



This past week I took advantage of [Mashouf Wellness Center's](#) free admission for staff and faculty and visited the natatorium three times. It was my effort towards self-care, so I could find renewed energy to support the campus amidst a world on fire. As I lifted my tired body out of the pool, I watched the sauna door carefully in hopes of sweating away any lingering anxiety in solitude. As I entered the sauna though, I realized the small room was quite full with students, four young men sitting or standing in only their swim trunks. What was an awkward encounter, however, quickly became a reminder of why I love being at State.

As I settled on to the bench, two of the men, one an exchange student from Spain and the other a transfer student just starting his junior year were engaged in friendly conversation, discussing the health benefits of the sauna and fitness broadly. The exchange student, majoring in International Relations, talked about how people in Spain laughed at overweight Americans, even though Spaniards were in fact unhealthy because all they did was drink and smoke. The exchange student continued that Americans must in fact have exceptionally good food since they can produce athletes who are "one hundred kilos" and over 6 feet. The transfer student, a kinesiology major with twists, who was just at that weight and height, listened enthusiastically, asking the international student where he found the best food on campus. They chatted back and forth - wiping sweat off their brows - in perfect "bro" argot as they affirmed each other. The exchange awakened me to the revelatory potential of college. Across race, nationality, and BMI (body mass index), these two half-dressed men in their twenties could find camaraderie inside of a small sweaty box of strangers.

That moment was a reminder about the incredible work we do on this campus to support students in their efforts to learn from each other, hold productive conversations, and create connections with people different from themselves. This is in fact the additional miracle of college. On top of social mobility, better mental health, and increased civic engagement that comes with a degree, the college experience both inside and outside the classroom provides an opportunity for mutual understanding among diverse groups of people. We must hold closely our responsibility of creating communities of care and conversation, as we finish our fifth week of classes.

While faculty begin preparing for midterms, departments are also finalizing spring schedules. For this coming Commencement 2026 we will be holding the event on a Thursday instead of a Friday due to a Giants game that cannot be rescheduled. We apologize for this scheduling conflict. We are asking faculty members who are teaching classes for graduating seniors with an in-class final to consider adjusting their class meeting time so that their in-class final does not land on the Thursday of Commencement. (If your class meets on a Thursday, your final exam day will likely be scheduled for that Thursday.) You could also be teaching class with an in-class final on Thursday in which you have just one graduating senior who wants to attend the Commencement. In this case, it might be easier for you to be more flexible with the final exam for the single student, rather than requesting your class be changed into a Monday/Wednesday schedule.

Many of you may have additional worry about what the budget holds in our future. After the Academic Senate's [Institutional Review Committee](#) completed the tremendous work of making [recommendations](#) for a financially sustainable future, the Provost Review Council prioritized the recommendations and have made them available for review [here](#). This semester we will be holding all-college meetings for each of the colleges to discuss IRC's recommendations, our priorities, and specific college implementation plans.

As we forge ahead in another challenging year, keep in mind that we do this work best together. Let us uphold a space for learning and conversation comprised of people from different backgrounds, so that an exchange student from Spain and a transfer student with twists could make a connection in a cramped sauna.

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