A Heartfelt Farewell to Ms. Linda Williams
by Cara Campbell with Contributors Anna Morgan, Emory Hutchens, Clem Smith, Elizabeth Bigham, and Soniya Patel

Recently, a controversial email was sent out by Headmaster Raymond Broadhead regarding the sudden and unexpected dismissal of the Head of Middle School, Ms. Linda Williams. The result was an enormous response from faculty, students, and alumni in support of the revered educator.

In Tech Crew, several freshmen were almost in tears after reading the email. Instagram was inundated with screenshots of the message. A Facebook group reflecting on how Williams changed students' lives during her tenure at Webb was created. A petition to reinstate her, which had 373 signatures as of December 2, circulated through the school. The email about her was printed and taped to countless school doors with a locally-trending hashtag: #save ms.williams.

Regardless of any controversy surrounding her dismissal, students and faculty alike will miss Ms. Williams dearly. Oracle staff interviewed different members of the Webb community, including faculty member L.R. Smith, Headmaster Ray Broadhead, and several students, inviting them to share their thoughts about Ms. Williams.

Zoe Speer, a junior, recalled a fond memory she had about Williams: “[After my family had a major car accident], Ms. Williams came up to me and said, ‘I had no idea about your parents and the car accident,’ and she said how sorry she was. She asked if there was anything she could do to help and that she felt bad she had found out late because she would have offered her help earlier. She was strict with me in middle school, which I’m sure I needed. She cared for me, and that made me appreciate everything she did for me.”

Sophomore Austin Cooper shared a bit of wisdom that Williams imparted to him: “She taught me how to be much more respectful towards my superiors. She told me how I could come off as more respectful even if I wasn’t being disrespectful to begin with.”

Mr. L.R. Smith, a prominent leader for students and a history teacher who has been at Webb for many years, offered a veteran’s perspective on the matter. “This kind of stuff is why I stay in the Junior Room. If I had wanted the power and big bucks, I would have gone into Administration. I was Dean of Students for one year, and it nearly killed me. But the thing about administration, with any headmaster, it is his right to have the administrative team he wants. Bear in mind, in any prep school like this one, the faculty serves or does not serve at the pleasure of the headmaster. Administration in any good prep school is a top-down operation. At best, it’s enlightened despotism.”

When Smith was asked whether he thought any of the other faculty members should be scared about losing their positions, he laughed and said, “I haven’t the foggiest idea. You’ll need to ask them. One does hope to leave on one’s own terms.”

Continued on Page 8
An Even Finer Fine Arts Department

by Lucas Wiesemann

Webb prides itself on helping its students find and pursue their passions in the Fine Arts. How well does Webb achieve this goal, and how could it do it even better?

The classes of the Fine Arts department are taught by five spectacular teachers, each presenting a completely different side of the subject. Webb students can take classes in theater, music, and visual art. Once they have found their passion, students may pursue more advanced classes in their area of choice.

It is obvious that the Fine Arts department at Webb has been very successful in its goal of giving students the opportunity to pursue their interests, but how could the school work to make it even better? Through conversations with the Fine Arts teachers, several observations have become evident.

Though Fine Arts instructors could have more teachers working in each area to support a heavier class load, such an approach would run counter to the school’s desire to maintain a small student body. As a result, it would be unrealistic for Webb to expand its Fine Arts staff because each of the different areas of the department would be stretched for student numbers. Instead, instructors must work to offer the best programs possible while keeping class sizes reasonable. Offering too many classes would cause students to disperse among too many areas, leaving some classes with very few participants, which would paradoxically stifle growth and quality of the Fine Arts at Webb.

This leaves Webb with one reasonable option for creating an even better Fine Arts department. The school simply needs to work to improve what it already has. Webb needs to find investors who wish to contribute specifically to its Fine Arts program and use their donations not to expand teaching staff and classes but rather to develop better learning opportunities in the courses already offered to students.

One potential way to benefit the Fine Arts program would be to relocate the old gym. Although it is a necessary part of the school, moving the old gym elsewhere would free up space for the Fine Arts. Such extra space could then be converted into a theater area with a stage for performing, a storage area, a makeup room, dressing rooms, a classroom for speech and theater, and a choreography room, all of which would be contained under one roof.

Though it would be challenging, it is absolutely possible to make an even finer Fine Arts department at Webb.
Dress for Success  

by Cara Campbell, Emory Hutchens, and Anna Morgan  

The recent crackdown on the dress code has evoked anger among some students who believe the policy is subjectively enforced based on gender. Starting in January, the rules are to become even stricter. When asked, many teachers claim a dress code is mandated to maintain uniformity, professionalism, and to limit distractions. Until recently, the dress code has been an insignificant issue during our Webb education. The occasional outlier was asked to change, but both genders dressed for comfort and were not distracted by their clothing. The skirts girls have been wearing for years have been taken off the Land’s End website, the amount of chapel announcements has increased, and as baffling as it seems, Nike athletic shorts have been banned for middle school girls to wear during P.E.. In addition to this, there will be new regulations beginning in January with detentions for infractions.  

Based on student interviews, many girls and boys now feel uncomfortable in their clothing and are paying far more attention to the issue of dress code instead of spending their time in a more productive and beneficial way. When asked, a male faculty member of many years commented: “I don’t really notice and have never noticed what people wear because I’m more focused on other things.” Like the majority of the student body, this teacher was not distracted and was not concerned. However, with the recent chapel announcements, in conjunction with the plethora of emails and stories told about dress code, skirt/skort/short length is brought to our attention. The chapel announcements are always very gender specific and prejudiced, to quote one in particular, “Remember, boys: Webb sweatshirts only. Girls: appropriate length skirts.” Girls wear non-Webb sweatshirts, and boys can wear short shorts. The stereotype that girls wear short skirts should not be perpetuated through biased chapel announcements which indirectly and harshly confront all girls, despite guilt or lack thereof.  

In terms of confrontation, general, indirect confrontation, other than the invocation of judging girls based solely on the length of their skirts, that method is far preferred to the often sardonic and otherwise biting comments girls receive if their skirt is perceived as too short. A taller junior female said, “I’m called out almost every day for my skirt length now and asked to change. It’s not fair that three inches on my legs is not the same as on [a short person].” This brings us to an extreme flaw in the girls’ uniforms. A 5’10 girl and a just above 5 foot girl will not have equal leg lengths. Thus, the skirts can be far shorter on the smaller girls and appear legal. Taller girls appear to have shorter skirts because they have proportionally longer legs. Unfortunately, this results in taller girls getting called out more for something that they can’t help, when their peers are wearing the same skirts.  

As lovely and fair as all of the above sounds, the attention to skirts leads to the unwanted and unnecessary oversexualization of skin. Recently, we interviewed an expert on the dress code and faculty member of many years, Ms. Williams, about her opinions on skorts. In the interview, when asked, Ms. Williams explained that skorts give girls a false sense of security: “You can’t tell whether or not a girl has shorts on underneath when she’s walking across campus. I’ve seen the way outsiders driving by look at you girls when you cross the street.”  

It is true that there is a bad part of society, but throughout my many years at Webb I have yet to hear a chapel announcement encouraging boys to respect girls’ bodies. Although the Webb student body is only a miniscule portion of society, it is important to educate that small portion about respect and basic humanity. But instead, girls are blamed for being “distracting” or “offensive” or “inappropriate.” Every day the Webb community perpetuates the idea of women dressing for men. Bodies are okay, and bodies will always be okay. Students should be comfortable with their appearance and with what they wear. They should not be worried that a teacher or classmate is looking up their skirts when they sit down because the colorful fabric, shorts, or underwear underneath is demanding to the eyes. Many girls wear Nike shorts or spandex under their skirts, but as the aforementioned quote clearly implies, if the shorts underneath are not visible, meaning the skirt is long enough to hide them, too much is left up to the imagination of anyone who sees legs. If faculty is going to be so adamant about mere inches on a skirt, they should make sure to address the reality of girls’ attire in sweltering weather and the appropriate way male students and teachers should react. The fuss about skirt length has gone too far this year and is beginning to cause more harm than help.
**The Oracle**

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**CROSSWORD**

BY ANDREW COOPER AND JIM SHERWOOD

**SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW**

**Across**
1. Christmas trees
5. What a man over 40 does
10. Rum drink
14. Advil target
15. Take one's weapon
16. Hawaiian island
17. To hold one's horses?
18. Knot again
19. Resistance units
20. Blockheads
23. Water tap
24. Church high point
28. Not hip
32. Show again
33. Walk softly
36. Monkey business
39. x, y, or z
41. Muscat resident
42. Slimy substance
43. Brown noser
46. Wallflower characteristic
47. Barbecue place
48. SAT Section 1
50. Jail
53. Bats, often
57. Perhaps
61. Type of berry
64. Egg-shaped
65. To think or believe
66. Long ago
67. Thickheaded
68. Marine eagle
69. Big-mouthed jug
70. City on the Ruhr
71. Like Dawn's fingers

**Down**
1. Applies makeup
2. Freeze
3. Spiderman foe
4. Lampoon
5. Vice president under Jefferson
6. From square one
7. Strip of wood
8. Towels off
9. To create metal from ore
10. Zero
11. "Go team!"
12. German Physicist Georg
13. Ms. Aker's dog
21. Pilot's announcements
22. Prefix with scope or meter
25. Malay boat
26. Midday meal
27. To exalt
29. Black Friday verb
30. 18-wheeler
31. Related maternally
33. Segmented appendages near the mouth
34. The A in CAT
35. Authoritative orders
37. Aardvark's food
38. ___ Ropehander
40. Revealing, comparative
44. A portion
45. Bring home
49. Incessant speech
51. Eat away at
52. Four-star reviews
54. Pack animal
55. Driving needs?
56. Had a novel idea?
58. Puts on
59. Workshop gripper
60. Garden with a snake
61. Bard's yes
62. Global warming scapegoat
63. Linking verb

**Quarter 1 Crossword Puzzlemasters**

**Student Winner:** Lucas Wiesemann
**Faculty Winner:** Susan Mullen

**Congratulations!**

As before, the first Webb Student and Webb Staff Member to correctly solve this quarter’s puzzle will receive gift cards to the coffee shop.

**Good Luck!**

**Quarter 1 Oracle Crossword /Solution**

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W A R S  A T F B R A T
O P E C  B R I L L A G E
M E S A L I E U G E E
B A T T L E O F T O U R S
A H A D E N
W A T E R L O O   O W L S
O L E   D I G M Y   H I O H
W E S T   V I S A B I L L
I R E   I T E L
M I S C A L C U L A T E S
U S A   J O I N G   G L U T
S I M   A N T I L E R D
E S E   G E T   E R O S
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The Prisoner’s Conundrum: 
A Timeless Riddle Recounted by Matthew Cooper

Once upon a time, a prince was locked into a tower by an evil wizard. The tower had two doors: One of them led to a secret passage out of the tower, but the other was a trap that led straight down into a crocodile-infested moat.

The wizard conjured fire wraiths that stood before each door. One of the wraiths always told the truth, but the other always lied. Before disappearing, the wizard told the prince that if he dared to seek his freedom, he could ask either wraith any question he wanted, and then he could freely choose either door he so desired.

What single question can the prince ask just one of the wraiths to be certain of choosing the door that leads to freedom?

(See Page 8 for Riddle and Sudoku Answers!)
Webb Company Players Bring Christmas Cheer to Campus  

by Kennady Peek

This holiday season, The Webb School Company Players presented to their audience a performance of *It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, adapted by Joe Landry. With the help of Robert Kiefer and Carol Ponder, Ruth Cordell and the Players produced what may be the best play that Webb has seen in a very long time.

With Christmas spirit in the air, the atmosphere was just perfect for this seasonal play. Fulfilling the lead roles, Parker Hyde and Dwayne Young joined together in a dynamic duo and executed the parts of George Bailey and Clarence excellent-ly.

Young also deserves praise for playing not just one character but five: Clarence, Jazzbo, share Freddie, the Announcer, and Uncle Billy. A first-timer to the Webb Company Players, Jim Sherwood blew his performance out of the wa-ter. Playing the antagonist Henry F. Potter as well as Gower and Martini, Sherwood impressed everyone with his abilities this November.

The play was well-executed and was successful largely due to the leadership shown by seniors Dwayne Young, Parker Hyde, Jasmine Ilarde, and Josie Reyes. *It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Ra-dio Play* could not have been better performed.

The play warmed the hearts of all its viewers. *The Oracle* would like to con-gratulate all participants in their success-ful performance, and we can’t wait for what this upcoming spring has in store!
**Chocolate, Vanilla, or...?**

by Mason Fizer

The never-ending debate between ice-cream flavors is pointless, as Neapolitan is objectively the best. Neapolitan combines the richness of chocolate with the smoothness of vanilla and the excitement of strawberry. Neapolitan allows choice over the kind of experience you are going to have during your frozen encounter. Quotes from actual taste buds will confirm that the triple-color trifecta is truly the best choice for frozen dairy treats.

When at the grocery, one doesn’t know the mood he or she will be in the next day. Maybe you want to sit down to your favorite book and let some calm, smooth vanilla soothe you into a state of near-vegetation. Perhaps your favorite character in that book just died. If you had just bought vanilla, you would be left without any support for these tumultuous times, but with Neapolitan, you can just crawl to the freezer and let some rich and emotional chocolate be there for you and mend that broken heart.

However, Neapolitan is not done yet! You probably want to have some friends over to discuss the trauma you just experienced, and now you can enjoy the zaniness that is strawberry ice cream to create that party environment that brings friends closer together.

As a topper for the roller coaster of a night you just experienced, you can combine all three flavors to create something that transcends the boundaries of what it truly means to be alive: you will laugh, you will cry, you will simultaneously regret everything you have ever done and wish that you had done more. In the industry, this phenomena is called a thermonuclear bomb, and though many have tried, no other flavor has been able to reach this level of absurdity.

Neapolitan ice cream is the best ice cream in the world, no questions asked. All dissenters will be forced to work in salt mines.

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**What Do You Think About Social Media?**

by Wesley Ledbetter

Mr. Garcia: I think when used properly that it is a good tool. I enjoy using it for quick communication and resources.

Ms. Howell: It depends on how you use it. You can use it for bad or good. It can be used as a good tool or for bad things.

Ms. Townes: It can be good or bad but is mostly good. It is a helpful way to stay in touch with people.

Ms. Rivas: It is a good resource with double-edge power.

Ella: I like it! It’s what I spend most of my time doing.

Ms. Young: It is a nice tool. It can be used for ill but can be nice if used for good.

Jessie: Only feeling really good about it. Like it.

Cybil: It’s fun in all, but people can get hurt.

Wesley: It’s good and bad. It can be used to hurt or encourage people and brag at the same time. I like using it to tell people my accomplishments and to tell people happy birthday and all that. But when people use it to hurt other people, it can hurt them for the rest of their lives or possibly kill them or [cause them] to make bad choices.

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**Virtual Friends Are Real, Too**

by Clare Beckett

In today’s world, technology is a major part of our lives. Planning events, speaking one’s opinions, scheduling meetings, and making friends are just some of the benefits of the internet. However, adults tend to be cynics and are often wary about cyber safety. Understandably, parents worry about their kids, especially when their children develop online relationships with people they have never met.

Even so, we become friends with strangers every day. Could you imagine a world in which everyone is an enemy? I can’t. About a year ago, I met an 11-year-old named Addie on Instagram. She ran a fandom blog, and we became fast friends. However, Addie had leukemia. I had the honor of direct messaging and using Kik to talk with her while she was in the hospital.

Nine weeks ago, she died. An eleven-year-old angel. I had get up that next morning and go to school, but I was crushed. She was like a little sister to me. A good friend asked me what was wrong, and I told her about Addie. She responded, “It’s okay. It’s not like you knew her anyway.”

But she was wrong because, even though I’ve never even seen a picture of Addie, I knew she was beautiful. I don’t know what color her hair was, or her eyes. But that’s okay. I saw her personality before I saw anything else. I knew her humor, her brightness, her courage, and her desperation the finish the Heroes of Olympus series. She never got to.

My point is that some friends you meet face-to-face. Some you meet over computer screens. That doesn’t diminish the quality of our friendships, and it never will.
A Heartfelt Farewell to Linda Williams - Continued from Page 1

Smith then proceeded to recount several delightful stories about Ms. Williams when she was his neighbor, including when she taught him how to “shuck a fish like a pair of pants.”

Other faculty members who were interviewed declined to comment on the situation.

Lingering questions about Williams’ unexpected departure led Oracle reporters Anna Morgan, Emory Hutchens, Clem Smith, and Cara Campbell to interview Headmaster Broadhead on the following Tuesday.

When asked whether he was aware of the visceral response the decision about Williams had generated in the Webb community, Broadhead stated, “I didn’t know it was happening; I don’t look at social media.” Mr. Broadhead would not comment when asked about the cause of Ms. Williams’ dismissal, explaining that it is a private matter. Broadhead instead recommended that Oracle staff interview Ms. Williams herself, because she was the only one who could talk about it.

When asked who was involved in the decision to let Williams go, Mr. Broadhead replied, “Just me and Joe [Iorio]. Some faculty were consulted.” No board members, students, alumni, or parents were consulted.

Mr. Broadhead’s favorite memory about Ms. Williams? Seeing her at the bus stop at 4:00 AM to take middle schoolers on their trip.

Elizabeth Bigham and Soniya Patel, two freshman writers for The Oracle, interviewed Ms. Williams. However, when asked to comment about the reasons behind her dismissal, Williams chose not to.

Throughout the entire situation, there has not been an answer to a very simple question: “Why?” Students and faculty alike have been left in the dark concerning the reason for Ms. Williams’ departure. Despite asserting that the middle school is moving in directions independent of her tenure, no indication has been made about what exactly these changes entail. The administration has kept silent, leaving some students and alumni uneasy. The Webb community trusts the administration to make the right decisions regarding the management of the school. Now, many simply want to know: “Why?”

The Oracle staff, along with many other students and faculty members, want Ms. Williams to know that we will miss her deeply. We wish her well and good luck, wherever she may go.