn how to listen to and even empathize with the opposing viewpoint. In a community such as Friends' Central where the majority of people have

*'Debate' COTD. on Back Cover (p8)*



Indian Fashion Show  
Participants Sport Their Garb  
(Imran Loudini '21)

## From The Editor: 2019 Indian Assembly Leaves Community Dancing

*This past Friday, March 15th, students and faculty had the privilege of attending the Annual Indian Culture Assembly. Between the enthusiastic drumming, the captivating dancing, the remarkable performance from the Temple students, and yes, even the promposal the extravaganza of a morning left everybody entertained, energized, and enlivened. Thank you to all of the students who lent their time and talents to make this program possible, and a special shout-out to Ms. Gupta, for without her tireless effort, leadership, and vision, this program would not have been possible.*

*-Julian Brenman '20*

### In This Issue:

Q+A with President-Elect Emma Malone -Page 2-

Pajamas in School? -Page 3-

Expert College Tips (No Scandal Here...) -Page 6, 7-

page 4

page 5

**Re-BARK-Able Feature!**  
Match the Teacher to the Dog!

## Emma Malone Wins Student Council Election

By: Jerry Yu '19, Technology Reporter

### *An Interview with our Soon-to-be President*

**FOCUS:** What are your plans as new student council leader?

**President-Elect Malone:** My main goal is to focus on cultivating school spirit, whether it be in the classroom, in theater productions, in sports... I just want the love for the school to be more widespread throughout the community.

**F:** What other plans do you have besides school spirit?

**P-E M:** In my speech I mentioned community meetings. In order to have school spirit we need to be a closely-knit community, and by meeting with all aspects of the community, different club leaders, team captains, athletes, people in theater, if I can meet with those people and those parts of the community, I'll be able to then talk about how we can come closer and better FCS. If there are issues with those groups, it is my job to report to the administration.

**F:** Do you wish to expand on the Meeting for Business (MFB)? Are there any changes you wish to make?

**P-E M:** Currently, the Agenda Committee is working on making MFB more interactive. The students will have more of a say about what MFBs will be. I do want to work with Agenda Committee to continue the tradition of MFBs because it is a good way to create community. I want people to be excited for MFB, so I wish we can talk about different things, from how we can manage stress to school events.

**F:** Do you think that the student-teacher relationship can be improved?

**P-E M:** I personally think that the students at Friends' Central are lucky to have the relationships they have with the teachers. I want to, however, find ways to how stress can be relieved. Maybe [I'll] talk to Ms. Beth about how we can make sure that all teachers are on the same schedule and there are no waves of work and weeks where is no work. I do think that there are ways us students [sic] can make it easier ourselves, and I think that learning how to time-manage and how to manage classes are important. [I'll] work with class council, Ms. Beth or Mr. Mac to figure out a way that communication between us as students and then us and teachers can be clearer.

**F:** Are you thinking about a new platform so that even students

cannot make it to the Tuesday early-morning meeting can learn about changes in the Student Council?

**P-E M:** I'm working on creating, once a month, holding more accessible Student Council Meetings, like during Tuesday's Community or Special Block time. I have to discuss with Ms. Beth regarding using Special Blocks, but I want to be able to make a time for the students who can't come to regular meetings to learn about what's going on and give feedback.

The President-Elect Gives FCS two "Thumbs Up!"  
(Sevag Yepoyan)



### "So, So, Great"

#### *A Note from the Editor Celebrating with Mr. Morris*

In the midst of the hustle and bustle of this hectic month of March, the *FOCUS* staff takes a moment to extend our most hearty congratulations to Mr. Morris, who became a first-time grandfather earlier this month. Mr. Morris reports that at approximately six pounds strong, Sophie made a beautiful entrance into the world, and both mother and daughter are happy and healthy. On a personal note, I can't recall a time during which I've witnessed anybody smile more glowingly than when Mr. Morris returned to school the day after his new granddaughter was born. That Wednesday at 8:25am, he opened the door to FCC 225, walked excitedly to the front of the room, and pronounced with an ear-to-ear grin, "I'm a granddad! This is *so, so great*." Mr. Morris, we wish you, your wife, your daughter, her husband, and most of all, their new daughter all of the gladness in the world. With you as her grandad, we know that baby will be making two-column proofs when she is still in diapers, and she'll be doing debate and mock trial before she reaches kindergarten! Again, we are beyond joyous and share in this remarkable time for you and your family. This is, indeed, "*so so great*."

*Yours in Journalism,*

*Julian Brenman '20, on behalf of the Friends' Central Community*



## Pajamas: Appropriate School Attire?

By Katia Campos '22, School News and Features Reporter

It appears as though we have something strange going on here at Friends' Central. No, it's not the food or the fact that we eat during class or call our teachers by their first names. It's the clothes. If you take a good look around campus, you'll notice many students wearing everyday clothes, such as skirts or khakis. Yet, chances are, you'll also spot a fair amount of students in pajamas--when it's not even pajama day! *FOCUS* reporters set to work immediately on trying to find out what's going on clothes-wise at FCS.

When we asked Sra. Socorro about her opinion on students wearing pajamas, she said, "It usually doesn't bother me because it does not call for a lot of attention. It's not a fashion show." Many other teachers responded with the same answers. "I think that it's important to remember though, that we should, to a certain extent, care about what we wear. It expresses who we are, and it shouldn't bother people," said Mr. Soper.

Other students who like to dress in everyday casual clothing such as jeans and sweaters have stated that their reasons for doing so are because they don't want to appear like slobs. One speaker who wanted to remain anonymous stated the following: "I like the idea of dressing in pajamas, just at home



Ryan J. Looking Dapper as Ever  
(Lydia Varcoe-Wolfston)

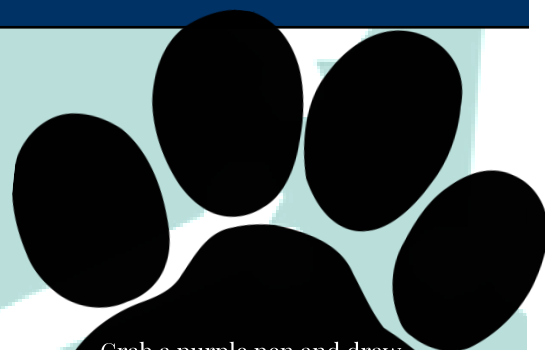


Cathy and Lily...Comfy in Science Class  
(Julian Brenman)

though, unless it's pajama day at school. I don't like people seeing me looking like that." Students who dress in sweat pants have reported that they feel more comfortable in that form because it shows who they are as a person without having to go far lengths to have a good appearance. "If you really want to wow someone, just show up to school with the best you can be. That's means answer all the questions, shine all you can," Leo Burman '20 said. "I go to school in pajamas at least six times a month, and the reason for this is because I want to go to school in the most comfortable way possible." From all of these quotes, we gather that comfort seems to be what most students here are looking for.

I believe it's important to acknowledge that it doesn't really matter what people wear. It can and also cannot define who we are. If you really want to know how we feel on the inside, just ask us. There might be more to us on the inside than you ever thought there could be, no matter if we're in PJs or a suit and tie.

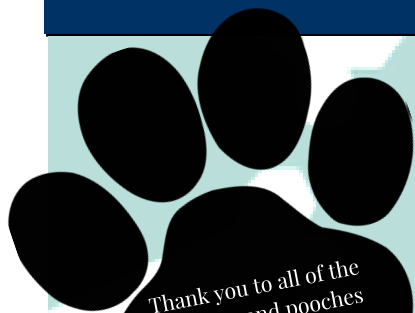
**Re-BARK-able Feature:**  
*Match the Teacher to the Pooch!*



Grab a purple pen and draw lines between each pooch and the teacher you suspect owns her or him! Answers are on the back page of the newspaper!

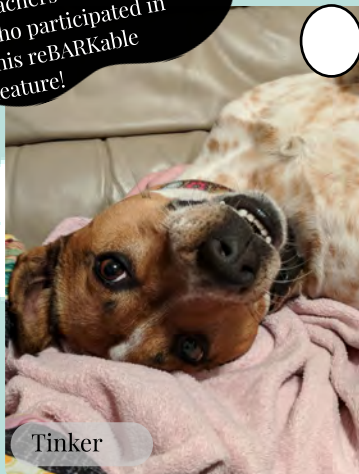






Thank you to all of the teachers and pooches who participated in this reBARKable feature!

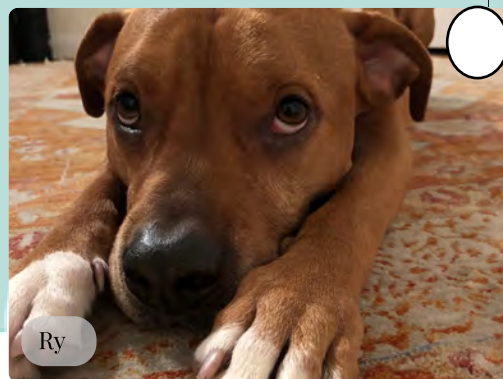
## Re-BARK-able Feature: *Match the Teacher to the Pooch!*



Tinker



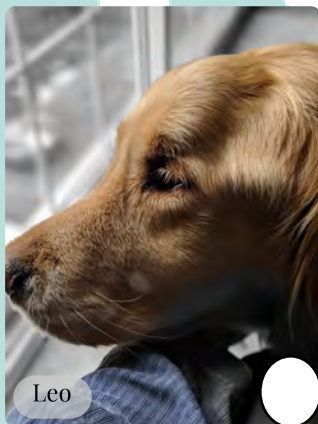
Mooshy



Ry



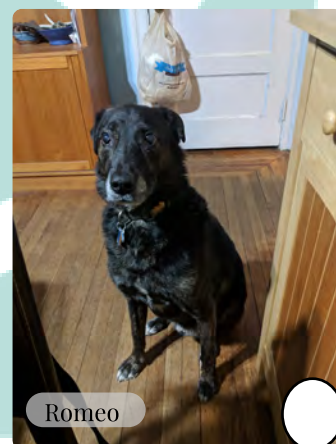
Bella



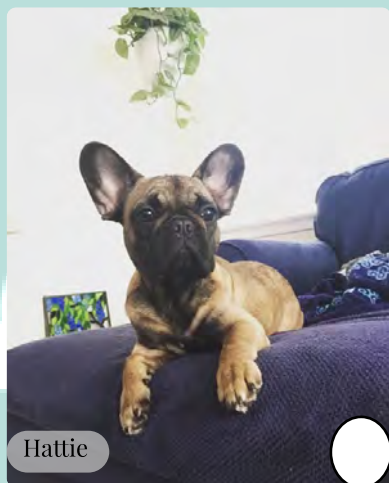
Leo



Lucy



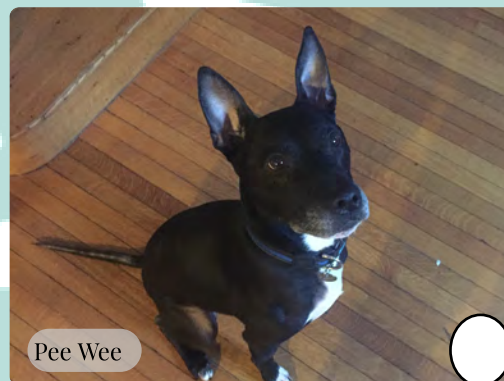
Romeo



Hattie



Philly Special



Pee Wee

## College Talk: Exclusive Advice from Top FCS Grads

By: Vicky Liu '20, Reporter

Spring Break is just days away, which, for juniors in particular, means college visiting season is almost here! To gain perspective and insight into the college application and visitation experience, I contacted a couple of FCS alumnae, Zoe Walker '17, Mira Kauffman-Rosengarten '18, and Miss Emily Harnett '09. Zoe is in her sophomore year at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), while Mira is in the midst of her freshmen year at Skidmore. Miss Harnett also earned her undergraduate degree at Penn, then went on to Yale, where she obtained a Master's degree. She now teaches in our school as a literature and poetry teacher. These three intelligent women's differing experiences makes their respective answers to some college-related questions particularly interesting. Read their wise insights below!

**F: What did you learn about your dream school during college visits in your junior year, maybe even during spring break? What was the experience like? What drew you to the school(s) you visited?**

**Walker:** Touring colleges for me was extremely exciting and entirely exhausting. Reflecting back, I think I often looked for attributes in a school that as a college student I now know aren't all that important. Those features that woo a lot of prospective students — for me it was the architecture and layout of campus — is *[sic]* a nice aesthetic touch, but it really can't tell you all that much about the character of an institution.

The most memorable things that happened during my tours were because of the tour guides. It's funny how easy it is to assume that one tour guide can represent the qualities of an entire school, but when you're touring you really only have small details like that to go off. My favorite guides were always the ones who improvised their rehearsed script enough to show us a glimmer of their unique personality.



**Harnett:** I toured a lot of lovely campuses, and the schools I was attracted to all had the same sort of vibe: pretty old buildings, trees, lots of brick paths that seemed very college to me. Penn was the essence of that college aesthetic, or so I thought at the time. I was very impressed by Locust Walk then, precisely because it looked so old-world and collegiate, but I ended up avoiding it when I was a student because it was swamped with undergrads and it stressed me out.

**F: What do you wish you could have done differently in high school? Any regrets?**

**W:** The cliché that college initiates a lot of personal growth has been very true for me. Since getting to Penn, I have found it much easier to let down my guard and dabble in extroversion. In high school, I was rarely the most outgoing person cracking jokes at the lunch table, but being in such a large, eccentric, and exciting pool for these four years has pushed me to question the artificial limits that I put on myself in high school.

**K-R:** I loved getting to know my teachers well. Sometimes I wish I would have talked to them more and gotten to know them more. I still find that I can become close with professors here; however, it's not as easy, and sometimes they're not as easy to talk to. At FCS, I was surrounded by them, and it felt like they really wanted to get to know me.

**H:** I just regret being so distraught by the college process. But those feelings are hard to tame when you're going through it.



**Kauffman-Rosengarten:** For me, a dream school didn't necessarily exist. I never visited a school and fell in love with it. I didn't really do college visits until the summer in between my junior and senior year. They were fun for me, I liked traveling with my parents on them, but I got stressed out because I wasn't falling in love with any colleges in particular. I remember visiting Skidmore, where I am now, and getting frustrated at the end of the tour because I liked it, but it just felt the same as the other colleges. I think, in that moment, I realized that I will be pretty happy no matter where I end up. As I let myself think about it, I ended up liking Skidmore enough to apply E.D.



**F: Any advice to juniors, who will be doing their college visits very soon during Spring Break?**

**W:** Juniors, know that colleges need you as much as you think you need them! A lot of the college touring process gets to be very performative and, for me, intimidating. If you can find a way to tour rigorously but still enjoy your spring break, that's a great balance to strike.

**K-R:** I think keeping an open mind is really important. It's also important to remind ourselves of our privilege as we do this. The fact that we can go to college and have the opportunity to further our education is extremely special and something that a lot of people wish they could do, but can't. So, reminding myself as I went on these tours that I was so lucky and that I was about to experience something really special was important.

I would also say that [the process] is scary and it's going to be scary. So the stress and the anxiety you're feeling make SO much sense. Those feelings are valid, and they go away in due time. For me, it was the biggest change in my life I'd ever had, and probably will ever had [*sic*]. It was a strip of my childhood with a huge amount of independence thrown on me all at once. I prepared a lot for it, and it was still hard. I would remind yourself of this, but also remember that, no matter what you do, the unknown will always be scary, and there's a lot of unknown ahead when you look towards college.

**H (to all upper school students):** I say this all the time, and I sometimes wish someone had said it to be me, but: College is school, and I know how my students feel about school! In other words, you'll be fine. College is so exciting largely because it's the beginning of adulthood and (somewhat) real independence, and you'll get to enjoy that independence no matter where you go. So stop worrying so much about the name and pick a school which seems like it will actually nurture you intellectually.

**F: Is there something you wish you had known before you entered college?**

**K-R:** I wish I would have been more aware that everyone is feeling the same as me, some people are just better at hiding it. I also wish people would have told me earlier that it will be the most awkward thing that you'll do, and there's no huge way around that awkwardness. Orientation week is just a lot of small talk and introducing yourself to people in ways you never really have before. It consists of many awkward conversations, but ones that are also necessary for your growth and comfort at school. Everyone is in it together.

**H:** I would say, and often do, that the assumption that students who graduate from Ivy League schools are the smartest people in the world is false and classist. Students from elite high-schools and wealthy backgrounds were absolutely overrepresented at Penn when I went there, and I found that fact troubling and still do. While Ivy League schools have great resources, they by no means have a monopoly on talented professors or talented students, and the belief that they do is very damaging.

**F: Is there anything else that you would like to share about college as a whole?**

**W:** Something my mom told me during the peak frenzy of the application process was very soothing to me: she reassured me that she could either drop me off at my dream school next year or drive me to some random school I'd never heard of in a random state, and I would probably have pretty similar experiences. At the end of the day, what is so amazing about college is not a function of the specific school, but a function of being a young adult exploring her interests and living with other people doing exactly the same thing.

**K-R:** Be patient with yourself!



I hope the suggestions and stories of these fine, collegiate individuals will help you! May you enjoy their words and find them useful in some aspects of your daily thinking. Perhaps Mira sums it up best when she says, “[College] almost always works out. It's just really, really hard at first, and then it's really, really fun!”

**'Debate' COTD. from page 1**

similar political and social views, it is often the case that people simply agree with each other. While it is wonderful to hear everyone's thoughts and ideas, they are, for the most part, similar regarding major political issues. This gives students at Friends' Central few opportunities to hear multiple sides or angles of an argument. In contrast to the general environment at FCS, students on the debate team regularly engage in discussions that force them to argue both sides of an argument, regardless of their own personal beliefs.

Examples of topics with which debate team grapples include whether NCAA athletes should be considered employees or whether the two-party political system is beneficial for America. Before beginning research, debaters may have strong opinions on the topic; however, by the end, they may be completely unsure of what they personally believe is best. This is because when preparing for a debate, where opposing positions will have to be argued, students are required to read extremely liberal and extremely conservative news sources. This does not mean that preparation for a debate always has this neutralizing effect. Sometimes, preparation for a debate can solidify personal opinions or even change them entirely.

This exposure to multiple viewpoints calls into question why we believe the things we believe. We tend to be positive that our beliefs are correct, and we are often even able to give an extensive list of reasons why we are right. However, this could be attributed to a lack of exposure to other viewpoints and the media sources that represent them. Lindsay Schweitzer '20 explained, "Debate strengthens our own beliefs because it forces us to see where others are coming from." In other words, debate teaches students that in order to formulate an informed opinion, people must familiarize themselves with all the



Two Sides of a Tense Conflict  
(Sevag Yepoyan)

possible extremes of an argument and everything in between.

In addition to changing one's thought process and formulation of arguments, debate changes the way in which one expresses these arguments. Four out of the five students interviewed agreed that being part of the debate team drastically improves the way they argue in their everyday lives. As teenagers, arguments with parents, friends, and acquaintances are common occurrences. Debate team not only strengthens arguing abilities and tactics, but also changes the way in which people view arguments.

This same concept can be applied to opponents in an argument. It is easy to view these people as the "enemies" and even begin to dislike them as people. However, in a debate, no one can choose their side, and this means that the things people say do not necessarily reflect what they actually believe.

Overall, the effect of debate can be seen in areas outside of the club such as how students view topics, question beliefs, and argue with others.

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### BONE-us Feature Answers!

The adorable **Mooshy** is the proud pooch of **Betsy Katzmman**.

**Hattie** (small face, big ears) belongs to none other than **C.J.**, our woodshop teacher and stage crew advisor.

**Tinker** is the precious pride and joy of **Dr. Skapik**.

You guessed it! Sweet little **Bella** is **Miguel's** little gal.

**Leo** belongs to **Mr. and Mrs. Crowley**.

**Ry Dankoff** looks just delicious in that picture, doesn't he?

**Mr. Thomas's** handsome pup is **Romeo**.

"**Philly Special**" is **Coach Mansure's** furry friend!

**Lucy Quinlan**...beautiful and funny...just like her math-teaching mama!  
**PeeWee** is **Ms. Dickerson's** special pet.