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# THE LEDGER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA



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UWT**

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**Abolition requires  
community involvement  
and community building**



PHOTO COURTESY OF UWT DRS

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**For more information:**  
  
**Email:** [drs@uw.edu](mailto:drs@uw.edu)  
**Phone:** 253-692-4508  
**Office hours:** Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
  
**Appointments can be made online and held over zoom. While there has been an influx in accommodation requests and emails, students are still encouraged to contact the office if they require help.**  
.....

# UW’s Disability Resources for Students

Whether invisible or not, UW frequently seeks to aid disabled students in their journey of education as best they can.

**By Andrew Anderson**  
News Editor

While the Disability Resources for Students (DRS) had their office, located in Mattress Factory 107, closed to the public from Mar. 20, 2020 to Sep. 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the staff and faculty are once more at work aiding students with disabilities to have an easier time on campus and in class.

The DRS is responsible for aiding students with documented disabilities in accessing all parts of campus, providing accommodations for classes or on-campus housing and providing resources that disabled students might require such as Sign Language interpreters, testing aids, etc.

The DRS website at [www.tacoma.edu](http://www.tacoma.edu).

[uw.edu/drs](http://uw.edu/drs) answers questions about the services they provide, what constitutes a disability and provides instructions on how to apply for their services. Students will have to fill out an application and provide medical documentation confirming the disability they are seeking accommodation for. From there, students are able to gain accommodations, priority registration and numerous other resources. As well, the website details to students how to file any discrimination complaints.

Heather Ruitter, the Program Coordinator for the DRS, was available to answer some questions about the program and explain more about what the DRS helps with.

“Students can apply for accommodations for either short term/temporary

disability, recovery from surgery or injury, or permanent/chronic conditions,” Ruitter responded through email. She went on to explain that students have confidentiality when it comes to their disabilities and accommodations, so they have full control of sending out Faculty Notification Letters. “If they want to use their accommodations every quarter it takes less than 5 minutes to send out those FNLs notifying their instructors of their approved accommodations.”

Ruitter also explained that things have changed with the pandemic moving students to off-campus instruction. Students who had in-class accommodations found that they didn’t need to use them while in remote instruction. The impacts of their disability also changed with the formatting of the lessons.

“During the first quarter of the shut-

down in 2020, the DRS staff of all three UW campuses met virtually to discuss how to best support students in the new environment and address the new challenges it presented,” Ruitter said, “New accommodations were created that directly addressed some of the new challenges of distance learning.”

When asked if there’s anything Ruitter wished for students to know about DRS, she said that many students struggle with invisible disabilities and may not realize that the DRS can support them. Students who have anxiety, depression, PTSD and other invisible disabilities are available to contact DRS and see if they qualify for accommodations or, if needed, can ask how to obtain them.

“The vast majority of students we serve have a qualifying disability you can’t see with the naked eye,” Ruitter said,

“Things like severe migraines, autoimmune conditions and so much more. We want students to know that if they are being negatively impacted by anything they might see any kind of doctor for that we may be able to make some accommodations available to them to help address those barriers that are making it harder for them to do the work they are here to do.”

Students can contact the DRS through email at [drs@uw.edu](mailto:drs@uw.edu) or phone at 253-692-4508. Appointments can be made online and held through Zoom as well. While there has been an influx in accommodation requests and emails, students are still encouraged to contact the office if they require help. They are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



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-  Rolling Admissions
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-  [kylei.harrison@multicare.org](mailto:kylei.harrison@multicare.org)




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### The Ledger


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<https://washington.zoom.us/j/91636229141>

**Office:** MAT 151  
**Phone:** 253-692-4428  
**Email:** [ledger@uw.edu](mailto:ledger@uw.edu)

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# Town hall meeting recap to decriminalize UWT

Upon the town hall meeting that took place on Feb. 9 here are five demands in order to decriminalize UWT

By **LESLIE GONZALEZ CRUZ**  
News Reporter

After the deaths of Manny Ellis and George Floyd in 2020, the UWT campus started a conversation about defunding and divesting from the Tacoma Police.

With the task force that was created by the chancellor to investigate gaps and problems to make changes, here are the five demands proposed to decriminalize UWT from the town hall meeting that took place in the William W. Phillip Hall on Feb. 9.

**DEMAND NO. 1: STOP USING TPD TO RESPOND TO REFERRALS FOR WELFARE CHECKS UNDER THE SAFE CAMPUS PROGRAM.**

One of the recommendations the task force has received is to provide mental health first aid for students on and off campus with resources such as PAWS and MySSP.

This demand will better help students who are facing mental health crises. It tells them how they can seek proper care on and off campus and what resources are available to them.

**DEMANDS NO. 2 AND 3: STOP USING TPD FOR ADDITIONAL SECURI-**

**TY FOR ANY CAMPUS EVENT. DO NOT REPLACE THE TPD WITH ANY OTHER ARMED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.**

A clear policy is being determined under what circumstances uniformed or armed police can be present on campus, while limiting police presence to what is legally required by the state, federal or city government.

Notifications for students for when and why uniformed and/or armed police officers are on UWT campus are being developed to inform the campus community.

To meet this demand, UWT campus safety and security are being trained to assist and properly handle situations on campus.

**DEMAND NO. 4: PUBLICLY COMMIT TO NOT HIRING FORMER POLICE OFFICERS WITH DISCIPLINARY RECORDS TO UWT.**

Among this demand the set recommendations to follow through are to determine what types of disciplinary records are deemed problematic and work with HR and campus safety to attract safe candidates.

In the coming days, Chancellor Sheila Edwards Lange and the vice chancellors will be meeting and discussing with the new Tacoma Police

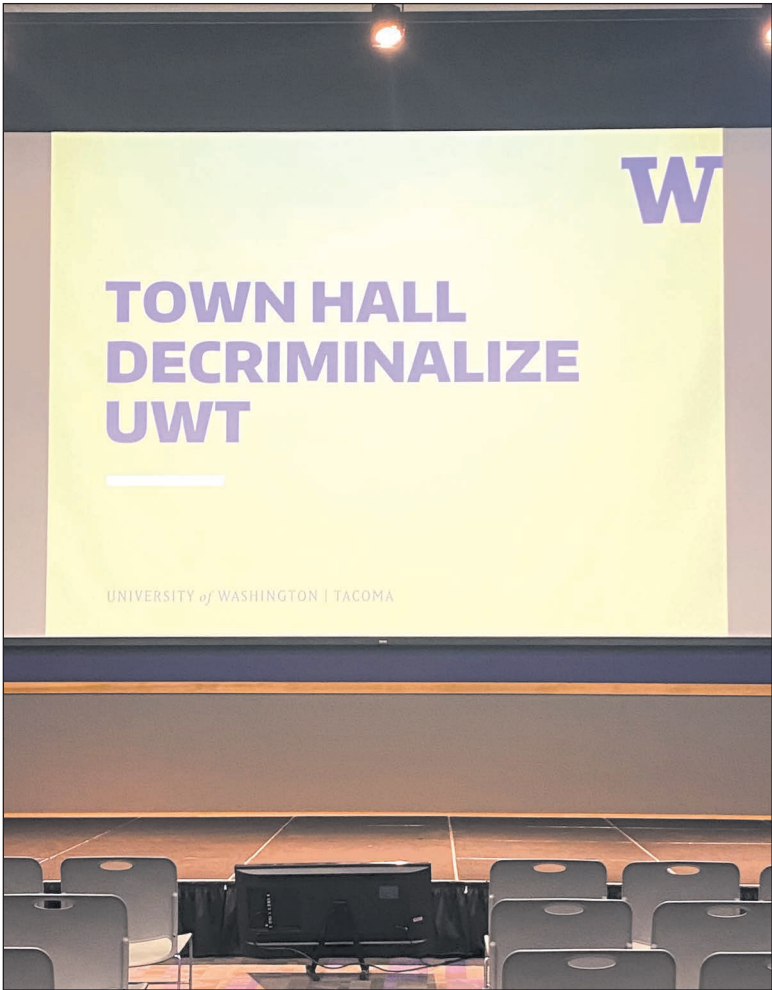
Chief, Avery Moore, about expectations for the TPD while on campus. With UWT agreeing, former police officers with disciplinary records will not be hired.

**DEMAND NO. 5: PUBLICLY COMMIT TO NEVER INVITING CBP OR ICE TO CAMPUS FOR ANY REASON.**

This demand states that for in person career fairs, law enforcement agencies are being requested to not be armed or uniformed and for law enforcement coming to campus uniformed and/or armed to have an alternative venue.

For students who are interested in law enforcement, a meeting between career services and student affairs will be held to structure career fairs that may involve law enforcement agencies.

UWT has agreed to meet these demands and recommendations in efforts to decriminalize the campus. If you would like to watch this townhall in full, it is available on the UWT website in the Office of the Chancellor section under the tab "About the Chancellor". In the upcoming weeks, on March 7, 2022 another town hall will be held in the William W. Phillip hall at 12:30 both in person and live stream at 12:30 p.m. for a campus update.



Town hall meeting at UWT.

PHOTO BY LESLIE GONZALEZ CRUZ

# Benefits of emotional support animals for college students

Information and resources on support animals is given and why they are beneficial to college students.

By **SHARLAYE DEZURN**  
News Reporter

A service animal is an animal that is trained and certified to assist the animal handler in some shape or form, however, emotional support animals are pets and not service animals. Dogs and cats are most commonly used as emotional support animals because of their pet-friendly nature.

Although emotional support animals are technically pets, they are required to be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional. The most common way college students get their pets approved as an emotional support animal is by requesting their licensed mental health specialist to officially prescribe their pet as a necessary function to their mental health. Again, emotional support animals are not the same as service animals so they are not guaranteed to be allowed in public places like college campuses, restaurants and shopping centers.

Emotional support animals are known to comfort their owners when the owner experiences anxiety attacks, panic attacks, signs of depression, signs of extreme sadness and even motions of

social anxiety.

According to a 2018-2019 study done by the American College Health Association, 40% of college students suffer severely from dysfunctional depression and 60% of students felt "overwhelming anxiety."

Due to recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic, social justice movements, and recent political conflicts, some may assume those numbers have increased.

"The University has a general 'no pets' policy in all of its buildings," says the UW website, "Including University Housing. However, Service Animals are allowed to accompany their handlers while on campus and in their residence and Emotional Support/Assistance Animals may be requested as an accommodation in housing through Disability Resources for Students."

Graduate Abigail Brown, who cares for three emotional support dogs, was available for comment.

"My animals comfort me through my everyday emotions," says Brown, "Every time I need a pick-me-up or if I am having a really bad day, I know I have something to look forward to, waiting for me with unconditional love

and support. I can't imagine having it any other way. I honestly have no idea how I would have made it through college without my emotional support animals by my side."

By having the emotional support dogs, Abby has been able to achieve high grades while maintaining a healthy mental health state.

"My dogs not only help my mental health, they motivate me to do better in school and they have taught me to re-

main calm when dealing with stressful assignments and projects," says Brown.

Brown argues that her grade point average would have suffered without the companionship of her emotional support dogs.

Local institutions like the Tacoma Humane Society and Cascade Animal Protection Society offer adoptable pets students can take home today.

If you are interested in getting prescribed for an emotional support an-

imal or would like to get your current pet approved as an emotional support animal, contact someone from UWT's Disability Resources for Students page on the UWT website or ask your licensed mental health professional.

**For more information visit:**

[www.tacoma.uw.edu/drs](http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/drs)



Student interacting with an emotional support animal.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOD NEWS FOR PETS



# OPINION: In racial education, Washington State pulls its weight

The history of America is defined by those who opposed racism, just as much as those who supported it.



ILLUSTRATION BY JAIDA NOBLE

Those seeking progress will always encounter those who stand in its way.

**By ANTHONY KREJCI**  
OPINION COLUMNIST

Over the course of Black History Month, I have attempted to cover how racism still plays a systemic and detrimental role in our society. There are many Americans who would claim that it doesn't, and some would say that those who think as I do are full of it. Many believe that racism in America is gone.

Although I strongly disagree with that evaluation, I see why so many think that way. The Civil War and slavery exist only in textbooks, and segregation is slowly fading from public memory. The obvious signs of systemic racism are gone.

For those who do not actively seek out information on active racism within our society, it's easy to look around and say we beat it, it is gone. That was my impression for the first twenty years of my life.

Yet as I have stated in previous articles this month, systemic racism does still exist, it just knows to be a lot less obvious. It hides behind curtains of legitimacy, such as Reagan's "War on Drugs" or the various voter restriction bills passed in many states this last year.

For this reason, proper education is one of the most crucial remedies we have against resurgent racist sentiment in this country.

Here in Washington and specifically around our UWT campus, we are fortunate to enjoy a progressive climate rooted in the beliefs of equality and acceptance. I believe this sentiment is reflected in our approach to education.

Last May, Governor Jay Inslee signed into law Senate Bill 5227 which mandated Critical Race Theory training, evaluation and education in public K-12 schools as well as forty public colleges in universities, including our own University of Washington.

Bill 5227 does allow local school

boards to reserve the right to decide whether CRT education will be allowed in their schools. According to Crosscut News, some school districts like the Chehalis School District are exercising that right, claiming that they will not teach kids that they are either guilty or innocent based on their race.

Yet much of what is prescribed in Bill 5227 is directed at teachers and faculty, not to students or the official curriculum. There have been recent changes in curriculum to incorporate a more diverse perspective in subjects such as history or literature, but these are most often proposed and introduced by individual schools or faculty.

Jesse Hagopian who teaches ethnic studies at Seattle's Garfield High School told Crosscut,

"Critical race theory teaches how racism is not just an individual problem of people saying bigoted things, but it's an institutional problem. There are systems that perpetuate racism.

Those insights are important for our kids to discuss."

Hagopian went on to say that often it is the students who are bringing these conversations to class, without prompting from teachers.

Here at UWT, our racial education is some of the best in the country. Dr. Honey and Dr. Sundermann's history courses on racial history, labor and colonialism are some of the best courses I have ever taken.

According to College Factual, we rank in the top ten percentile for general diversity, and the top five for both racial-ethnic diversity and gender diversity. Nowhere is perfect, but I believe those are numbers we can be proud of.

America is not unique, and white people are not inherently more racist than other races. In this country's history, white people have benefited the most from racism, sure, but racism has touched every corner of the globe, and every nation in-between.

With that type of consistency, it is impossible to deny that racism has, does and will play a systematic role not only at a national level, but at a species-wide level as well. It stems from our most primal of instincts, to reflexively distrust something unfamiliar and to be naturally drawn to the familiar, our own kind so to speak.

With the gift of sentience and education, we are able to look past those primal instincts and evolve into a more compassionate and successful species. Any school should seek to make this principle one of the central pillars of its curriculum, and any government should formalize this principle within its mandates.

Here in Washington, and around our UWT campus, we are seeing signs that we are doing our part. Good job guys, Happy Black History Month.

# OPINION: Abolition requires community involvement and community building

The Chancellor's Office organized a Decriminalize UWT Town Hall. But how the university is doing on this issue is still unclear.

By ALEX BUCKINGHAM  
OPINION COLUMNIST

On Feb. 9, UWT Chancellor Dr. Sheila Edwards Lang hosted a town hall to discuss the recommendations developed by the Decriminalize UW Tacoma Task Force in response to a community-driven petition calling to decriminalize UWT.

The five demands of the petition per the Town Hall were : UWT must stop using Tacoma Police Department (TPD) to respond to welfare checks; UWT must stop using TPD for security at campus events; a different armed law enforcement agency must not be used for security at campus events; UWT must publicly commit to not hiring police officers with disciplinary records for UWT security; and UWT must publicly commit to not inviting ICE or Border Patrol to campus for any reason

Community involvement was limited however both due to a lack of online resources about the campaign and the university choosing to close the comments section of the live stream.

Just writing an opinion piece on the issue is difficult because of what seems to be a lack of blog posts, news articles and official communications on the Decriminalize UWT campaign.

Obtaining a critical view was made even more difficult when attendees were denied community involvement by the lack of a live comments section.

Perhaps the university was responding to their last Town Hall on the COVID-19 pandemic and in-person classes.

While those UWT representatives laughed at almost every concerning question raised (literally they laughed at just about every question), the comments section was a space that allowed attendees to create community, raise concerns about the material being presented and offer alternatives.

The comments section was a far more significant community dialogue than the unwelcoming COVID-19 Town Hall presenters and their seemingly curated questions list.

**The benefit of community dialogue far outweighs the cost of moderating an online forum.**

I can understand the university may have been wary of allowing trolls and cop loving racists to spam

a comments section, but this problem is easily addressed through strict moderation.

The university, given its emphasis on social responsibility, should be leading on this issue, not simply being reactive to a petition and ten years of the Black Lives Matter movement.

**They can lead not only by encouraging community involvement, discussion and debate but also by going farther than they have so far.**

For instance, one demand from the petition is for UWT to publicly commit to not invite ICE or Border Patrol to campus for any reason. At the Town Hall, the Chancellor rebuffed this demand, citing students who want to pursue careers in law enforcement and saying the school will provide online opportunities for those interested in information sessions with such organizations.

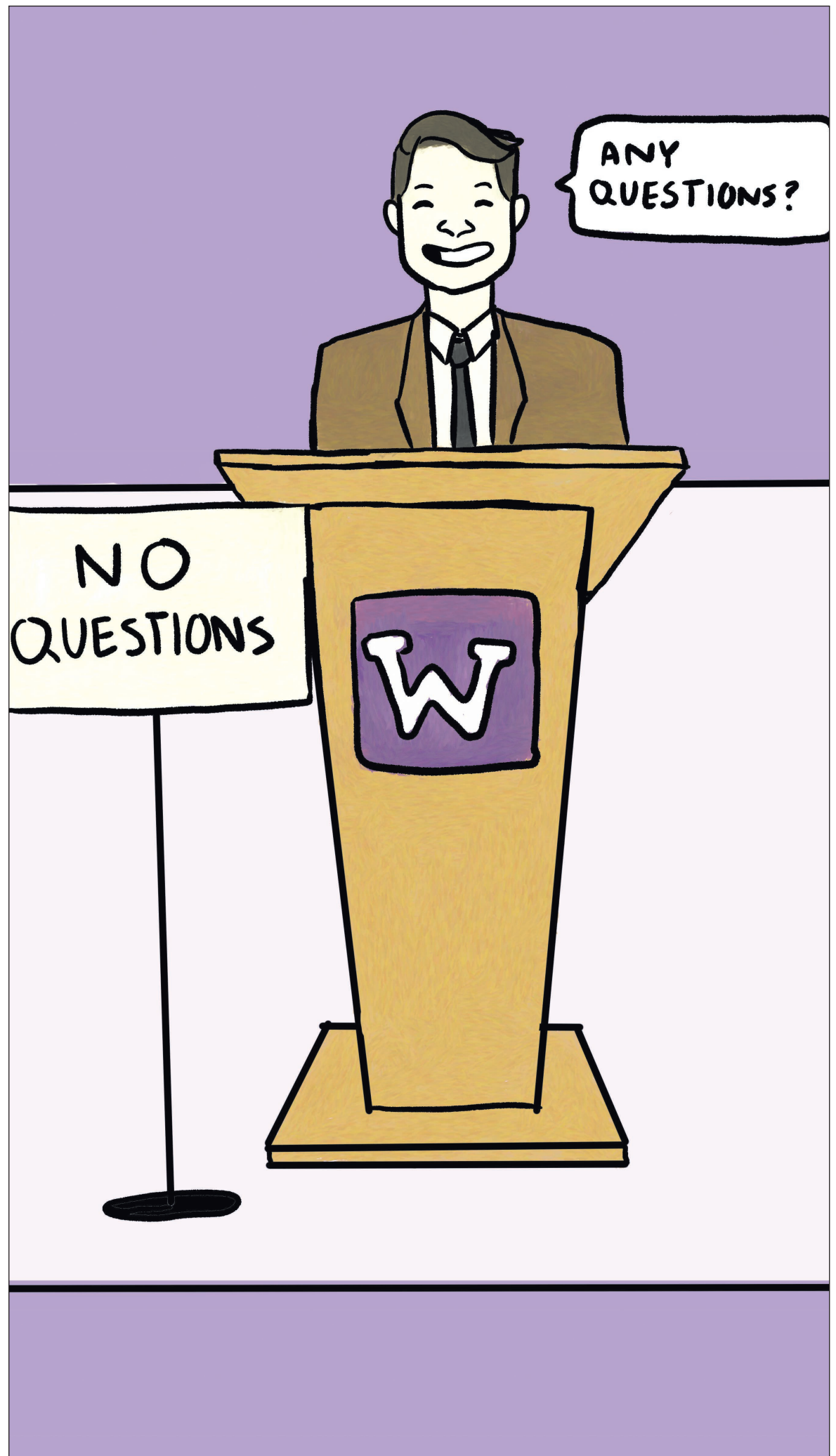
Rather than placate students whose goal is to participate in state-sanctioned violence, why not lead on such a basic question by rejecting ICE and Border Patrol recruiters from campus? While we're at it, why not go beyond the petition and ban the FBI, you know, the federal police, as well who recently got recruitment help from UWT's Handshake system. This would be an actual example of leading on the project of police abolition and reimagining security.

Of course, such shifts would raise big questions about the role and goals of UWT's criminal justice program.

But, like the practice of banning military recruiters from campuses as an anti-war statement, such actions would make it clear that UWT is opposed to state-sanctioned violence rather than complicit in it.

Unfortunately, an apparent lack of coverage of the decriminalize campaign makes it very difficult to analyze the town hall. Is the chancellor's office actually addressing the issues? Or is the Decriminalize UWT Task Force simply a way for UWT to go through the motions of appearing to catch up with the times while maintaining a status quo?

The answers to these questions would be more apparent if the Chancellor's office encouraged discussion and community building rather than silencing it.



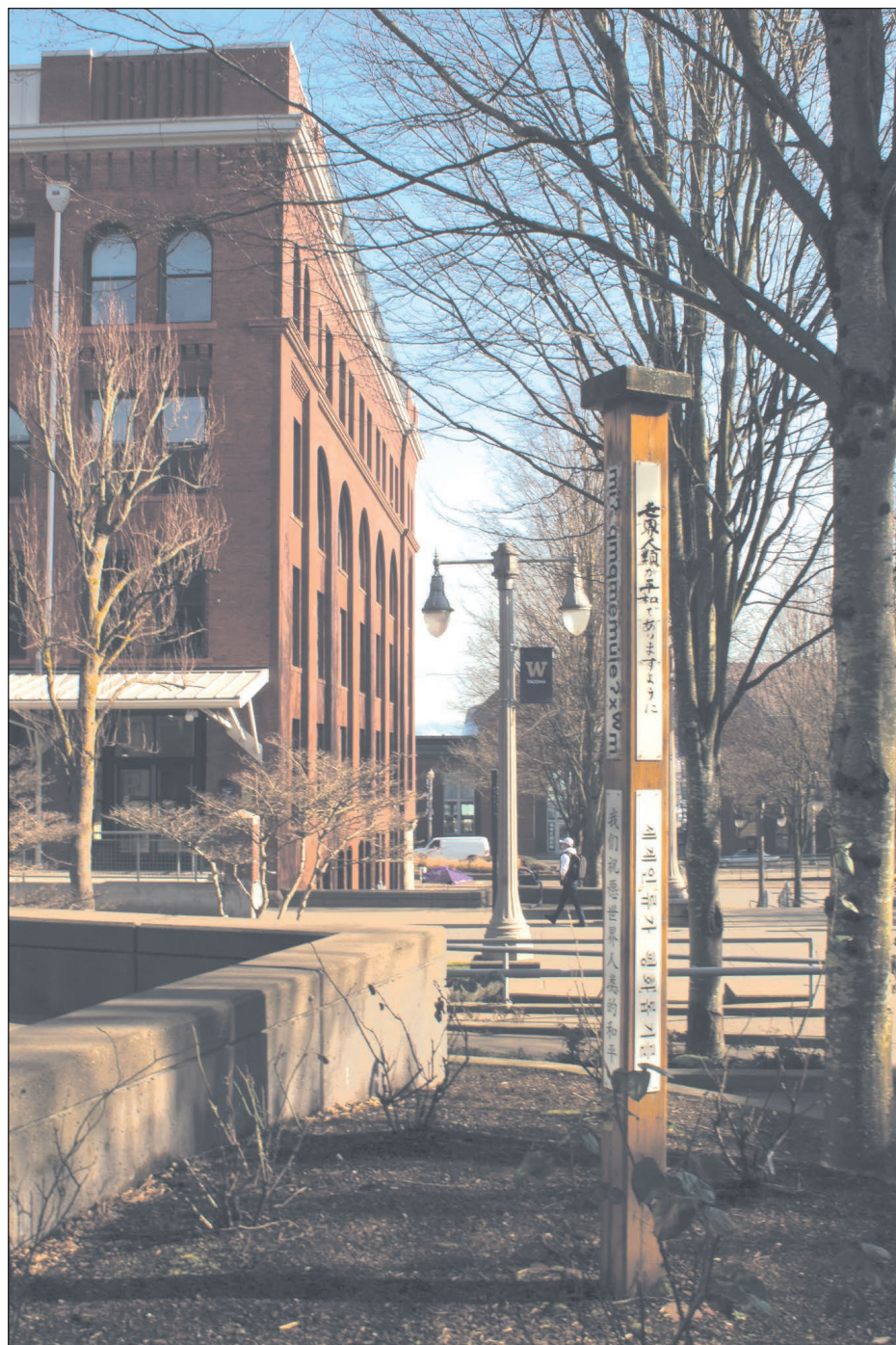
The Decriminalize UWT Town Hall should have encouraged discussion, not undermined it.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAIDA NOBLE



# OPINION: Is the U.S. really learning from past mistakes?

Feb. 19 is the 80th anniversary of Executive Order 9066. Has anything changed?



This is the Japanese language school memorial on the UWT campus which operated from 1911 to 1942 when it was shut down due to Executive Order 9066.

PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

## REMI FREDERICK OPINION EDITOR

On Feb. 19 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which authorized the removal of all people deemed to be a threat to national security from the West Coast. This order was the start of the Japanese internment camps and a dark chapter of America's history.

Internment camps were littered across the West Coast holding over 143,000 Japanese, not just from the United States but also from Canada and other countries in South America. These people were forcibly moved across miles and miles to be put into "relocation camps" surrounded by barbed wire and guards.

Camp Harmony is the nickname for the Puyallup Assembly Center, or

better known as the same place where the Washington State Fair is held. The internment camp in Puyallup had armed guards that escorted people, and to go to any other part of the camp you had to get signed papers.

The United States's unnecessary internment of the Japanese is one of many dark stains on our nation's history. However, many don't even know the full extent of the cruelty that our government and people committed.

There was no evidence that there were Japanese spies in the US or in specifically the Pacific Northwest which is where most of the camps were placed.

Even worse, the government destroyed any evidence that presented that there was no evidence of spies. Just take the reopening of the case of Korematsu v. U.S. which proved that there was a massive government cov-

er-up to protect their own behinds.

President Roosevelt knew about this lack of sufficient evidence when he signed Executive Order 9066.

Yet, we never learned about this in our history classes. Just another example of things not told to us. If we don't learn what we don't know, how can we know which questions to ask to learn more?

Fear and anti-Asian ideology made the United States government commit a horrific act and we were never fully taught about it. How are we supposed to prevent it from happening again?

We aren't and we haven't been. Take Executive Order 13769 for example.

On Jan. 27 2017, President Trump issued Executive Order 13769 also called "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The

United States." This executive order banned travel from several countries that are predominantly Muslim.

However, once again our government has chosen to listen to fear and Islamophobic rhetoric. Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration expert at Cato Institute, found that of the seven nations that President Trump decided to suspend all visas from, no foreigners have killed Americans on U.S. soil in terrorist attacks from 1975 to 2015. None.

Nowrasteh also said in his report published by the Cato Institute, "The measures taken here will have virtually no effect on improving U.S. national security." Virtually no effect.

Yet, this order was still issued, and while President Biden did overturn the executive order on his very first day in office, the sentiment of Islamophobia and hateful rhetoric towards

Muslims or even those who look like they could be from the Middle East remains.

It seems once again that we have learned nothing from our past.

We must learn about history even on the UWT campus. The Maru statue is a memorial of a time long gone when there was a language school on what is now the UWT campus. It was shut down when Executive Order 9066 was enacted but before that, it was used to teach children in the community the language, arts, and culture of Japan.

When we learn about other cultures and about each other instead of relying on fear-mongering tactics, the world is a better place. We must learn from the atrocities of our past to better the future.



# The four-year wait is over: Mitski's "Laurel Hell" is here

'80s synth-inspired bangers, complex sad girl anthems - Mitski has outdone herself.

**JOSEPHINE TRUEBLOOD**  
A&E EDITOR

The acclaimed indie songwriter, Mitski, has an impressive discography of commercial hits like "Nobody" and "Washing Machine Heart" and ruminating, haunting slower songs, all inspired by her background in classical piano composition. Bringing uncommon rhythms and melodies to popular music, Mitski has been bridging the classical, indie and pop worlds since her self-released 2012 album "Lush." Leaving fans waiting for four years, the arrival of her new album "Laurel Hell" is much anticipated and has a lot to live up to after the massive success of her 2018 work, "Be The Cowboy." The album can be separated into two distinct vibes; '80s-inspired, upbeat pop hits and reflective soundtrack songs.

This album is ruled by synths, particularly in the upbeat songs. Amazingly memorable synth riffs are focal points in songs like "Love Me More" and "The Only Heartbreaker," also bringing a defined '80s sound to the more poppy songs. Mitski has mastered the art of a perfect singalong, with lyrics like "I need you to love me more" and the sing-your-heart-out chorus "there's nothing I can do, not much I can change, so I give it

up to you, I hope that's okay" that rings through "Heat Lightning." These three songs pair well together in the middle of the album with their obvious nostalgia, artfully-placed strings and cascading synths. "Working for the Knife," the first single released for the album, is a departure, adding diving distorted guitars with Mitski's ever-truthful and introspective lyrics. These dancy songs are bound to be hits, as they all inspire impromptu dancing in your living room.

For the slower songs, "Valentine, Texas" is the highlight. With excellent tension-building chord progressions that honor Mitski's classical roots, this song has it all and is very well-balanced. Plucky strings accompany reverb-laden vocals like "who will I be tonight" and set the tone for the album as the first track. "Everyone" and "I Guess" both play on the synth-done, adding haunting and soothing textures to the album. As usual, Mitski brings all the drama through ABBA-esque vocal melodies in "There's Nothing Left For You." All of the softer songs bring a soundtrack element to "Laurel Hell" that are just as intriguing as the powerful pop tracks.

At times, the vocals lack a defined rhythm for too long, making it difficult for the listener to stay engaged. While spaced-out vocals that lay a bit behind



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEAD OCEANS

"Laurel Hell" Cover

the beat are a Mitski staple, a few songs aren't very compelling when met with the wrong elements. "Stay Soft" is a prime example of this phenomenon, as the grandiose piano and hi-hat-heavy beat overpower Mitski's open vocal.

"Should've Been Me" and "That's Our Lamp" also fall short in an aes-

thetic mismatch crisis. Reminiscent of the "happy-instrumental, depressing-lyric" pairing that The Smiths mastered, both of these end-of-album tracks don't have great hooks and come across as lacking emotion.

"Laurel Hell" is also entirely bridge-phobic, as the longest song clocks

in at three minutes and 47 seconds. However, the short, pop formula is not a detriment to this album and makes the songs highly repeatable. Already the biggest-selling album in America this week, "Laurel Hell" is a must-listen. Enjoy playing "Love Me More" repeatedly until you know it by heart!

## Why you should watch Netflix's newest anime "The Orbital Children"

Be on the lookout for more seasons of "The Orbital Children" on Netflix

**ANGELO ALEGRE**  
A&E REPORTER

"The Orbital Children" is a story that takes place in the year of 2045. It follows five children who are on a space station named Anshin. Of the five children, two were born and raised entirely in space. They are the last two of the total 15 children born in space. The rest of the crew includes the caretaker of the two space children, the mascot of the space station and three astronauts who maintain and control Anshin.

With only six episodes, "The Orbital Children" takes you through an entire story that will satisfy most watchers. The type of audience who are more likely to enjoy this show are people who are fascinated with either the topic of space or the topic of advanced artificial intelligence. This is because the main setting

of the show is in space, and because the topic of artificial intelligence is a main driving point of the plot.

The show starts with an introduction of the main character, Touya, who holds a dissenting opinion of Earth and its people. He meets three children from Earth who are on Anshin for a tour when after a while, something exposes everyone onboard Anshin to a threatening situation. This situation will not only affect them but the entire population of Earth. Will this experience change how Touya thinks about both Earth and its people?

Besides the story of this show, the music and visuals are enough for someone to sit through and watch the entire thing in one sitting. With only six episodes that span only 30 minutes each, the entire series can be binged in only three hours. Whenever an important

scene is happening on screen, the music heightens the viewer's immersion in the background. There are also scenes that make your eyes glued to the screen because they are just that remarkable. This is especially true near the end of the series, when the main characters are at another level of the human psyche.

This story follows the main cast as they try to escape the major threat they have been exposed to. Will they be able to make it out alive? You can find out by watching this short but visually stunning show on Netflix. Although this might not be a show for everyone because of the topics the story revolves around, it is one that should be given a chance by anyone looking for a brand-new show to watch in 2022.

**STAR REVIEW: 3.5/5**

[Exclusively streamed on Netflix]



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRODUCTION +H



# Take a trip to “Nightmare Alley.”

Guillermo Del Toro’s latest film is a tragic tale with a predictable end.

**RYAN MANTLE**  
FILM CRITIC

## MOVIE CONTENT WARNING:

*There are moments of gore that are shocking but they are short and don’t define the movie.*

“Nightmare Alley” explores the twisted life of a carney who bites off more than he can chew. It is almost two separate films, the first showing the meteoric rise of Bradley Cooper’s Stanton Carlisle, and the second showing his tragic downfall.

If you want to know what kind of man Stanton Carlisle is, the film wastes absolutely no time in telling you. Anybody who is lighting a body and house on fire in the opening scene is probably seedy, something that is only highlighted by him not saying a single word for the first 15 minutes of the movie. If you want to know why he is doing any of that, I am sorry to say that you’ll be left wanting.

Guillermo Del Toro, the director, has built a reputation as an expert at weaving unsettling characters or creatures into prominent roles in his stories. While “Nightmare Alley” does this a bit more subtly than say, “The Shape of Water,” it is also a bit more jarring because of how plausible it is. The creature in this story is a man, a desperate one, but a man all the same. A man who has been manipulated and borderline tortured to the brink of insanity, and what’s worse is that at different points, multiple people are convinced to become what they so eloquently call a “Geek.” All of this is done to simply make people feel better about themselves.

That seems to be the purpose of this film; watching someone slowly ruin themselves just so the viewer can think “well at least I’m not them.” In that way, Del Toro is almost mocking the viewer, which seems like an odd choice.

Nothing will surprise you in this movie either as the foreshadowing is both frequent and obvious.

While the purpose and story of “Nightmare Alley” leave a lot to be desired, there are definitely still impressive features that make it palatable. First, the set design is excellent. Every scene in the carnival truly transports you there. It’s chaotic and diverse, with things pulling your eye in every direction. Despite all of this, the camera work ensures that you are seeing what Del Toro wants you to see.

The cast is chock-full of recognizable faces in small roles, but the headliners, Bradley Cooper, Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara and Toni Collette are the true draw. Cooper goes from showing off how acting can happen without talking to seemingly never stopping. He can show you that he’s the smartest guy in the room in one scene and then the face of desperation in the next. Blanchett is flawless in her role of Dr. Lillith Ritter. Most characters understandably defer to Cooper, but Blanchett always controls her scenes. Mara’s character Molly feels like she was written by a man, meaning she is only there for Cooper’s character to use, but she does her job admirably. Collette felt underused for her talents but is otherwise excellent. There are so many other talented actors in this film that all prop up this predictable movie.

“Nightmare Alley” tells a story that made me ask “why?” but it was consistently interesting. That is largely a credit to the preposterously talented cast and an experienced director knowing what to do. Technically, the movie is incredible but without a statement or purpose, it falls short of Del Toro’s previous works.

**3½ STARS**

*“Nightmare Alley” is streaming on HBO Max and Hulu.*



Left to right: Bradley Cooper, Toni Collette, Rooney Mara and Cate Blanchett.

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