Overlaker

ALUMNI AND SCHOOL NEWS FOR THE OVERLAKE SCHOOL COMMUNITY **SUMMER 2025**



Changemakers

Making an Impact Beyond the Nest

The Overlake School
EST. 1967



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From the Head of School

Dear Owl Community,

In this edition of the *Overlaker*, we celebrate the inspiring stories of our students and alumni who are making a difference both within and beyond our school community. Their curiosity, passion, and innovative spirit are driving positive change in the world.

We are also proud to announce the successful completion of the Coming Together strategic plan. This milestone reflects the dedication and collaborative efforts of our faculty, staff, and students in achieving our shared vision.

Adding to the excitement, we announce the triumphant completion of the *Doors to Discovery* capital campaign. Thanks to the generous contributions and unwavering support from our community, we have met our goals, paving the way for Overlake's bright future.

We are equally thrilled to open the new Student & Community Center in August 2025. This hub on campus will influence learning experiences and foster innovation for generations of owls to come.

Lastly, we highlight the curricular innovations in our science department. Our commitment to advancing education is evident in the thoughtful approaches and research-informed methodologies that are integral to our curriculum, preparing our students to excel in a rapidly evolving world.

Join me in celebrating all that is Overlake as we look ahead to a future filled with promise and potential.

Sincerely,

Gretchen

Gretchen Warner
Head of School

THE ARTS *at Overlake*



Our students have been hard at work this winter and spring on some awesome performances.

In January, this year's Benefit Concert raised funds to support the Cougar Mountain Zoo. The show was full of amazing music and student performances. As a special treat to get students excited about the concert, the organizers arranged to have representatives from the Cougar Mountain Zoo visit campus during lunch that week and share more about the zoo and their conservation efforts. They even brought a turtle along to say hello!

The All-School Musical returned in fun fantasy form with an exciting, upbeat performance of *Shrek the Musical!* Students of all ages banded together to present three fun performances for the community.

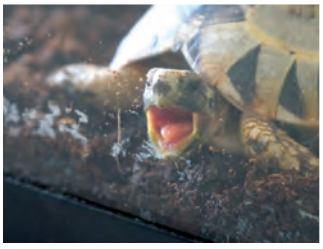
To round out the spring season, the Upper Schoolers presented *The Good Doctor* by Neil Simon. The show consisted of short vignettes showcasing all manner of dark humorous happenings based on Anton Chekhov's writings. Overlake performed *The Good Doctor* once before in November of 2003. It was the 8th show ever presented in the Fulton Performing Arts Center.







BENEFIT CONCERT











SHREK THE MUSICAL!



THE GOOD DOCTOR



Science Department Reimagines Students' Experience



"We want students to have the skills they need to look at the world around them and ask questions about why it is the way it is, because it's through those questions that students can develop a deeper understanding of the world and become critical thinkers," shares science department faculty chair, Janet Jones.

This year Jones and her team of science faculty have been integrating Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) into the curriculum. These standards were developed by the National Research Council in partnership with state education departments, the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). "Unlike traditional science curricula, which often focus on memorization of facts, the NGSS emphasizes three key dimensions: scientific practices, crosscutting concepts, and disciplinary core ideas," explains Jones. "In simple terms, this means that our curriculum is not designed to simply teach students what science is, but to also focus on how science works and how to think as scientists."

> **The more connections students can make to their learning, the more meaningful and enduring the learning becomes."**
>
> **MARSHALL McCURTIES,** UPPER SCHOOL HEAD

"The science department's work with the NGSS standards is a great example of how we continue to refine and deliver a 21st century education," says Upper School Head Marshall McCurties. "This curriculum will help our students think both more deeply as well as see the interconnected nature behind what they are learning. The more connections students can make to their learning, the more meaningful and enduring the learning becomes."

The three key dimensions NGSS emphasizes relate to content, skills and themes. "We've been working to update our assessments to reflect this 3D nature by ensuring that each assessment incorporates multiple dimensions. This helps us ensure that assessments are authentic, reflecting how science is used beyond a school setting," says Jones.

Beyond reviewing the way in which assignments and tests are assessed, Jones and her fellow faculty have also looked at the overall science curriculum at Overlake. "One of the areas that we found the most room for growth in our curriculum is around Earth Science. So, many of our courses are addressing this by investigating how physics, chemistry, and biology topics are applied to real-world situations in our Earth and universe."

"We want to make sure that students leave Overlake with a body of content knowledge that will set them up for success whether they pursue higher education in a science-related field or not," explains Jones.

Because the Next Generation Science Standards are not designed to be prescribed as a strict, closed curriculum, Jones and her fellow science faculty are able to take what's already working well in the science curriculum and incorporate it within this new framework.

"The emphasis on science skills and using them in an authentic way to solve real-world problems is not new to our department. What NGSS allows us to do is to support that good work we were already doing in a structured way that makes sure there are not topics or skills that are being mistakenly overlooked."

Overlake's science department has participated in several professional development opportunities to learn more about bringing NGSS into the curriculum. "Our department completed the Stanford NGSS Assessment Project (SNAP) course together to better explore the shifts in assessment encouraged by NGSS. We've also completed NSTA webinars, most recently 'Designing Equitable, 3D, Curriculum-Anchored Assessments: Topic Study for K-12 Educators' put on by the National Science Teachers Association."

In the end, Overlake students will continue to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that will help them continue to make sense of the ever-evolving world of science. "Ultimately, we want students and families to feel confident that these changes are designed to provide a deeper, more meaningful science education that celebrates the beauty of discovery, and the impact science has on the world," reflects Jones.

Opening New Doors

Reflecting on a Strategic Chapter at Overlake

As the 2024–25 school year draws to a close, Overlake stands at the intersection of reflection and renewal. This moment marks the successful conclusion of our five-year strategic plan, Coming Together — an ambitious initiative launched in 2020 to sharpen our institutional identity, deepen our commitment to diversity and inclusion, elevate well-being for all, and strengthen our ability to attract and retain exceptional educators. Simultaneously, we are completing an intensive decennial NWAIS reaccreditation process, concluding our *Doors to Discovery* capital campaign, and welcoming our 10th Head of School, Gretchen Warner. Together, these milestones signal the end of a transformational chapter and the beginning of our next.

The Coming Together plan was always about more than meeting benchmarks. It challenged us to align our practices with our values and to build systems that would evolve alongside our community. What makes this final year especially meaningful is not only the breadth of what we've accomplished, but also the spirit in which we've done it amid a global pandemic, leadership transitions, campus construction, and cultural shifts in education. Our commitment to process, transparency, and our students has never wavered.

We are proud of our achievements in five years and haven't taken our foot off the pedal this year. Learn more below about what we've accomplished this year across the four pillars of Coming Together — and peek through the doors we're already opening for what comes next.

Institutional Identity: Living Our Values, Telling Our Story

Overlake's mission, vision, and values — refined early in the strategic plan — now live at the center of our work. This year, our focus turned toward deepening that identity and communicating it consistently across platforms and programs.

In our admissions materials, in classroom conversations, and on our planned new website for fall 2025, families now encounter messaging that speaks clearly to Overlake's DNA: a student-centered education grounded in curiosity, compassion, equity, integrity, and mutual respect. We piloted new messaging in our admission materials to capture this spirit in a way that is authentic and actionable, and work is ongoing to create a storytelling guide for how we communicate our identity internally and externally.

We also laid the groundwork for our next big leap in articulating who our students become. The long-anticipated Alumni Engagement Survey was drafted and launched in May. This survey joins our employee, student, and family engagement surveys as part of our Institutional Research program that aims to "measure what we value."

Continuing to understand the value and impact of an Overlake education, as well as how our alumni engage with the school now and in the future, will continue to help us refine our identity and how we tell our story.

Well-Being: Making It Foundational

One of the most visible and impactful shifts has been Overlake's maturation into a school where well-being is not an initiative — but a foundation. After all, our new vision strikes a bold claim that "we will be known for a definition of human success that includes learning, relationships, well-being, and purpose."

Our Wednesday schedule continues to honor this ethos, with late starts supporting both adult learning and student rest. RULER's social-emotional learning framework, launched with training at Yale and implemented through tools like the Mood Meter and Meta-Moment, is now embedded into classroom culture and our broader student experience. This year, students led well-being presentations for families, and employees continued to grow through summits and learning aligned with CASEL (The Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning) and UDL (Universal Design for Learning) standards.

We also completed our fourth year of administering Authentic Connections' High Achieving Schools Survey (HASS) and the fifth administration of our Employee Engagement Survey, using data to track and reflect on wellness trends. The data tells a promising story: our student Well-Being Index continues to improve each year.

From our admissions philosophy to our advising model, Overlake is not simply responding to mental health needs — we're preparing students and adults alike to thrive and continue to become a school known for student well-being.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Culture, Not a Checklist

At the core of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work this year was a simple but profound shift: moving from episodic training to embedded professional development. Cultural responsiveness is a core skill for teaching and learning at Overlake. This year, many of our Wednesday morning professional summits included culturally responsive practices grounded in EE Ford's "Thriving in a World of Pluralistic Contention: A Framework for Schools," led by Head of School Gretchen Warner and Overlake's Interim Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Joanna Guiler ('03).

Our hiring systems, too, are evolving. With the addition of a full-time Director of Human Resources, we launched an audit of hiring practices and developed new protocols for attracting, developing, and retaining educators from diverse backgrounds.

On the student side, we continued to refine how we collect and understand demographic data—adding questions about language spoken at home, first-generation middle or high school status, and other meaningful indicators that help us support students more holistically. Demographic dashboards and data from the HASS provide ongoing insight into where we are meeting our goals — and where we need to grow.

We are still becoming the school we aspire to be. But what's different now is that we have clearer systems, data, and shared expectations to guide that journey.



Attract and Retain: Investing in Our People

Overlake's commitment to excellence has always depended on attracting and retaining exceptional educators and staff. This year, we made that work even more systematic — and more sustainable.

We codified updated practices for hiring, onboarding, and offboarding employees, completed a benefits analysis, and launched a new employee benchmarking protocol in partnership with HR consulting firm Compensation Connections. Perhaps most notably, we introduced a revised faculty salary scale and began developing a staff salary review that brings more transparency and predictability to compensation. These steps build on several years of work — across engagement surveys, data dashboards, and a culture of feedback — to ensure our people feel valued and supported.

This year also saw the construction of a "stay interview" plan for 2025–26, helping us better understand why employees choose to remain at Overlake and what conditions best support their growth. And as housing costs in the region continue to rise, we've started to explore long-term solutions to alleviate pressure on employees.

The takeaway is clear: investing in our people is not just about retention, it's about aligning our values with our operational systems.

A Convergence of Milestones

It is no coincidence that the final year of Coming Together also marked the culmination of other landmark moments in Overlake's institutional life.

In February, we welcomed our NWAIS reaccreditation team to campus. Their visit, and the robust self-study that preceded it, offered both affirmation and challenge. As one faculty member put it, reaccreditation is "holding a mirror up to the school." We are proud of the image reflected back: a community that practices what it preaches, that centers mission, and that embraces continual growth.

This spring also marks the completion of our eight-year, $35 million *Doors to Discovery* capital campaign. That campaign has reshaped our campus with the Whitten Math & Sciences Center and — soon — the new Student & Community Center, which opens this fall. These physical spaces are more than buildings; they are the infrastructure of belonging, curiosity, and collaboration. They are, quite literally, the doors we've opened together. (Learn more about this milestone on page 8)

And throughout all of this, we have experienced the steady, joyful leadership of Gretchen Warner in her inaugural year as Head of School. From day one, Gretchen's emphasis on joy in learning, relational leadership, and bold vision has aligned seamlessly with the spirit of the strategic plan. Her arrival feels not like a beginning from scratch, but a powerful continuation of momentum.

What's Next?

As we bring Coming Together to a close, we do so not with a final period, but with a thoughtful ellipsis. Each pillar has generated not just deliverables but "opportunities for further research" — next steps to explore in the months ahead.

How might we continue evolving wellness as a core competency? What's the next chapter of equity work as demographics shift? How do we tell our story with clarity and conviction in a changing world? These questions will guide our next strategic planning cycle and they will be shaped by a community that has proven its resilience, creativity, and heart.

We celebrate not just what we have built, but how we built it. Together.

> *Overlake's future is bright beyond measure."*
>
> **GRETCHEN WARNER,** HEAD OF SCHOOL

Opening this Summer!

New Student & Community Center

We are thrilled that Overlake's beautiful new Student & Community Center will be open for our entire community by the start of the 2025–26 school year! Step inside and see a gorgeous, modern, 8,000-square-foot multipurpose space that can seat 250 people — it's unlike anywhere else on campus.

The Center will be a place of belonging for every student — no matter their background, interests, or dreams. It's where each student will find their voice, connect with others, and engage in a community that supports them every step of the way.

With movable furniture, cutting-edge technology, and adaptable spaces, students will be able to shape their environment to suit their learning needs. They won't just be sitting at desks, they'll have the freedom to collaborate, innovate, and create together.

This space won't just be for classes — it will be where students celebrate their victories, share their talents, and create memories that will last a lifetime. From study sessions and spirited discussions to dances, debates, tournaments, and performances, the Student & Community Center will be the heart of Overlake's student life.



And with this new space we can celebrate the entire Overlake community with gatherings for all our current and alumni families and alumni. We can't wait to invite you to experience all that our campus now has to offer.

Hear from the architect

Scan this QR code to hear from our talented architect at Mithun, Brendan Connolly, about his inspiring vision for the new Center.

Key features of the Student & Community Center

A place to congregate

- Grade-level meetings, Associated Student Body (ASB) meetings, and other student gatherings
- Gatherings for each division
- Admissions programs and interviews
- Senior Project and student presentations
- Student orientations
- Book fairs
- College Counseling presentations and college admissions visits
- Guest speakers
- ParentNet, Overlake Friends of the Arts (OFTA), and Overlake Athletic Club (OAC) sessions; Faculty Staff Appreciation events
- Parent Guardian Association (PGA) meetings and events
- Volunteer orientations and meetings
- Alumni gatherings and meetings
- Testings (Standardized SATs and APs and course finals)

A place to collaborate

- Student collaborations and group projects
- Student clubs and advisories
- Student study sessions
- Student academic teams presentations and competitions (e.g., Speech & Debate)
- Faculty and staff collaborations and meetings

A place to celebrate

- Student dances and events
- Student cocurricular events
- Senior celebrations
- Parent/guardian socials
- Family celebrations around performing arts, athletic events, and more
- Alumni reunions, events, and programs
- Alumni parent guardian gatherings

And more!







Grand Opening Celebration!

Get ready to celebrate the Student & Community Center's grand opening.

Saturday, September 6
12–3 p.m.

We will have a fun BBQ, lawn games, and activities for all.

Thank you to our *Doors to Discovery* donors!



We are so grateful to all our *Doors to Discovery* donors. Thanks to you, the Whitten Math & Sciences Center opened in 2021 and is a thriving hub on campus, financial aid endowment tripled to strengthen our commitment to socioeconomic diversity, and now the Student & Community Center is coming online this summer.

Doors to Discovery is the school's most successful capital campaign in the school's history, having raised $29+ million, and we are so grateful to each and every supporter for investing in our future.

The campaign is concluding June 30, 2025, but it's not too late to make a gift if you would like a tile on our beautiful donor wall. Every donor at every level is included. Scan the QR code to make a donation or multi-year pledge today.

Questions? Contact Director of Development Brisen Brady at bbrady@overlake.org or 425-868-1000.



Changemakers

At Overlake, we don't just teach facts and figures, we champion students to take what they learn beyond the classroom and into the world.

"We really hope our students aren't learning information in a vacuum but are thinking about the issues and how they can take them and apply them to the world in which they live to better understand," social studies faculty Amanda Jones shares. Overlake's mission statement states that we seek to graduate students who are passionate about learning, ready for any path that contributes to a better world.

One way students have been inspired to take their knowledge outside the classroom is by expanding on something they've learned during Project Week. Other students have taken their existing passions and, at the encouragement of a teacher or class on campus, stepped beyond the campus to see what impact they might have.

Two years ago, Jones led a Project Week titled, Activism in the Housing Crisis, exploring housing justice and equity in Redmond. "We remind students that it's not just a Seattle thing. It's happening right here in our area," says Jones.

Students learned about the Plymouth Housing project in Redmond, a project that aims to develop new, permanent supportive housing in Redmond to serve individuals exiting chronic homelessness. Several students were inspired by that project to go above and beyond and take what they learned during that week and testify in front of the Redmond City Council advocating on behalf of the housing project. Another student from that same Project Week was inspired to use their interest in STEM disciplines to experiment with developing alternative building materials.

Other students have taken their passions to the state level and testified on Washington State legislative bills aiming to make an impact on a larger scale.

In this issue of the *Overlaker,* a few students share their personal stories of activism outside the walls of Overlake. Learn what inspired them to venture outside the Owls nest.

As of right now, the Plymouth Housing project is on track to open to new residents in the summer of 2026. For more information on the project, scan this QR code.



Vidhi M. ('25)

Vidhi recalls that her interest in politics and policy started back as a freshman at Overlake being immersed in the culture and environment of Seattle. Then, in her sophomore year, she served as a legislative page for Senator Manka Dhingra which opened a world of learning to her.

"That kickstarted my political journey and interest in policy. I was shadowing her and learning and doing a lot of work in the capitol. I gained a lot of interest in policy in general," Vidhi shares. She recounts that she was always interested in education and climate activism but was less familiar with housing challenges. But through her work as a page, she learned more about housing justice and took it upon herself to lean into the issue. That year, Vidhi signed up for a Project Week focused on this cause, helping the non-profit Habitat for Humanity. Then as a junior, she signed up for the Activism in the Housing Crisis Project Week to learn about how the issue specifically affects Redmond.

"I signed up for that Project Week because I wanted to have a focused understanding and a specific avenue to understand why this is happening and how we can address it. I have lobbied at the state level, but I wanted to do something more local and more personal," she shares. "I felt like it was my job because I come from a privileged background, to learn about the wealth gap and the disparity between communities. That just opened my eyes to how Washington is not housing friendly."

During the week, the students learned that there was a lot of pushback on the Plymouth Housing project. Signs were even popping up all over Redmond in opposition to the project. That led to conversations about how students could get involved outside of Project Week. Since there is no age requirement to speak at a city council meeting, a few students, including Vidhi, who had previously spoken to the council on other issues, decided to take what they had learned and present at one of the council meetings.

"We were faced with insane backlash. It was literally just us Overlakers and a room full of people who were against us," Vidhi remembers as many residents strongly opposed the housing project being built in Redmond. As soon as they realized what they were facing, the students changed their tactics to fit the room.

"We wanted to educate them. We wanted to give them more info. They only see what they read online but they had not seen the research we had put in on learning about the housing project."

What's next for the senior? She hopes to go to school for political science or pre-law and eventually apply to law school. After hearing from a lawyer during her Project Week speak to the group about how they take on cases pro bono, she was inspired by the prospect of using a law degree to help those in need. "I hope to open my own law firm or work at a high-level law firm and take on pro bono cases or cases where tenants and homeowners are having issues," Vidhi shares.



Smaran M. ('27)

"Housing and homelessness were always something I was passionate about," sophomore Smaran says. When he saw there was a Project Week that offered addressing the housing crisis, he jumped at the chance to get involved.

Smaran also joined Vidhi in speaking to the Redmond City Council on behalf of the Plymouth Housing project and echoed the intimidating environment they stepped into.

"Everybody there was against it," he recalls. "I was more scared than I usually feel when talking to people. People were screaming at the mic, and it was very intense in the room. But it motivated me and made me more excited about what we were doing. I felt like I really wanted to convince the people to at least think about another view."

While the environment was intimidating, the students were encouraged when the mayor of Redmond sent them a thank you letter for showing up and speaking out.

But as time went on, Smaran wondered what else he could do. "After that project I wanted to see how I could start having an actual impact. I started thinking that a lot of the focus of the housing crisis is on policy, but I'm interested in a lot of STEM fields as well as policy, so I wanted to combine those two interests and take a different approach to it." He started by looking into what makes up the biggest cost of housing and he found that around 80% of the cost is in construction.

That's when he landed on cement. "Cement is interesting because it's very widely used. It's the second most used material in the world. Because of what I learned about housing, I wanted to find a way to develop a novel cement," Smaran shares. He wanted to focus on creating something that is both environmentally sustainable and competitively priced without compromising on the material's overall strength. Smaran went on to explain that the current industrially used cement is known as Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) and accounts for 8% of global greenhouse emissions. This is due to the high heat used in the process. The material heats up to 1900 degrees, so the chemicals react with water to form a binding gel in the cement mixture. Smaran hoped to develop a form of cement that did not need such high heat to create.

He dove into the research at home, learning about what had been done in the past and where he could improve on what was already in existence. But when it came time to start experimenting, his parents did not want him using chemicals and attempting these laboratory experiments at home. So, he approached his Overlake teachers and explored using the science lab facilities inside the Whitten Math & Sciences Center.

After he conducted his experiments and created his new innovative cement formula, he set out to do compression tests and a cost analysis. In the end, he found that his cement was 260 PSI stronger than the industry standard and approximately 16% cheaper to make. One of the biggest differences in his cement was the ability to create it without extreme heat.

"While chemicals in OPC need to be heated to high temperatures so they can react with water, the chemicals in my cement react with each other when placed in water, which occurs very readily and without heat input," Smaran explains. "However, typically even the two chemicals I use (sodium silicate and calcium hydroxide) require heating steps to manufacture industrially, which is why my research also investigates producing them sustainably, without any heating steps."

Going forward, Smaran hopes to take his findings to the Washington State Science Fair and see where he might take his research in the future. "I hope there's future research done on this. And I may continue some experiments to expand on the project."



Mahi M. (’25)

Senior Mahi has taken her passions outside the Owls nest by getting involved at the state level over the last several years. But it all started back in Middle School at Overlake. “Advocacy has been a big part of my life at Overlake; that’s where I fostered it,” Mahi recalls. In seventh grade, she joined the Impact Club and had the opportunity to attend the Student Diversity Leadership Conference where she learned more about affinity spaces. After she returned, she and a few other students championed the creation of affinity spaces for Middle School, which still run today.

“It’s been so amazing to see affinity spaces for Middle Schoolers grow. I’m still in shock seeing that happen,” Mahi says. “It’s nice to see that my legacy is embedded in the school schedule now.”

Taking her passions outside Overlake took some time after her experience in seventh grade. She recalls that in eighth grade during the pandemic, an Overlake teacher sent her a link to an organization they thought she might be interested in: the Association for Washington Student Leaders. At the time there was an opportunity to be a part of a panel that explored what it was like to be a student in Washington. She said yes to the opportunity, which led to her getting even more involved with an organization run by the leader of the event, the Washington Youth Alliance. Over the years she became more and more involved and now she is the vice president of that organization.

But she recognizes that the series of events that got her to where she is now didn’t just happen overnight. It involved some risk taking. “One thing I’ve learned from all this is just, say ‘yes’ to the experiences you get. If you don’t like it, you have a fun story to tell. But saying ‘yes’ has gotten me to the point where I’m now the vice president of a nonprofit!”

In recent years, Mahi has jumped at the chance to publicly testify before the state legislature on several presented bills. She has spoken on behalf of youth mental health bills aiming to increase funding for school counselors across Washington as well as gun violence prevention bills.

While politics often takes time, Mahi recently had the opportunity to see a bill she testified on passed and put into action. She had spoken on behalf of SB-5444, a bill prohibiting firearms from being allowed in zoos, aquariums, libraries, and transit centers. She was even in a public library and noticed a sign posted referencing the bill she helped pass. “It was a tangible reminder that I contributed to this. That’s the bill I helped pass, and it’s helping someone else,” she says.

Making an Impact Outside the Nest

Stepping outside the nest challenges a student to take initiative for their passion and pursue it no matter the cost. Mahi notes that she often misses class to testify before the legislature on a bill, but that her teachers have all been extremely supportive with the overwhelming message being, “go help the world!” giving her the freedom to work her schoolwork around her legislative efforts.

Vidhi shares that her experience at Overlake, whether on Project Week or in classes, has helped foster her curiosity and passions. “The education we get here, it’s an open curriculum. We have debates about climate awareness. We talk about how we can improve as individuals and citizens. We have conversations in physics for example about how we could make a sustainable and cost-effective house. We have a great faculty that are able to provide these great Project Week experiences for us.”

Although she has achieved a lot in her high school years, sometimes Mahi still finds the experience a little surreal.

“I think about how I got here a lot. I’m very surprised that my life has changed so drastically over the last two years just because of testifying,” Mahi shares.

And if she had some words of wisdom to pass onto younger students, she says, “don’t get so caught up in what you can’t do. I am not a math whiz. I love humanities. I’m going to major in it. Do the things you’re good at and let that be enough. You don’t have to be good at everything. Let your passions be your purpose. You’re good at the things you’re good at for a reason.”

As Jones has taught classes and led different Project Week experiences in her time as a social studies faculty member, she gets excited about having students who want to take their passions and run with them. “The fact that we have kids who want to do that is the best of Overlake.”

Other Inspirational Project Week Courses



Building a Tiny Home



Sea Turtle Conservation in Costa Rica

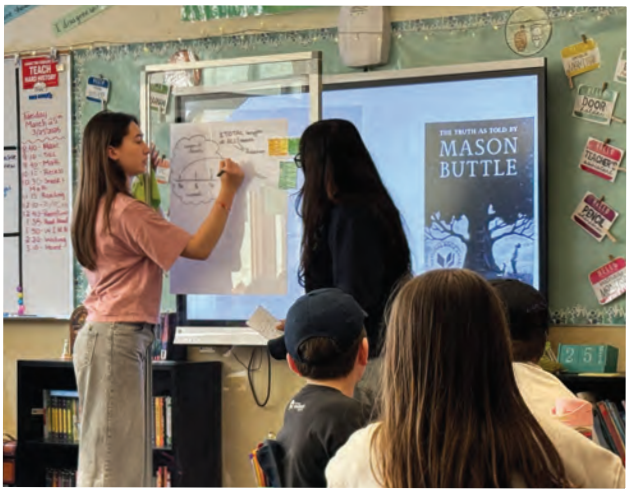




Exploration to Plastics and Sustainability



Upcycle Furniture Challenge



Community Service at John Muir and Franklin Elementary Schools



Community Care at Rainier Valley Food Bank



Elwha River Restoration





Art Installation at Transit Station

After graduation...

Born to Change

Sahar Fathi ('01) is a born changemaker. As Policy Director at the Washington State Office of the Governor working under Governor Bob Ferguson, Sahar is making her mark on history, one law at a time.

"I don't know how I got to where I am," admits Sahar with a laugh, a common response to the question of how alumni arrive in their careers. But her story says otherwise, and she was driven by a desire for change, even from a young age. Born to immigrant parents who were both students at the time, education was central to her upbringing. At eight, Sahar accompanied her parents to Iran for the first time and saw firsthand how women were treated, declaring her ambition to become an attorney then and there. Sahar's determination has been a constant throughout her life, and she has never stopped until she reached her goals. "Once I have a goal, I don't stop until I reach it."

As a student at Overlake, Sahar had many goals. She played lacrosse, having never picked up a stick before trying out as a sophomore, performed in the school musical, wrote for the school newspaper and our first-ever French literary magazine, and even became a class representative, something she says she never would have done if she hadn't been in the supportive community of Overlake.

From there, Sahar fast-tracked her relentless pursuit of knowledge, graduating from Overlake in 2001 and attending the University of Southern California where she roomed with fellow Overlake graduate and current Director of Health and Wellness Sam Chan Hillyer ('01). Double majoring in International Relations and French, Sahar graduated in three years. Her strong foundation in French, built at Overlake, enabled her to study at the Sorbonne.

> **"Once I have a goal, I don't stop until I reach it."**
>
> **SAHAR FATHI ('01)**

After earning her juris doctorate and master's degree simultaneously from the University of Washington, Sahar's passion for policy work led her to an international program in Lyon. There, she realized her calling was in supporting human rights through policy change rather than reacting to ineffective laws.

Back in Seattle post 9/11, Sahar founded the Middle Eastern Legal Association of Washington, a nonprofit connecting refugees and immigrants with attorneys who spoke their languages. Her work with the City of Seattle further solidified her role as a changemaker.



One of Sahar's proudest achievements is the creation of the Refugee Women's Institute, a program that built trust between refugees and Seattle police officers, earning an award from the Obama administration. "A research group from Harvard tested the relationships, finding a high degree of trust in the program. I still talk to some of the refugees today," Sahar says with pride.

When Sahar isn't busy creating new laws and running the state with Bob Ferguson, she can be found writing poetry, a talent that sprung from her Overlake roots. "I was in 10th grade English when teacher Ellen Zarter pulled me aside after class and encouraged me to enter one of my poems in a national competition, leading to my first publication. Now I've had at least a dozen poems published, all thanks to Ellen," shares Sahar. "Not every 40-year-old can brag that some of their biggest cheerleaders are their high school teachers," she remarks of Ellen and her former teachers Sarah Fitzpatrick and Erin Gabriel, mentors who inspired Sahar to be creative and use her voice.

"I think it's especially important for women to be taught that you deserve every opportunity," Sahar muses. "I think I got to where I am today because no one ever said no — not at Overlake, not in my home, and not in my work in city and state government," she reflects. The beauty of living in a world of green lights is having the freedom of thought and ability to think differently. And that's how real change happens.

After graduation...

Roots of Change

Sometimes you don't have to travel far to embark on a journey. For **Latio "LT" Cosmos ('16)**, the journey since graduating from Overlake may only have taken him as far as Seattle, but it has been a journey deeply rooted in transformation and growth.

When you hear the name LT Cosmos, "Overlake basketball star" likely comes to mind. Indeed, the former Owl hoopster attended Seattle University on a basketball scholarship and played with the team through his sophomore year. A friend, knowing that quitting the game would leave the seasoned athlete with some free time, invited him to join the African Student Association. "As an African person, it's important for me to learn about my history and where I come from," he shares. When almost immediately the position of president became available, LT threw his name in and won, serving two terms before graduating as a senior. "I was leading others and hosting meetings, forming deep relationships with my peers in the ASA, but I was also educating myself on African and Black history."

Graduating from Seattle U in 2020, in the thick of the pandemic, with a major in public affairs and a concentration in international and community development, he delivered his thesis virtually (from his living room!), speaking about his research on the gentrification of the Central District in Seattle. He focused on the opening of the Liberty Bank Building, including behind-the-scenes details he gained thanks to the Seattle University Albers School of Business and Economics. "I'm constantly digesting what I'm ingesting," LT reflects, "and my thesis gave me the opportunity to think bigger, about Seattle as a city, Washington as a state, and the US as a country. I kept zooming out."

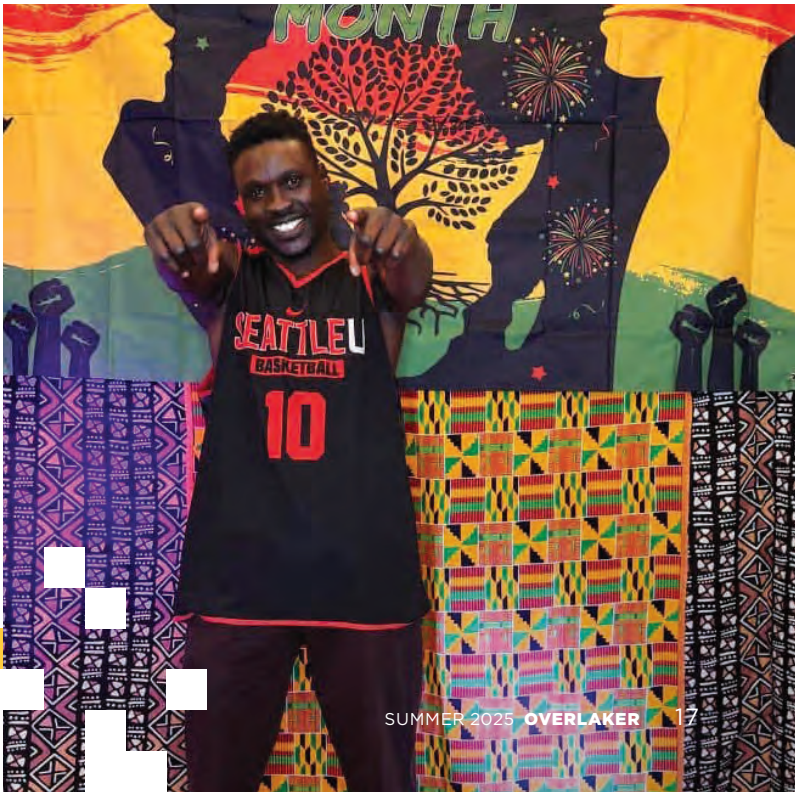
Fast forward five years to today. LT has just accepted a position at a wealth management firm, a field he wants to learn so he can connect what he's studied in community development and public affairs. Ultimately, he aims to help cities and governments manage resources economically, sustainably, and equitably. His vision, he shares, is "a world where no one is exploiting anyone else," adding, "it's possible."

In the meantime, LT is bringing his vision to an annual show hosted by the African Student Association at Seattle U, where he remains a consultant. The show started in 2016 and is sponsored by the Kicheko Project, a nonprofit founded by a Kenyan friend of LT's. The aim of the show is to celebrate Africa and Black history, to share culture, stories, and art, and to raise funds for the ASA. This year's show was titled Roots and Punchlines.

LT is not only the manager of the show, but he's also one of the performing artists. His set was centered on the theme of perseverance. "Each piece conveyed how we are striving for both personal and collective growth while learning to love ourselves and our communities in the process." LT performed four original songs, including a collaboration with sister **Jane (Kaku) Cosmos ('21)**. "Roots and Punchlines reaffirmed my deeper purpose as an artist," shares LT, "art has the power to challenge, heal, and inspire, and gatherings like this remind me why I do what I do."

Perhaps music is LT's way of giving voice to his thoughts and experience, a channel for expression of ideas that emerge more naturally through song. And that confidence stems from his time at Overlake. "I am not easily intimidated," he shares with a laugh, "I gained a sense of freedom to think intellectually and against the grain at Overlake. I'm not afraid to go against the current, but it's exhausting, I'm not going to lie to you. It wears you down. But it's second nature and expressing myself is what I was born to do. Those seeds were already within me, but Overlake watered and nurtured them." His roots, it turns out, aren't a punchline after all.

Thinking back to the performance, which took place in early March, LT shares, "I'm excited to keep refining my artistry and to continue working with new voices and talent. The energy from this event has only strengthened my commitment to collaborate with others to shape a better world." A mover. A grower. A changemaker. And just the beginning of LT's impact on the world.



After graduation...

Changing the Face of Giving



They say some superheroes don't wear capes and that's certainly the case for Overlake graduate and nonprofit-meets-tech changemaker **Rahul Gupta-Iwasaki ('10)** who would surely balk at even a hint to him holding superhero status. But the cape is real, flying in the breeze of millions of dollars being funneled into deserving nonprofits all thanks to the company he helped build.

Rahul is the cofounder and CTO of Every.org, a nonprofit that helps other nonprofits raise funds and strengthen donor relations by providing a free platform for giving. And it all started with an idea amongst classmates — a spark of shared curiosity.

After leaving the corporate world of tech startups in 2017, Rahul met up with Stanford University classmates Tina Roh, Mark Ulrich, Omar Diab, and together they hatched an idea to make giving more accessible. Every.org was launched in March 2020, an ideal moment in time when donors were primed to support front-line workers during the pandemic and nonprofits had to shift away from in-person fundraising due to Covid-era restrictions.

As Rahul thinks back to his years at Overlake, he credits the school community for fostering a place where students feel encouraged to express their ideas.

The platform took off. Rahul remembers celebrating their first milestone — when $1,000,000 was given through Every.org — on a Teams call. This year, Every.org passed the $100,000,000 milestone, funds which have been donated across more than 6,400 nonprofits through their platform. Even with milestones like this, it's the stories from the individual nonprofits they set out to help that resonate most with Rahul.

"From an impact perspective, it's very cool when a nonprofit reaches out and tells us that Every.org made life easier for them," he shares. "Most for-profit payment platforms target larger, well-funded nonprofits because that's where they'll make the most money, but we focus on small and medium-sized nonprofits that benefit from our services, especially Crypto," noting that "Crypto has really changed the game for many nonprofits we support." In fact, Every.org was the first organization to enable crypto-currency as a donation source to any nonprofit in the US.

"Several nonprofits have shared that a major gift came via cryptocurrency from a donor they didn't even know existed."

Funded by a Gates Foundation grant, Every.org has worked on a special program in the last year to build their support of fiscally-sponsored organizations, which are groups that do not have their own nonprofit status but use a nonprofit sponsor to accept funding for work that is mission compatible. Every.org is the first organization to facilitate giving for fiscally-sponsored organizations, which are often invisible to donors because they cannot register with for-profit giving platforms. Thanks to the Gates Foundation grant, Every.org has brought on over 2,000 fiscally-sponsored organizations, many of which are grassroots operations that are responding to timely issues, and that's a brand-new capability for the nonprofit sector, another new path opened by Every.org.

As Rahul thinks back to his years at Overlake, he credits the school community for fostering a place where students feel encouraged to express their ideas. "I was on a first name basis with my Upper School teachers and my advisor, Mark Manuel, which allowed me to engage on a level playing field. My ideas were always taken seriously and that gave me the confidence to go out into the world and believe in my own dreams," Rahul shares.

And dream he did. Of course, while dreams and curiosity are one thing, bringing them to fruition is another. "Most days, this work is not glamorous. But you just keep working on a problem you find fascinating, and you see it through. I feel proud that I stuck with the process," says Rahul, speaking to the grit, patience, and growth-mindset that originated in his years at Overlake and carry over to his work.

As an organization, Every.org dreams of a day when individuals will make their Every.org giving profile a core part of their online presence instead of their social media handles. "We talk about how cool it would be if people defaulted to sharing their Every.org giving and the causes they care about on their online dating profiles instead of just linking to their Instagram," Rahul shares. "One cool thing about Every.org is that you can give to any nonprofit in the US through our site." Yes, even The Overlake School.

To check out Every.org, scan the QR code and see the change for yourself.

Students learn what's possible in Gerald Blycker's class

Upper School science teacher Gerald Blycker offers two separate semester-long courses focused on climate change and actionable solutions people can take to lessen the environmental impact. Students learn how to reduce the carbon footprint through research projects and field trips.



As part of the Design Thinking with Impact class, students researched and then reported on Overlake's carbon footprint, such as emission projections.



Pearl Cassidy-Woodward ('25) reports to the class how shipping containers could be used to support a method of growing called vertical farming.



Students in Gerald Blycker's Net Zero class visit a home that's actually net positive in its design.



Blycker shows students solar panels installed on a net positive home, which generate a surplus of power beyond the needs of the home and offloads power back to the public grid.



Creating a playbook for all learners



Krishna Davda

Overlake's Head of Student Experience, Krishna Davda, is part of a global initiative redefining how international schools support all students, especially those with learning differences. "It's centering students that drives me," says Davda, who has 16 years of working experience in schools supporting neurodivergent learners.

"I'm the only non-head of school that is part of this group, and while they are used to working with neurotypical environments, I'm coming from the niche of having experience in learning differences communities," says Davda. This international taskforce is commissioned by the U.S. State Department's Office of Overseas Schools.

The group's official charge: develop a strategic and implementable framework for expanding and enhancing sustainable student support services in international schools. The taskforce is creating a playbook entitled, *Getting Down to Business: A Playbook for Expanding and Enhancing Sustainable Student Support Services in International Schools.*

One of the things we know is that when we design for students at the margins, we actually create systems that lift up everyone."

KRISHNA DAVID, OVERLAKE'S HEAD OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Since the fall, this group has been working both in-person in Washington D.C., and remotely to identify successful, sustainable programs that better center and serve neurodivergent communities. They are writing an actual playbook for educators to follow. "This isn't just a toolkit of tips," Davda explains. "It's about fundamentally shifting how schools think about neurodivergence — not as a cost burden, but as a strategic investment that benefits every student."

The playbook includes sections on systems leadership, scheduling, staffing, culture change, and performance-based budgeting, the latter of which is one of Davda's focus areas on the project. With a master's degree in public policy and management that focuses on school finance, Davda is bringing his lens of operational strategy and budget design to the work. "We're aligning this with globally recognized financial standards — like IPSAS and IIA — so schools can make data-informed decisions about how to serve students without compromising financial stability."

Davda goes on to say that there are three subsections in this plan that describe three different business models for supporting students with neurodivergent needs. "There are holistic, wrap-around programs for these kids that are included in the price of tuition, so a one-price-fits-all model, which Overlake is an example of," explains Davda. "There is a hybrid model where there are some programs in-house albeit learning specialists, or speech pathology or counseling, and then you outsource to specialists depending on how the student presents. And finally, there is the fee-for-service model. You have services in school, but each of those services come at an additional cost."

The playbook will be shared domestically and internationally, including in interactive formats, at conferences and through online platforms supported by the State Department. "Ultimately, we're trying to create something that any school regardless of where they are on the spectrum of neurodivergence can use to move forward."

In the end, the work of this taskforce will benefit all learners. "One of the things we know is that when we design for students at the margins — whether they are twice-exceptional or need comprehensive learning support — we actually create systems that lift up everyone. Academic performance gains are often more measurable in this group, and the benefits ripple outward. We're helping schools build durable systems — academically, culturally, and financially that allow all learners to thrive."



Krishna Davda, far right, attending a taskforce meeting in Washington, DC this fall.

Mike Davidson is honored with Coach of the Year



"It's funny how much better of a coach you end up being when you win," laughs Mike Davidson, long-time coach of the blended Overlake–Bear Creek baseball team, the Growls. Davidson recently won the top honors for a baseball coach, after a tremendous 2023–24 season with the Growls winning the State Championships.

"I was honored with the 2024 1A state Coach of the Year given by the Washington State Baseball Coaches Association," beams Davidson.

It's an honor that has been 24 years in the making. Davidson participated in a champions panel at the Winter Coaches Conference where other coaches were able to ask questions on his strategies and tips to winning.

"Coaches love doing conference because we're big fans of stealing what works," explains Davidson. "It's funny when you give a talk like that and you realize 'I'm just telling you stuff that I probably stole from somebody else, maybe in this room ten years ago.' But that's how we get better: sharing what works. You try it in your program and if it works you keep it. If not, you steal something else."

Now that Davidson has reached the pinnacle in his sport, some might think everything is easy street from here on out. Not so. "When a couple things break your way and you finally win a title, there's this idea that you finally figured it out, but it just means that you helped push the right buttons for that group of guys," explains Davidson. "This is a different group of guys. Even those who return from last year are in a different set of roles. I have three captains this year who were not seniors last year and now have to shoulder that leadership."



2023–24 State Champions

One aspect of Davidson's Growls has not changed through the years — the culture of the team. "One of the advantages of doing it 20-some years is you don't have to restart culture every year. Your guys who are juniors and seniors learned those standards and values when they were younger by juniors and seniors. So, the culture is self-replicating. What changes is individuals need to be coached individually. The way you reach individual players depends on what kind of relationship you have with each of them."

And to the core, those relationships are what matter each season. "The hard part of coaching is managing personalities, managing egos, managing fear. I think for new coaches it feels like it's a huge distraction and then, when you've done it for a long time, you realize that's all you were ever doing. Baseball just happens to be the vehicle."

Inspiring change one donation and sandwich at a time

It started with an idea during Thanksgiving and has grown into a yearly fundraising campaign. And at the center of it all, Director of Alumni Engagement Jenni Baldwin and her husband, Ryan. “Our fundraiser began when we donated to Northwest Harvest in Fall of 2020, giving in honor of each person who couldn’t attend our Thanksgiving table that year due to Covid,” explains Baldwin. “We shared our donation and our ‘why’ on social media and the post went viral within the community. In that first year, we raised over $10,000 for Northwest Harvest and the Baldwin Challenge was born.”

In fact, the Baldwin Challenge has been gaining momentum and now, five years later, more than $140,000 has been raised. The Baldwins were recently honored for leading the largest private single fundraising effort for the organization at a Northwest Harvest event.

“Food is a human right. Period. End of story. It’s the foundation of nutrition that allows us to work productively in the community and connect with others.”

JENNI AND RYAN BALDWIN

“It’s an honor to run this campaign each November, but mostly, Ryan and I want to thank the good folks at Northwest Harvest who are doing the hard work every day to help those experiencing hunger. Because of their coalition of over 400 business partners, schools, food banks, pantries, and distributors, Northwest Harvest is able to stretch every dollar given to several times that amount.”

Beyond the challenge, the Baldwins also run several other philanthropy projects throughout the year, including collecting between 800 and 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the Union Gospel Mission’s Search & Rescue program, which helps feed the unhoused in Seattle. “We’ve been delivering monthly carloads of pb&j’s for more than four years, delivering over 45,000 sandwiches to date.”



At the end of the day, the mission to feed others spoke to the Baldwins. “Food is a human right. Period. End of story. It’s the foundation of nutrition that allows us to work productively in the community and connect with others. Without food, it becomes even harder for individuals to find permanent housing and stable work, let alone to form meaningful relationships and community.”

Celebrating change one byte at a time at the first annual Alumni & Community Tech Event

We already know that technology enables change, but we often ignore its transformative power to bring people together.

There was a buzz around the room as alumni, current students, parents, and community members gathered for the first annual Alumni & Community Tech Event in January. Senior **Emily L-K. (’25)**, student leader of Overlake’s Applied AI Club, notes, “It was beautiful to be in a room full of storytellers, all with similar origins, but different endings.” Fellow senior **Dabao Z. (’25)**, student leader of Applied AI and Computer Science (CS) clubs, shares, “It was easy to connect and delve into meaningful conversations even though the alumni represented a wide range of tech-based professions. The experience was both approachable and personalized, and the event represents how extensive and strong our Alumni Program is.”

What started as a networking event for alumni turned into a cross-generational opportunity for current students and parents to meet alumni from all eras with a shared interest in tech. Current student **Dylan Y. (’26)** shared that the event taught him how to approach a potential contact at a networking event, a skill he leaned into, even taking a campus tour with fellow alum attendee **Jeff Silverman (’76)** after the event. Alum **Michael Simpson (’19)** shared, “It’s wild to be on this side of a networking event. Students are coming up to me for industry advice and it feels good to be able to pay that forward.” Dabao reflected how he “gained a greater appreciation of the Overlake experience and how this community promotes not only academic excellence, but also soft skills,” further adding, “The Alumni & Community Tech Event reaffirmed the value of Overlake’s education, which teaches students how to think and thrive no matter where we end up in the future.”

For many Overlakers, that future begins in a lab, club, or class that ignites a lifelong passion. Alumni Board member **Matt Bellamy (’04)** shared, “I was in the first-ever computer science course at Overlake junior year. Brian Swan taught us the core fundamentals of CS using what we now call a project-based learning model. That hooked me.” Now, returning to campus as an alum and co-host of this event, Matt notes, “I love the event’s setting in the IDEA lab because I can see how that space is setting students up for success. They’re already building, applying the concepts they’re learning in the classroom, so they’re way ahead of where I was as a student.”

Director of Technology, Jay Heath, spoke at the event, sharing, “Everyone in this room is a tinkerer. We all tinkered with something and learned from failure. That curiosity



and willingness to fail is so essential to success in this field,” and deeply connected to Overlake’s mission.

The landscape of Overlake is always changing, and we’re not just talking about the newest building on campus. The horizon of technology, including computer science and robotics courses and clubs, are constantly adapting to changing technology and the shifting culture of technology in the world beyond Overlake, especially in regard to AI. Faculty members Brian Husted and David Basham, key leaders of our robotics, technology, and CS curriculum at Overlake, spoke to Overlake’s next chapter in this field. “I’m introducing a class next year in the IDEA Lab called Engineering Applications of Computer Science where students will learn programming by working on collaborative teams to solve design challenges,” shares Brian. David is excited to see the “constant learning and growth of our student body. The students in these classes are highly engaged and ask excellent questions; they keep me on my toes!”

Ultimately, this event not only represented changes happening on the tech frontier at Overlake but also created change, establishing a new tradition and offering a space for those soft skills that Dabao referenced, which all of the adults shared as being so valuable. Matt urges, “You have to go out and connect with professionals. If there’s someone you can learn from in your field, approach them, but practice your elevator speech and be ready to translate what you’re learning or eager to study to be understandable.” And that’s what this event was all about — sharing and celebrating change, one network connection at a time.

A Hoot from the Director of Alumni Engagement



I've always loved stories, especially those about heroes whose actions create a ripple effect of positive change. One of my favorite stories to tell is why I've loved shifting out of the classroom and serving our incredible alumni this year. Not only do I get a front-row seat to all the alumni news — my job is like one giant lunch block where I get to hear all the great, positive happenings — but I also have the privilege of passing those stories onto others, shaping the collective understanding of what Overlake was and who Overlakers continue to be in the world today.

Yet, the roots of all those stories remain the same. Our alums are still the curious, passionate, lifelong learners and champions of creativity and change that began as Overlake students. Their work as tech giants, business leaders, entrepreneurs, artists and creatives, builders, educators, performers, and so much more is changing the world as we know it. Alums' willingness to color outside the lines, to think different, and to dream is still quintessentially Overlake, the thread of green and gold being woven into the fabric of the future.

The theme of this *Overlaker* issue is "changemakers," and there are so many Owls out in the wild leading change in big and small ways every day. It's an honor to tell their stories and to serve all our Owl alumni in this role.

Changes have also been happening to the Alumni Program this year. We cleaned up alumni data and soft launched a new alumni portal — The Nest — for communications and alumni needs. We launched an all-alumni survey to gather data and inform program growth. We engaged rising alumni by partnering with the Class of 2025 in a Seniors Give Big fundraising campaign that yielded a 100% dollar-for-dollar match from our alumni. We celebrated senior Lifers in a new Lifer Social tradition, and refined the Alumni Initiation event to formally welcome our new alumni to the community. We offered many opportunities to engage through events all year, especially at the All-Class Reunion that took place May 31. This was the party of the year for over 300 alumni and their families, and current and alumni faculty. We celebrated milestone years, raised a glass to award-winning alumni, engaged in playful activities like ping pong and cornhole, toured campus with a special stop at the new Student & Community Center, and of course, made and shared memories.

The Overlake Alumni Program, like its alumni, has gone through many phases over the years. As we look ahead, we are excited to celebrate change, milestones, and all the little moments in between that have kept our alumni community connected to Overlake. Read on to hear about our incredible alumni changemakers and attend an upcoming alumni event to catch up in person.

Hoot hoot!

Jenni Baldwin
Director of Alumni Engagement

As we look ahead, we are excited to celebrate change, milestones, and all the little moments in between that have kept our alumni community connected to Overlake.

ALUMNI EVENTS

ALUMNI SURVEY

Owls Unite for Pawsitive Change

One of the trends we hear from Overlake alumni is that the relationships built on campus — with faculty, advisors, and peers — are the core of their best memories as students and are what keep alumni connected to Overlake even decades later.

This is a story of three alumni with a vision to make caring for rescue dogs more affordable and sustainable, a vision they made into a reality by working together.

Meet **Jenny Nordin ('02)**, director of the largest foster-based dog rescue in the Pacific Northwest. Founded in 2017 as a 501c3 organization, Dog Gone Seattle (DGS) became a reality after she was volunteering at another rescue organization but saw an opportunity to improve their model, taking a chance with the support of husband **Jon Nordin ('00)**.

What makes DGS special is that its base is a network of dog foster families and individuals, which removes the need for a large space to house many dogs. In their first year, DGS rescued over 400 dogs, jumping to 800–1,000 dogs in 2025. Rescues come from local folks who cannot keep their dog for any number of reasons, and from kill shelters, especially in California and Texas.

As DGS matured as an organization, a growing cost and challenge emerged in providing these rescues with veterinary care, which DGS, like other rescue organizations, outsources through a network of vets in the area. With an average of 100–150 dogs in their care at any given point, a slower month of vet visits accrues $25,000 in bills that must be built into their budget. Vets in the area are overwhelmed and cannot prioritize seeing rescue dogs, and the cost of veterinary care has increased since the pandemic, creating a community-wide problem. Enter Jenny's brilliant idea to create an onsite care facility and hire in-house vets.

When Jenny shared this vision with classmates **Jeni (Ellison) Webb ('02)** and **Blake Murray ('02)**, they were eager to help, and so Jenny launched what DGS refers to as the Wellness and Growth (WAG) Initiative dedicated to providing affordable and accessible veterinary care for dogs in their rescue program. In October of 2024, DGS hosted its first-ever WAG Mission Mixer, an event supported by Overlake classmates Jeni and Blake. Jeni, whose family owns an event space, offered up the venue at gratis while Blake generously agreed to match any amount raised at the event. The event was a huge success, raising approximately



$230,000 (including the match), a testament to the lasting power of Overlake friendships through the decades.

The influx of funding enables Jenny to continue construction on the 2,400-square-foot converted barn on the property she shares with Jon, a space that will become DGS's new Community Center as well as the in-house site for veterinary care. This veterinary care center will not only serve the 1,000 dogs in DGS's care per year but also support dogs from other rescue organizations in the area by providing affordable veterinary care for them too, sharing the resource and paying it forward.

The new DGS community center opened in Spring 2025, offering new opportunities to partner with other organizations, to serve the community, and to facilitate more volunteer opportunities.

This dynamic group of alumni is living out Overlake's mission and value of compassion as they work together to change the landscape for rescue dogs in the Pacific Northwest. Pawsitively inspiring!

You can learn more about DGS by scanning this QR code.

CLASS NOTES

Overlake community members give a hoot about what's happening within our alumni community! In Class Notes, we share events big and small, personal or professional, chance meetings, fun adventures, travel stories, etc. If you have an alumni story to share, be sure to send it to alumni@overlake.org.

2020s

Muad Abdi ('24) is joining Dr. Venkatesan as a research assistant at Northeastern University where he is currently a freshman studying economics. The work will delve into the economics of poverty exploring root causes of poverty and effective measurements of poverty and wealth. Muad shares that this opportunity "aligns perfectly with [his] passion for using data-driven insights to address critical societal challenges."

Dante Austin ('24) co-directed *The Good Doctor* this spring with faculty member Bill Johns. The show was performed on the Fulton Performing Arts stage on April 25 and 26. *The Good Doctor* was first performed at Overlake back in 2003 as the eighth performance in Fulton. The April 2025 performances of *The Good Doctor* will be Overlake's 80th show — over 20 years of amazing performances!

Ellie Hong ('24) is the Vice President of Finance for the inaugural Residence Hall Council at Brown University. She is also a Chinese language tutor at Brown's Sheridan Learning Center and a singer in two student acapella groups. Ever the busy bee, Ellie is a newly certified cycle instructor and is teaching undergrad spin classes three times a week. Recently, Ellie graciously donated several gently used lacrosse sticks to the Athletics Department. The Overlake Athletics Department is happy to take new and gently used sports equipment to support athletes who are trying out new sports and to equip athletes who are on financial aid. If you are interested in donating athletic equipment, please connect with Alicia Gold at agold@overlake.org.

Bess Hurlock ('24), a freshman at Chapman University, is the newly appointed social media manager for the Chapman Peace and Justice Union. Bess crafts posts, organizes their social media campaigns, and collaborates with other union leaders to determine meeting topics and logistics.

Sylvia Lou ('24) began a new position this spring as a senate aide at the University of Southern California as part of USC's undergraduate student government where she is currently wrapping up her freshman year. As a busy former Owl, Sylvia has also started working as a research assistant at the USC Dornsife Department of Economics.

Evan Spinner ('24) is starting a new position as a podcast assistant at Wonder Peak Media, continuing to follow his passion for film and visual productions.

Aryav Taneja ('24) accepted a position as a campus strategist for Georgia Tech through Perplexity. Aryav will serve as a liaison and educator to showcase how Perplexity's AI-powered search has supercharged his learning as a freshman.

Catherine Tang ('24) began a research assistant role in the department of chemistry at Northwestern University earlier this year where she is currently a freshman. Embracing both sides of the brain, Catherine has also started a new role as a stage manager at Northwestern's Bienen School of Music. We love seeing Overlake's education in action!

Annalee Debenport ('23) participated in a sustainability art symposium in Finland last fall. The 2024 International Socially Engaged Art Symposium (ISEAS) focused on how Finnish people connect to and utilize the forest's resources. Annalee learned from a master forager, sound artist, several visual artists, food researchers, dancers, and a Finnish shaman during the five-day symposium. As a participant, Annalee was invited to create original art, specifically using all-natural materials such as charcoal and hand-crafted natural watercolor paints made from mushrooms she foraged. ISEAS took place about an hour north of Helsinki at Mustion Linna, a countryside manor owned by the richest man in Finland.

Neha Dubhashi ('23), a sophomore at the University of Washington, is working on a lunar rover prototype as part of the Lunar Sensor Systems Lab, which studies how lunar regolith affects wireless communication and rover self-charging capabilities. One of Neha's responsibilities for the team is to write Python code to integrate motion and data collection from the sensor. She is being mentored by Dr. Shanti Garman and Dr. Joshua Smith in this work and is learning a lot about electrical and computer engineering principles. When she's not building robots, Neha shares that she keeps busy perfecting her banana pancake recipe.

Kiran Mitra ('23) started a new position as a financial software engineer with the Cornell FinTech Club.

Kamya Raman ('23) joined Brown University's Mezcla Latin Dance Team and is a member of two other Brown dance teams as well. She recently performed in Mezcla's 29th annual spring show called Amanecer.

Nity Rosenbloom ('23) will be spending this summer as an intern at H2 Energy Now in Israel. Nity shares that she is excited to dive into the world of hydrogen energy storage at this Israeli startup company by contributing to research, product development, and engineering simulations while gaining firsthand experience in the high-tech startup ecosystem.

Clara Sun ('23) is in her sophomore year at Duke University where she is majoring in neuroscience with minors in education and visual arts. She is also currently working as creative director for Duke's student-run creative agency and as a research assistant in a cognitive neuroscience lab. Clara volunteers weekly at an inpatient hospital unit and a call center assisting Medicare beneficiaries apply for additional benefit programs. Additionally, she is the Director of Education for the Duke chapter of the national nonprofit PERIOD. Last summer, Clara worked as a STEM educator for underserved communities in Orange County. When she's not honing her medical or teaching skills, Clara can be found in the studio with fellow members of her dance group, Duke Chinese Dance.

Leo ter Meulen ('23), a sophomore at UCLA, is currently working as a care extender at UCLA's Ronald Reagan Hospital.

Eashan Vagish ('23) will be joining Atlassian as a software engineering intern this summer. Eashan is currently a sophomore at Cornell University.

Siena Verpraskus ('23) secured an internship at Copper Lake Partners as a Summer 2025 Private Equity Intern.

Jack Wiley ('23), **Zach Foster ('19)**, and **Trey Rudolph ('19)**, Assistant Varsity Boys Basketball coaches, saw their team head to the state tournament in February. Only 25% of teams earn this opportunity, a testament to the leadership of this stellar alum coaching team!



Daniel Welicki ('23), University of Washington sophomore, was selected to participate at IrvineHacks, an annual invite-only hackathon hosted by UC Irvine. Daniel's group focused on preventing patient harm and spreading awareness for patient safety, with only 36 hours to complete an application and pitch it to the judges. Daniel and team created Patient, an AI-powered search that aggregates information about medical professionals from hard-to-reach sources to make it more accessible. The team won "Best Beginner Hack." Congratulations to Daniel and his IrvineHacks team!

Ryan Bartlow ('22), former Overlake cross-country and lacrosse team captain, visited Overlake's campus in December where he spoke with various athletics team captains about his experience as a West Point Cadet.

Josh Colleran ('22) is wrapping up his junior year at Santa Clara after returning from studying abroad at UCC in Cork, Ireland. Josh is majoring in computer science and engineering and is playing collegiate ultimate frisbee, even being selected for the SCU ultimate frisbee traveling team all three years!

Zane Likosky ('22) completed an internship at De Line Pictures where he gained valuable experience in script coverage and honed his communication skills. Zane moved on to a new internship at Flynn Picture Company this spring, continuing to follow his passion. Zane is a film studies major at Chapman University, where he'll be a senior this fall.

Trinity Pape ('22) had the opportunity to sit at the defense counsel table during a weeklong trial for a client facing Hobbs Act Robbery, Felon with a Firearm, and Armed Career Criminal charges. Trinity spent four months preparing for trial engaging in activities such as visiting her client in prison, photographing evidence in the field, and participating in trial at Los Angeles' US District Court. Trinity is considering a career in criminal defense work and is studying art and political science at UCLA where she just wrapped up her junior year.



Rachel ('22) & Addie ('22) Sapirstein faced off against each other in a mid-March women's softball double header. Rachel plays on the Claremont Mudd Scripps women's softball team and sister Addie plays for Haverford. Rachel also began a position as a marketing intern at Amazon in January.

Joseph Zhang ('22) shared that he has accepted a 2026 investment banking summer analysis internship at Capital One, focusing on their New York City capital markets financing division.

Kaku ('21) and **LT ('16) Cosmos**, dynamic sibling duo, performed in *Roots and Punchlines,* a comedy and music variety show that celebrates Black excellence, cultural resilience, and storytelling. The show was held in early March at the Seattle University Theater and was funded by the Kicheko Project Foundation. Proceeds from ticket sales supported Black student mission programs in Washington and community empowerment initiatives. Want to learn more? Read their spotlight on page 17.

Sydney Goad ('21) has a busy term working as an intern at Katalyst Public Relations where she will continue her study of marketing, real estate, and public relations as well as working as a marketing and administrative intern at Pacific Sotheby's in La Jolla for Team Anderson-White. Sydney is a senior at the University of San Diego where she was recently nominated for the 2024 Gender Equity Award, which recognizes members of the USD community who embody the principles of intersectional social justice by promoting equity through collaboration, empowerment, solidarity with marginalized populations, courage, and creativity. Sydney was nominated in the community catalyst category, which celebrates individuals committed to the holistic development and support of others, fostering a sense of belonging for all USD community members. Sydney shares, "As Co-VP of USD Women in Business, I'm grateful to contribute to empowering others and building a stronger, more inclusive community!" Sydney attended a Gender Equity Awards Luncheon in December as well.

Belén Gutierrez ('21), despite being a self-classified art kid at Overlake with no STEM tilt, is now a physics major at Bard College, making her former Overlake physics teacher, Brian Husted, proud.

Ivy Haight ('21) is currently writing her thesis on the financial impacts of firms hiring chief sustainability officers as a way to bridge her economics and environmental studies double major. Ivy graduated from Amherst College in May and will start a job at Bain and Company, a global management consulting firm, based in Seattle, this summer.

Anya Sharma ('21) was recently accepted to a Master of Medical Science program at Harvard Medical School where she will be studying biomedical information come fall.

Jessica Colleran ('20) graduated from the University of Washington Allen School in 2024 and now is a software engineer at Splunk. This spring, Jessica was named to the Orienteering USA National Team after rehabbing from a stress fracture for the past year and getting back on the training and competing circuit. Jessica recently joined the Cascade Orienteering Board, serving as a member at large and she is about to receive her level 2 coaching certificate in the sport. We had the chance to catch up at the recent Hops & Headshots event along with friends and fellow classmates **Bridget Essex ('20)** and **Kate Parsons Proctor ('17)**.

Michael Culbert ('20) shares that he has started a new internship at The Center for Water Security and Cooperation.

Anna Diaconu ('20) decided to take a gap year between completing her undergraduate studies and entering law school to travel and connect with her family history. After graduating from Bowdoin



College in May of 2024, Anna has been living in Iasi, Romania, with her extended family. While in Iasi, Anna is strengthening her connection to her Romanian roots, sharpening her Romanian language skills, and exploring the country. Anna has also been working at the EuroEd Foundation, a K-9 school and nonprofit, which aims to further the state of education in Romania with a special emphasis on technology literacy, anti-discrimination, and the national urban-rural divide. At EuroEd, Anna teaches English, conducts EU-funded research projects, and runs seminars for kindergarten to college-aged students to develop empathetic listening skills, intercultural sensitivity, and emotion management.

Allison Hoff ('20) was recently promoted to Associate Producer for 24/7, a national show at CBS News. In her role, Allison is able to work with correspondents from around the world on everything from politics to business to international news. Allison's responsibilities include writing scripts, producing live segments, and communicating with correspondents. Allison shares that the work is "intense and fast-paced but always interesting!"

Joey Kahn ('20) will be attending Emory School of Medicine after completing his master's in public health in applied epidemiology at Brown where he graduated magna cum laude this spring.

Alex Martin ('20) and his sister, **Sydney ('23)**, overlapped for a year at Santa Clara University before Alex graduated last spring. Alex spent a month traveling in Europe with some good friends, including **Ishaan Sharma ('20)**. Now based in San Francisco, Alex has started a new position as an audit associate at Frank, Rimmerman + Co. where he's working in public accounting and doing audits while also pursuing his CPA license.

2010s

Grace Fujinaga ('19) is in a data science master's program at Northwestern, which she will complete in June. Luckily, she had an extra year of eligibility to continue playing NCAA lacrosse, so she has been able to play on Northwestern's team. Grace has also been volunteering her time off campus by working with elementary-aged athletes through the Y.O.U. organization, which is part of the Northwestern NIL Collective, an endeavor that fills her cup as she "loves to get out in the Chicago community and work with kids!"

Charlie Hill ('19) currently lives in Oklahoma City where he is working as a civilian software engineer for the US Air Force on Tinker Air Force Base. Prior to moving to Oklahoma, Charlie traveled across Europe, visiting Austria, Belgium, Spain, Croatia, Poland, and Denmark before returning home to the Pacific Northwest to spend time with his family before relocating last fall.

Joseph Raymond ('19), who graduated mid-year from Amherst, played on the Division 3 NCAA Championship soccer team as a student athlete, beating out rival Connecticut College in penalty kicks last December. Congratulations Joe! Joe played varsity soccer at Overlake all four years as an Upper School student and recently attended the Hops & Headshots alumni gathering to reconnect now that he's back in the area.

Jack Shewchuck ('19) began a new position in business operations at SpaceX in February.

Meili Zhang ('19), who moonlights as a content creator and influencer for brands such as Victoria's Secret, passed 150,000 followers on TikTok, as reported by proud brother **Joseph Zhang ('22)**.

Lucas Gavrila ('18) graduated from the Leadership Development Program at Angi last December. In this program, Lucas had the opportunity to deepen his leadership skills through weekly modules and individual initiatives, including designing and running a Formula-1 inspired contest for his team, hosting multiple coaching sessions and team huddles, and delivering a final presentation on his leadership journey. Lucas transitioned from his role as a senior consultant of inside sales at Angi to join Solar Reviews as a business development manager in March.

Holly Harris ('18) completed a weeklong avalanche safety course in Bellingham in February as part of her AIARE program, which is the gold standard for national avalanche training and certification. Holly hopes to use her certification to lead more backcountry ski trips in the future, combining her lifelong love of skiing with her outdoor education experience at Overlake, and making former Director of Experiential Education, Kent Renno, proud!

Mary Javier ('18) is completing a longitudinal research project that began in 2019 examining the relationship between bacteria in the saliva and plaque of infants and their mothers. The study launched with a then-pregnant group of mothers and Mary is continuing that work with the offspring who are in the early stages of teething to find a potential relationship between the two generations.

Amanda Lin ('18) currently works at Daiichi Sankyo, utilizing her Doctor of Pharmacy degree to focus on training customer-facing teams to support the company's oncology products, which consist of antibody drug conjugates with a particular emphasis on breast cancer. Amanda shares, "It has been incredibly rewarding to expand the options for patients and to contribute to the advancement of cancer treatment," and that she "is grateful for the foundation Overlake provided" as she continues to grow in her career.

Kate McConnell ('18) is currently at University of Texas Austin where she is a biochemistry PhD candidate. Kate's research focuses on developing an improved vaccine for whooping cough.

Mariya (Havelliwala) Qasim ('18) and now-husband Qasim Gadiwalla were married last May in Clarksville, Maryland. Congratulations to the newlyweds!

Griffin Rettig ('18) has been at LinkedIn for nearly three years working upwards through their sales organization, most recently landing in talent partnerships. He currently manages the LinkedIn relationships for a handful of widely known organizations, including the Atlanta Falcons, Skydance, EverCommerce, and PGA Tour Superstores.

Maria Russinovich ('18) completed a Motorsports Marketing & Partnership course at ELVTR, an eight-week program taught by an industry expert covering brand partnerships, communications, and marketing with a unique focus on the motorsport world.

Shivani Shanmugam ('18) and now-husband Darshan Patel were married at the Fateh Collection Resort in Udaipur, India, in early February surrounded by family and friends. Hoot hoot hooray to the newlyweds!

Annie Vert ('18) began a new position as an account executive at L'Oréal for WPP Communications.



Andrea Wynn ('18), one of our 10 Under 10 Alumni Award recipients, performed in *The Nutcracker* at Johns Hopkins University where she is in a PhD program for computer science. An Owl of many talents, Andrea can often be found lacing up her ballet slippers for ballet classes and performances between doctorate research and coursework.

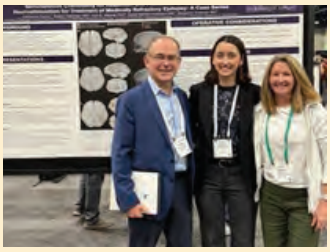
George Birch ('17) started a new position as an engineer at Stripe in April. He is working with their optimized checkout suite team, continuing his deep dive into the world of iOS engineering.



Betsy Button ('17) and her fiancé Jonathan Carrasco-Noriega were engaged in Big Sky, Montana, last December and will be married this August. Congrats to the happy couple!



Peter Dudunakis ('17), an alum Growl from his days on the Overlake and Bear Creek Growls team, has been continuing to lean into his passion for baseball, even playing on the Greek baseball team. Pictured here is Peter scoring a home run. Many thanks to Peter for showing up for recent Growls practices to offer his assistance and for clenching the alumni their win in the Bat Flip Classic in May.



Cate Gwinn ('17) is in her second year of medical school at the University of Washington, where she wrapped a research project with the department of neurosurgery, describing three patients with epilepsy who underwent surgery for brain resection and implantation of responsive neurostimulation within the same operation as a groundbreaking method to treat epilepsy-related seizures. Cate presented this research at the American Epilepsy Society Conference in December, where she was joined by her parents.

John Spencer ('17) joined Databricks as a product manager in early February, a role that involves helping customers build AI applications on their data without sacrificing data privacy or control. John works with clients from various industries including airlines seeking to optimize their operations and minimize flight delays, fintech companies aiming to democratize access to financial services, and clothing brands striving to deliver personalized shopping experiences.

Trent D'Alessio ('16) shared that he's obtained a new certification as a professional engineer from the Florida Board of Professional Engineers. Trent currently works as a civil engineer at Stantec.



Paul Dudunakis ('16) is currently fulfilling his dream of working as a F-16 fighter pilot for the US Air Force and is based in Aviano, Italy, where he will serve for three years. Paul is a member of the world-famous "Triple Nickle" squadron, which sends him soaring through the Dolomites to defend democracy. Paul graduated from the US Air Force Academy in 2020 with a degree in aeronautical engineering and has been a pilot for the US Air Force ever since, serving in Columbus, Mississippi, and Alamogordo, New Mexico. When he doesn't have his hand on a joystick flying at 50,000 feet and breaking the sound barrier, Paul enjoys traveling through Europe with fellow pilots.

Katon Minhas ('16) began a new position in March as a Senior Consultant in data science and analytics at AArete, a data analytics consulting firm.

Miranda Stuck ('16), a longtime dancer, began working as a writer and video editor at Dancio in early March.



Evren Terek-Fries ('16) and **Ozzy Terek-Fries ('14)** were married in early December of 2024. The couple, who met when both participated in Junior Classical League in Canada in 2010, began dating two years later in 2012. They made it official by signing papers in their Subaru and attending a women's hockey game to celebrate. Congratulations to these two happy Owls!

Catherine Cunningham ('15), Owl-turned-educator, presented to over 300 principals in New York late last fall, sharing that she has mastered her public speaking skills after learning the basics in the English 9 speech unit as a freshman at Overlake. We're sure she's mastered eye contact and poise and that her Overlake classmates are cheering her on!

David Treadwell ('15) is in the second year of a computer science master's program at Northeastern University where he has contributed to award-winning research projects. In December, David completed an internship with Earth and Space Research, a nonprofit in Seattle where he worked on machine learning. Last year, David authored a paper that came out of a hackathon for Earth Day in 2024.



Cecilia Wilson (’14) was engaged to fiancé Jared Thomas of Mercer Island on February 15 at the Seattle Arboretum. The pair met in 2021 and currently reside in Austin. Congrats to the happy couple!



Tori (Lin) Pearce (’13) welcomed daughter Lucy with husband Hunter in February. Baby Lucy loves spending time with Auntie **Amanda Lin (’18)**, her second favorite Overlake alum.



Dean Poplawski (’12) and **Emily (Kelly) Poplawski (’11)** welcomed Henry Dean Poplawski to their family on October 30, 2024. Henry is the first grandchild on the Poplawski side and the fourth on the Kelly side. Congrats to the Poplawski family on this sweet new addition!

Jimena Sanchez-Gallego (’12), Alumni Board member, announced that she wed now-husband Ben Berman in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, in early April surrounded by a dozen former Owls.

Chap Grubb (’10) became the new Coordinator of Experiential Education at Overlake this year. Chap brings a wealth of experience in outdoor education, having spent over a decade in the field, even founding his own business, Rerouted Co., which focuses on sustainability and adventure. Chap is a wonderful asset to the team thanks to his expertise as well as his rich knowledge and appreciation of Overlake’s history as a former student himself. Welcome back to the roost, Chap! If you would like to get to know Chap better and relive some of your Overlake outdoor ed memories, check out the Alumni Events tab on the Alumni Portal to register for a special alumni Paddle & Pints event with Chap and Director of Alumni Engagement, Jenni Baldwin, in June!

2000s

Chris Genovese (’09) is currently living in New York where he is working in live event production. Chris and faculty member Danielle Troy bumped into each other at an exhibit called Luna Luna that Chris worked on as the Senior Production Manager at The Shed. Luna Luna resurrected a 1987 art amusement park. Chris produces concerts, fashion shows, product launches, galas, and other events including the Super Bowl halftime show, a project he’s worked on for the past two years. Chris is producing the WNBA draft that is being hosted at The Shed in mid-April. Chris says he owes so much of his success to Danielle Troy, Bill Johns, and Erin Gabriel who “bolstered [his] love of the arts and creative projects,” starting him on a career path to follow his passions.

Pratik Keni (’09) and his wife, Shalaka Joshi Keni, were married in Alexandria, Virginia, last July after relocating from Bellevue to Arlington, Virginia, in 2023. Pratik, formerly of LinkedIn, is a “proud alum” and freelance advisor whose personal mantra is to “spread positive vibes every day.” Pratik’s background is in talent management, strategy and operations, and data and analytics across technology, consulting, and financial organizations. He and Shalaka look forward to connecting with other Owls at the All-Class Reunion on May 31, and invite Owls in the Washington DC Metro Area to connect via LinkedIn for a meet up. Congrats to the newlyweds!



Allison (Schoening) Rataezyk (’08) and husband Brandt welcomed son Luka Schoening Rataezyk on January 26. Luka joins big brother Tristan and big sister Kinsley, rounding out this happy family of five, nephews and nieces of Overlake alumni **Uncle Dan (’06)** and **Uncle Brian (’12)**. Congrats to the Schoening and Rataezyk families!

Olivia (Coombes) Gerami (’03) cohosted the all-new Hops & Headshots alumni event in March, flying up from LA, where she lives with her family and works as a professional photographer. Olivia captured attendees’ best angles in new headshots while mingling with her early 2000s alumni friends. With over 40 guests of all eras, this event was a success and a new tradition for professional Owls!

Sahar Fathi (’01), Overlake’s 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient, joined Washington Governor Bob Ferguson’s senior leadership team as the Washington State Policy Director in January. Sahar has held a variety of leadership and policy positions at the City of Seattle and King County before joining Governor Ferguson’s team. Sahar holds two bachelor’s degrees from the University of Southern California, a master’s degree from the University of Washington, and a juris doctorate from the University of Washington School of Law. Sahar is also serving as a highly engaged member of our alumni community by mentoring other alumni and current students who are interested in the world of politics and human rights. To read more about Sahar, check out her spotlight on page 16.

1990s

Many thanks to **Greg Bamford (’92)** for his governance and stewardship over the past six years on Overlake’s Board of Trustees — we are so grateful for his leadership as he finishes his service this year. As an active member of our alumni community, Greg has attended several alumni events and helped to serve as an ambassador and class representative for the Class of 1992 at this year’s All-Class Reunion!

1980s

Leigh Hines (’85) and **Cyrina Keller (’85)** represented the Class of 1985 at the Hops & Headshots event.

John Steele Sangster (’83) hosted Overlake’s Latin Percussion Project Week students and faculty members Aimé Ngandu and Ernesto Sanchez at his recording studio Crackle & Pop!. The students recorded songs created during Project Week at John’s studio and were delighted to meet an Owl alum.

1970s

Christian Fulghum (’77) and **Kim Robertson (’77)** attended the Hops & Headshots alumni event and mingled with young alumni, current faculty member Erin Gabriel, and former faculty member Ellen Zarter.

Caroline Von Weisel Forbes (’73) lunched with Bill “Army” and Anna Armstrong while the pair were in Melbourne in March. During lunch, Caroline called **Keith Himmelman (’73)** and the four enjoyed a group chat spanning several oceans and continents! Caroline maintains friendships with fellow classmates including **Peter Acker (’73)**, **Jeff Silverman (’76)**, **David Vineberg (’73)**, **Gail Stewart (’74)**, and **David Lawrence (’73)** among others.

Current and Retired Faculty

Bill “Army” Armstrong experienced another “Army is that you?!” moment. He and wife Anna ran into alum **Corey Koczarski (‘09)** and his wife in a hotel lobby in Sydney while vacationing. Owls really are everywhere!

Nate Edmunds, former faculty member in the English department and longtime tennis coach, is now the Director of Auxiliary Programming at the Park School in Baltimore. Nate shares that he and wife Jenna are happily settled into their new community where their kids, June and Miles, play with many neighborhood friends. Nate enjoys running the summer programs and after-school programs at Park where his daughter, June, is a student.



Stephen Ringo, former faculty member in the English department, decided to give himself the ultimate retirement gift: 23 days in Oman. His trip included camping in the Wahiba Sands Desert as well as at two different beaches and the Jebel Akhdar Mountains. He visited two new museums and spent one long day at the American International School where he taught for nine years. This was his first return to Oman in nearly a decade and one for the memory books, as they say.

Alumni Parents

Michelle Kastner, mother of alumni **Jessica Colleran (’20)** and **Joshua Colleran (’22)**, is currently in her third year as a director on the University of Washington Foundation Board, representing the UW Allen School. She also serves on two subcommittees: recognition and development. Additionally, she has served on the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science Advisory Board since its inception a few years ago. Michelle is also a director of the Cascade Orienteering Club where she has served on the board for over seven years, directing their WIOL school league for orienteering in the greater Puget Sound. The league has grown significantly, with 497 students from over 80 different schools (including Overlake) registered this year, making it the largest school orienteering league in the US.



Terrel Lefferts, mother of alum **Kaelyn Lefferts (’18)**, has now authored several children’s books under the series title *Once Upon a Dance*. The series heroine, Konora, is a fictional company artist based on professional ballet dancer daughter, Kaelyn. Terrel, who taught creative movement and ballet for decades and currently serves on the Board of Pacific Northwest Ballet, has earned over fifty literary awards for her *Once Upon a Dance* books.

In Memory

Peter (Pete) Billington (’93) passed away on March 6, 2025. He is survived by his mother, Vicki Billington, who resides in Redmond. Overlake sends love and peace to his family and loved ones in the wake of his passing.

Dr. King Holmes passed away earlier this spring. A longtime member of UW Medicine, Dr. Holmes was widely known for his work in the medical world as a specialist in sexually transmitted diseases, particularly with bringing the previously ignored field to the forefront of medical research. “Dr. Holmes was a visionary who saw the need and, during his nearly six decades at the University of Washington, blazed a path as the most effective proponent of this historic transition, arguably the single most productive investigator, and its most influential driver,” several of his colleagues wrote in a 2024 tribute in the journal Sexually Transmitted Diseases. He was devoted to public advocacy and had a lifelong commitment to the education, well-being, and career development for medical researchers, mentoring generations of individuals who became leaders in STI research, prevention, and care. King was preceded in death by his brother Barry Holmes, his sister Robin March, and his eldest daughter, Kimberly Valerine Holmes. He is survived by his loving wife, Dr. Virginia Gonzales, his daughter **Heather (’82)** and son-in-law Keith Jellerson, his granddaughter Sage, his son **King Jr. (’83)**, and his daughter-in-law Helen Holmes, his grandchildren Reilly and Connor Holmes, and his brothers Robert and Eugene Holmes.

ATHLETICS

















Winter Sports Wrap-Up



Boys' Basketball

As the winter sports season wrapped up, the Boys' Basketball team had plenty to celebrate. Under the leadership of Coach Taylor Banks, the team overcame early challenges and earned a hard-fought trip to the State tournament.

"Our biggest challenges this season were our youth — significant minutes from freshmen and sophomores — and our lack of size," said Banks. "We knew this going in and built game plans to highlight our strengths and protect our weaknesses."

That meant focusing on speed, depth, and strong team chemistry. "Our competitive practices and togetherness brought our young players up to speed. We leaned on our quickness to make up for size," Banks explained.

Team unity proved vital in high-pressure moments. The bench played a major role, both in energy and focus. "Even when things weren't going well, our togetherness never folded. We even practiced bench energy and reviewed film of it," said Banks.

As the season progressed, the team grew more confident under pressure. "We weren't a team that fed off pressure," said Banks. "When we were relaxed and having fun, we played our best basketball." That mindset helped them secure a big win in Spokane during State.

Skill development was another focus, building directly into team strategy. "Many of our drills are subsets of our plays, so everything connects," Banks noted.

Reflecting on the season, Banks emphasized what set this team apart: "One of the things I'm most proud of is our bench energy and our togetherness. It was the foundation of our success."



Girls' Basketball

The Overlake Girls' Basketball team caps off a year of growth, resilience, and teamwork under the leadership of Coach Rick Nelson.

Nelson's coaching philosophy centers on equity and communication. Whether a player is in the starting lineup or coming off the bench, he emphasizes clarity and consistency. "It's important to treat everyone equally and ensure they understand their role on the team," he said. "We give everyone the same opportunity to start and offer feedback to help each player improve."

This season, the Owls were a young team with many new faces, but that didn't stop them from pushing themselves each day. "The goal was always to play hard, have fun, and play together," Nelson said. "We simply worked to get better each day."

Transitioning student-athletes from one sport to another can be a challenge, but Nelson credits the Overlake athletic community with making it seamless. "We rely on collaboration and feedback from our strength and condition coach Joey Swidler and athletic trainer Kim Stevens to ensure athletes are healthy and have a clear plan as the season starts."

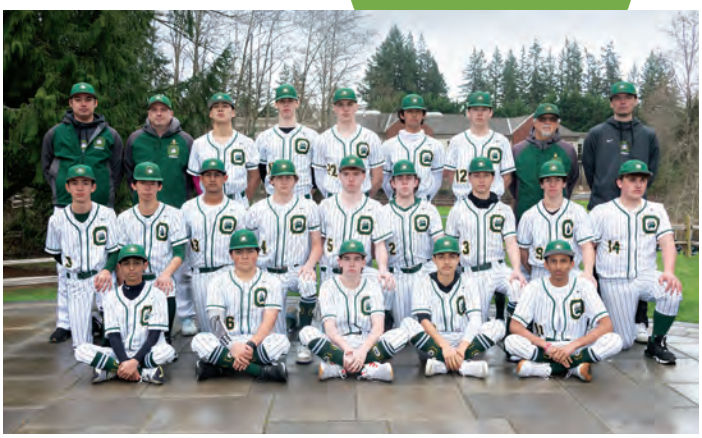
When asked about the biggest lessons learned this season, Nelson pointed to the value of flexibility and humility. "Being patient and understanding that your plans may change is key," he said. "Staying humble and grounded will always help us through adversity."

As the team looks ahead, the foundation laid this season — one of support, unity, and steady improvement — sets the stage for even greater success in seasons to come.

Spring Sports Wrap-Up

Editor's note: *We spoke to coaches in mid-April for these highlights*





Boys' Tennis

The Boys' Tennis team has embraced flexibility and perseverance under the guidance of Coach Jeff Loranger. "We have a small team this season, and with a team match requiring eight players, it became a bit of a challenge as our team had a few injuries to start the season," says Loranger. "It challenged our team to be flexible with where they were slotted in the lineup — sometimes playing singles in one match and doubles in the next or even switching doubles partners to help balance the team."

Coach Loranger emphasizes the importance of preparation and versatility across the board. "The biggest strategy toward each match has been to keep everyone ready in case they were needed to play that day, and to have everyone focus on both singles and doubles strategies rather than prioritizing just one." That mindset has helped keep the entire team engaged, as lineup shifts have become the norm. "Since we've had to deal with injuries and a small roster, it's been easy for everyone to stay involved," Loranger adds.

One silver lining in the team's early-season challenges has been the opportunity for younger players to step up. "It's been a great opportunity for our new freshman players to get a lot of match play, which they may not have gotten if our team was fully healthy," explains Loranger. "It will not only help them the rest of this season, but also in future seasons as they've gained valuable experience."

As the season progresses, the Boys' Tennis team continues to demonstrate adaptability, determination, and the spirit of growth, qualities that will serve them well in the weeks ahead and beyond.

Baseball

The combined Overlake and Bear Creek baseball team, the Growls, is off to a hot start as they seek to defend their 2024 1A State Championship. As of April 10, the squad is 9–1 overall, 4–0 in conference, and ranked second in the 1A state RPI index.

While the Growls graduated some key players from last year's championship team, coach Mike Davidson believes that this team has all of the necessary pieces to make another deep postseason run. "One great advantage this team has is that we are loaded with players who have played on the big stage and seen what it takes to be successful," says Davidson.

While the team's success on the field remains consistent, there are a number of players with new roles who have stepped up this season. Davidson shares, "Anirudh S. ('25) has provided great leadership as a senior captain. He understands that his role extends beyond the field, making sure young guys feel comfortable and looked after. Brendan W. ('27) got some time last year as a freshman, but he has made a huge leap to the next level this year, hitting .429 with 1 HR and 10 RBI through 10 games and posting a 0.39 ERA and 29 strikeouts in his first three starts on the mound. Our group of juniors has also seized the day as they have become everyday players, guys like Alex H., Hank D., and Dhruv N.

While the program's first state title sets a very high standard for success, Davidson insists that wins and losses are not the team's only metric. "For us, it always flows from a positive team culture, one where we play for our teammates, where we have a standard and hold each other accountable to that standard, where baseball is the most fun part of the day. Our goal is to play the perfect game and to do it with a spirit of joy and class and brotherhood. If we do that, the wins take care of themselves."



Girls' Lacrosse

"This season has been anything but easy, but it's also been one of the most rewarding," explains Head Coach Olivia McCarey. Early injuries tested the team's depth and spirit, but the way everyone has responded has been incredible. "Seeing a teammate go down is always tough, it impacts morale and limits subs," shares Assistant Coach Katie Hill ('14). "But instead of backing down, the girls leaned into effort plays and found new ways to support each other."

That resilience was on full display during the team's first home game. With the lineup shuffled, players stepped into new roles without hesitation. "We've seen so much growth from this group," Hill explains. "They've embraced putting the team first, and that flexibility has made all the difference."

Defender Maddie H. ('25) stepped up offensively, scoring multiple goals, while Peishan P. ('25) carried the ball coast-to-coast to notch the team's first goal of the season. "They didn't just fill gaps, they thrived," said the coaches.

Defense has continued to anchor the team, fueled by strong on-field communication. "It's the heartbeat of how we play," notes McCarey. "That consistency has kept us in games, even when things get tough."

The team has also shifted focus beyond the scoreboard while staying mentally strong. "When the girls are having fun, that's when the magic happens," says Hill. "Teams fall apart when they let outside factors like referees or opponents get in their heads," adds McCarey. "Our girls are learning to stay focused on what they can control."

As the season continues, the team is dialing in on the details, such as ground balls, crisp passes, and smart communication. "That's what will set us apart down the stretch," Hill emphasizes.



Boys' Lacrosse

"After graduating 10 seniors last season, we knew we were going to look a lot different," reflects Coach Colton Umberger ('14). While the losses were significant, Umberger sees this transition as an opportunity rather than a setback. "I'm incredibly excited about the direction we're headed. We've got a young, athletic group, and our upperclassmen have done an outstanding job stepping into leadership roles. They're setting the tone at practice, staying composed under pressure, and showing our younger guys what it means to compete."

One of the biggest areas of development has been the defense, which now features several underclassmen in key roles. "Our defense is younger, no doubt, but they're smart, they're tough, and they're learning fast. Every week, they're flying around with more confidence. If they keep progressing the way they are, they're going to be a real force."

Another exciting addition to the roster comes from the basketball court. "We've brought in a few dual-sport athletes this year, and they've made an immediate impact. Their speed, length, and versatility give us a different dynamic on the field. It's added a lot of flexibility to what we can do."

Despite their youth and relative inexperience, Umberger sees something special brewing in his team. "There's still a lot of season left, and plenty of room for growth. This group is hungry. They're putting in the work. They're playing for each other, and they're buying into the vision. We're building something special here."



Girls' Golf

As the season progresses, the Girls' Golf team continues to impress both on the course and behind the scenes. Coaches Justin Prohn and Shawn Farmer-Sese are proud not only of their team's accomplishments, but also of the character, leadership, and work ethic the players bring each day.

"In a very humble way, I think we have a very talented group," Coach Prohn says with a smile. "From the very start of the season, the girls have shown that they're not only skilled, but deep and driven."

One of the season's standout moments came in the team's first match, where sophomore Kendria W. scored 39 points — a mark that Prohn believes may be a school record. The team posted 122 points, another potential school best. "We had five players qualify for the league tournament in that one match alone," he added. "And we have a couple more who are likely to qualify soon. It's just a deep and talented group."

Despite their youth, the team has benefited from strong leadership. "Freshman Reena L. has really stepped up this year and done a fantastic job," said Farmer-Sese. "And our captains, Maya W. ('25) and Sherry F. ('26), have been phenomenal."

That team chemistry has become a cornerstone of their success. "This is just a really fun group," Prohn notes. "They bond well together. They support each other. You can feel it at practice and during matches."

With the league tournament on the horizon, the focus is on finishing strong. "In golf, not everyone plays every match, it depends on the course and the size of the match. Our goal is always the same though, we want every player to feel engaged and to be playing their best golf by the end of the season," says Prohn. "Wins are great, but our focus is on progress. If we're improving every day, the results will take care of themselves."



Girls' Ultimate

It's a transformative season for Overlake's Girls' Ultimate team, and guiding the journey are Coaches Ben Ostman and Ash Gilbert — a dynamic coaching duo bringing both fresh perspectives and a grounded experience to this growing program.

"I have been coaching here for three years now, but this program has only been active for this and last season," says Ostman. "Coach Ash and myself have felt so welcomed by the Athletics department. We really appreciate the opportunity to represent an administration that puts the players' personal development above everything else."

For the coaches, the goal isn't just about wins and losses, it's about helping student-athletes grow on and off the field. "We feel like we really have an opportunity to make an impact on our team and help them grow into better and more confident people," Ostman adds.

Looking ahead, the coaching staff is focused on long-term growth, particularly with a team composed entirely of underclassmen.

"We are 100% locked in on personal skill and athletic development. We don't have any seniors, so all of the work we put in now will translate to better play on the field next season."

Reflecting on the season so far, the coaches recognize that execution and focus are key ingredients to unlocking the team's full potential. With thoughtful leadership, a focus on development, and a bright, motivated group of student athletes, the future of Overlake Ultimate looks promising — both on the field and beyond.



Boys' Soccer

For Coach Scott Lane and his Boys' Soccer team, this year's story is one of unity, growth, and the power of collective purpose. From the first whistle of the season, it was clear that something special was forming — not just a group of athletes, but a brotherhood.

When asked how the team dynamic has evolved, Lane reflects on the uniqueness of each season. "I think every year each team forms a unique identity and personality," he says. "The motivation comes from the players and always has to come from the players. As coaches, we just need to make sure the motivation comes through in a positive way." It's a philosophy that puts the players at the center of the experience, encouraging ownership and pride in the work they do together.

Central to the team's success this season has been their chemistry, something Lane believes is more vital than any individual performance. "Team chemistry plays the most vital role in any success for high school sports," he says. "The talent will always be there and there will be players with individual talent that can come up with moments of brilliance on the pitch. However, we like to define ourselves as a championship team rather than a team full of champions." That unity has been evident on and off the field, where players have shown up for each other in ways that go far beyond the final score.

Despite coming off a successful run last year, the coaching approach has stayed grounded in the present. Lane stresses the importance of staying in the moment. "The approach has been pretty consistent to the previous ones," he says. "We need to focus on being present and living in the current moment. We need to focus on being at our best rather than always trying to be the best. Look at what's in front of us rather than behind or too far in front." It's that focus on the now that keeps the team from becoming distracted by pressure or expectation.

Inclusivity is another cornerstone of Lane's leadership. Whether a player is a starter or comes off the bench, every athlete has a role to play. "I think it's been important to ensure that every player can feel themselves in a sort of role and has a part to play," Lane says. "They each have a unique gift or 'superpower' they bring to the program. We are not successful by relying on the 'superpowers' of others but rather, we make the best use of our own." That belief has fostered a culture where every player matters, and everyone contributes to the team's identity.

As the postseason looms, the team's focus is clear. "Our goal is to be playing our best soccer of the season when we hit the postseason," Lane says. "We look to improve with every half and every game we play." That steady climb is what defines this team — not flashy plays or statistics, but the day-to-day commitment to growth, chemistry, and heart.

In a world that often celebrates the individual, this team stands as a reminder that greatness is best achieved together. Coach Lane and his players aren't just building a strong season — they're building something that lasts.

GO OWLS!

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