

Oldham Cancels Student Group's Events



Treasurer of Lambda, Cadence Miller, helps set up Lambda's bake sale held on Sept. 9 to raise funds for future projects. Photo by Elliot Payne.

MEGAN REAGAN & LUKE HAYSLETTE
Reporters

On Wednesday, Tech's official Instagram account posted a photo of Tech's campus, and in the caption, President Phil Oldham, wrote a letter referencing a video that was shared by several social media accounts from a drag show at the Backdoor Playhouse.

Oldham wrote, "As of now, all public events scheduled on campus by these sponsoring organizations are canceled pending a review." Although Oldham did not reference

them by name in the letter, the two organizations that sponsored the event are Tech's LAMBDA club and Tech Players. Oldham claims these groups are un-

der review but gave no further comment on the nature of the review or who would be conducting it.

E Vigil, president of the LAMBDA organization stated, "As far as we know we haven't been reached out to about canceling our events. When I talked to Dr. Stubbs I explicitly asked him, 'Are we okay to have this bake sale because this was already scheduled?'" Dr. Stubbs responded saying they could still have their bake sale.

Oldham's letter was a response to Robby Starbuck and his wife, Landon, — a Nashville politician who was removed from the Republican primary ballot while running for Tennessee's 5th Congressional

District. Starbuck is known to attack institutions of higher education throughout the state for so-called "woke" values and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Starbuck took to social media, demanding Tech administration to take action after misrepresenting a drag show put on by Upper Cumberland Pride, a non-profit organization who strives to educate the Upper Cumberland community about issues faced within the queer community.

Starbuck tagged the university in a Facebook post saying the following: "Tennessee Tech had a drag show with kids in attendance on their campus with a theme

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'Vote of No Confidence' Looms Over Tech VP, Rumors of State Investigation

MEGAN REAGAN
Reporter

A "Vote of No Confidence" in Tech's vice president is looming from the Faculty Senate after discrepancies in salary distribution were found.

The discrepancies in last year's raise allotments have been a topic of discussion after it was discovered that some faculty and staff members received raises exceeding the 1-7% approved by the Board of Trustees (BoT) in March of 2022 — some receiving upwards of 9-32%.

In the March BoT meeting, merit-based raises between 1-7% were approved for individual faculty members, and any single unit or department was to not exceed a 4% average in increases; however, eight units saw increases exceeding that.

The inconsistencies were found soon after the BoT approval, and Faculty Senate members began to inquire about rumors of the "excessive" salary increases in April.



Some faculty and staff got raises exceeding the 1-7% approved by BoT. Photo by Sarah Aku.

"One key concern among senators is that many of the large raises appear in a single unit, not Academic Affairs which is the largest unit on campus," Faculty Senate meeting minutes from April 4 said.

Data shows academic affairs saw only a 3% increase, while planning and finance saw a 9% increase.

After the April 4 meeting, Internal Audit

initiated their own investigation into the matters — but things have since escalated.

Later in April, the senate issued a "Vote of No Confidence" in Vice President Claire Stinson.

Stinson is the vice president for the Office of Planning and Finance and serves as the chief business and fiscal officer for the university. Other university functions that fall under Planning and Finance include major areas within the division such as facilities and business services, financial services, human resource services, environmental services, and information technology services. Many of which had employees receiving raises exceeding the 7% cap set by the BoT.

A question that begs to be answered is whether a conflict of interest exists within planning and finance.

Senators asked President Phil Oldham about the viability of an organizational chart change that would remove human resource-

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Tech Faculty File For Preliminary Injunction To Remove Sanctions

MEGAN REAGAN
Reporter

Two Tech faculty members suing the university's provost filed a motion for a preliminary injunction earlier this year, requesting the court to restrain the enforcement of sanctions imposed upon them. However, the provost's attorneys argue that such an injunction is not necessary.

The federal lawsuit filed in October 2021 by Dr. Julia Gruber and Andrew Smith alleges retaliation by university officials while exercising their First

Amendment rights.

According to the suit, Gruber and Smith suffered "adverse action intended to chill their speech ... that is protected under the First Amendment" and were denied procedural due process.

"[Bruce] is the one who imposed the sanctions that include non-monetary punishment, and she allegedly did so in violation of Plaintiffs' free speech right and without due process," the complaint said.

The actions taken against Smith and Gruber came as a

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Dr. Gruber and Dr. Smith are suing Tech on the grounds of the First Amendment. Photo by Elliot Payne.

Response from Student Organizations

The presidents of the two student organizations respond to Oldham's letter addressing them.

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Gacy-Inspired Musical Primere at Tech

The Backdoor Playhouse is putting on the original production of a musical inspired by John Wayne Gacy.

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SPORTS

Tech football scores in the last six seconds to win against Texas A&M Commerce.

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mocking Christianity. Tennessee Tech University should be ashamed this took place on their campus. Do they condone drag shows for kids and using school resources to mock Christians? It sure looks like it. Wow. Does Lisa Zagumny, Dean of TTU, condone this? Do tuition or alumni funds contribute to these “backdoor playhouse” events? Tennesseans deserve answers,” Starbuck said in a Facebook post.

“We gave the left control of these schools, even in red states.

They use the schools as indoctrination centers for their belief systems. They’re all infected on some level. Want this to stop? Alumni at every school need to use their time and \$ to demand leadership changes across the board to get people in power who reflect the values of the vast majority of our state and our citizens,” he continued.

The drag shows are held at the Backdoor Playhouse in partnership with Tech’s student organization, Lambda Gay-Straight Alliance (Lambda GSA,) and

are free to attend for all ages. All donations made go to the organization and their efforts on representing the marginalized group — many of whom are students, were students or will be students.

Oldham describes the show as “disparaging mockery” that was pointed towards a religious group. Oldham then distanced the university from the event that was held at the Back Door Playhouse by stating “To be clear, this was not a university sponsored event. No university

funds were used.”

Upper Cumberland Pride’s Executive Board put out a statement Thursday and said the accusations made on social media are false and harm all who are involved.

“We are disheartened and dismayed by the recent misrepresentation of our event held at Tech,” the statement said. “Our hope is to resolve this misunderstanding with the university and continue to educate the community about our organization and the LGBTQIA+ community.”



E Vigil
Junior
President of Lambda GSA

“I can say a lot of things got taken out of context ... We want to make sure that everyone has a safe space. We’re going to continue trying to create that space. It’s upsetting to hear that this is coming from the president of a university that I attend because I want this campus to be safe for every person.”

Student Organization Response to Oldham’s Letter

Bee Goodman & Elliot Paye
Reporters

Emma Waltenbaugh
Senior
President of Tech Players

“Recently, the Tennessee Tech president put out a statement addressing some social media controversy surrounding a drag show that happened on campus. Every month, the student organizations Lambda GSA and the Tech



Players collaborate with Upper Cumberland Pride to host drag shows. These drag shows are family friendly, welcoming and inclusive. We do not discriminate based on age for attendees, but minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The goal is to create a safe space for our performers and audience members to have a good time and freely express themselves. Any controversy that has arisen is from out-of-context misconstructions of the event. Any action taken against either Lambda GSA or the Tech Players is an attack on students’ freedom to express themselves.”

The Ending of Queen Elizabeth’s Era

Bee Goodman
Reporter

Queen Elizabeth II, the longest serving monarch in British history, died at the Balmoral Castle on the afternoon of Sept. 8 at 96 years old.

Elizabeth II took the throne in 1952 following the death of her father, King George VI. After serving 70 years, she passed royal responsibility to her son, King Charles III, the morning of her death.

With the long lasting reign she held, this period was named the “Modern Elizabethan era.” She accomplished many things on the throne, including being an auto mechanic with the British military after enrolling at 18 despite family refusal. She was only 13 when World War II began and by the time she was came of age in 1944 the war was coming to an end.

She was the epitome of “soft power.” The position she inherited was already extremely

reduced in terms of actual power and authority, and during her reign, the crown underwent a transformation into a figurehead position. Some royal duties include sanctioning legislation from Parliament with the power of refusable. Arguably, the largest accomplishment of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth is the stability she built after WWII and the controversial abdication of her uncle King Edward VIII, happening just three years before the war started. Elizabeth worked alongside 15 different prime ministers, including Winston Churchill.

As expected, the 70 years she ruled have been filled with change. She was the first televised queen. Many are surprised that the royal family was the focus of one of the first reality show style documentaries. Elizabeth had it archived it so that it could never be found. Her time in power saw the creation of cell phones, internet and social



After 70 years on the throne, the modern Elizabethan era ends with the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Photo from Getty Images.

media.

Despite her lifelong dedication to her job, it’s well known that the queen also kept several hobbies. Most well known is her appreciation of corgi dogs and the breeding of puppies and dorgis, a dachshund and corgi mix. She also dedicated a lot of time to her daughter’s horse riding career even long before Princess Anne’s Olympic Horse Riding

career took off. The late queen was also involved with the sale and breeding of horses.

Her late husband, Prince Philip of Edinburgh, will have his casket moved from holding in St. George’s Chapel in Windsor to King George VI’s Memorial Chapel within St. George, where he and Elizabeth will lay together.

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John Wayne Gacy–inspired musical to world premiere at Tech

Audrey Wilkins
Reporter

The Backdoor Playhouse is preparing for the world premiere of a new, true crime musical based on the life of serial killer John Wayne Gacy titled “Crawlspace.” The musical will begin its run on Nov. 3.

After its opening night, Crawlspace will hold shows at 8 p.m. on Nov. 4, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 12 in the Backdoor Playhouse. There will also be a late show at 10 p.m. on Nov. 10 and a matinee at 2 p.m. on Nov. 12.

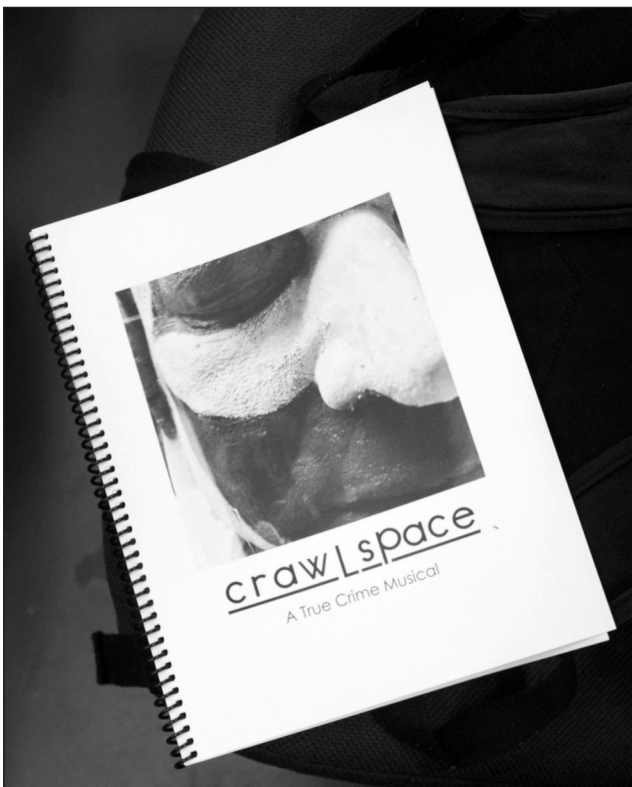
James Alder, facilities manager for the Backdoor Playhouse, explains how this musical came to be.

“Well, the playwright specifically reached out to us, the Backdoor Playhouse, to produce it because he thought it jives with our work. We do kind of strange stuff. So, I think that’s part of what makes it special,” Alder said.

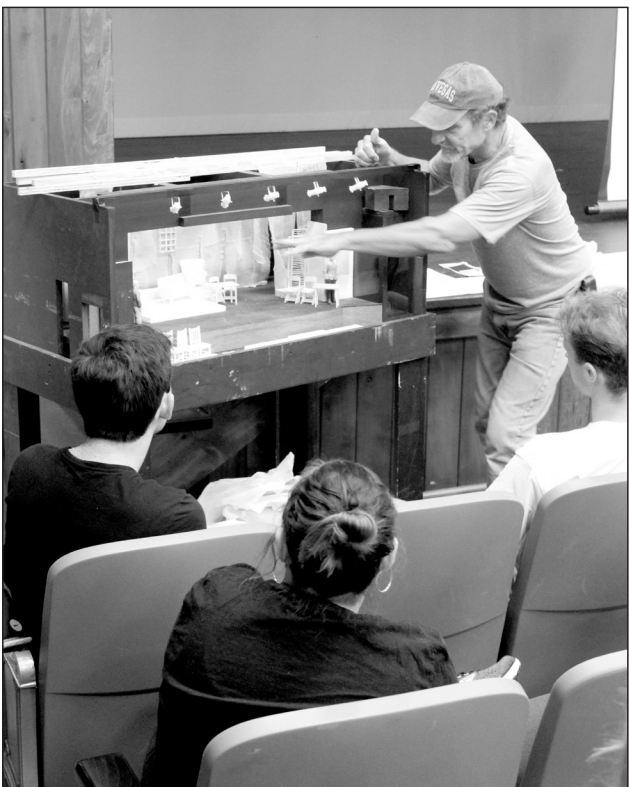
According to Alder, running the world premiere of a musical can have future significance. “If it ends up being very successful, whoever’s in the cast will be printed on every copy going forward as the original cast. That’s pretty exciting,” he said.

Lorelei Jernigan, a fine arts major, hopes to become part of this cast whose name will be printed on every copy as the original cast. For Jernigan, this musical is the colliding of her two longtime interests.

“I auditioned because I’ve always really liked doing theater. I’ve always really been a part of theater,” Jernigan said. “And I love true crime. So, it was kind of like a mixing



The musical, presented by the Backdoor Playhouse, will be based on serial killer John Wayne Gacy. The musical’s success could mean the cast’s name could be printed on every copy as the original cast. Photos by Elliot Payne.



of, like, two of the two things that I really, really like. Because, I don’t know, I’m a freak about true crime. It’s so interesting to me.”

Alder hopes after seeing Crawlspace, audiences will appreciate the musical as well as its cast. He said, “I hope [the audiences] enjoy it. You know, people enjoy true crime. Some people don’t, but I hope that people will come out and enjoy it and think that our students are very talented people and that we do good work.”

Jernigan hopes audiences will get more than just entertainment, though. She said, “I guess I hope [audiences take away] just more knowledge about the case. Either how it’s like a cautionary tale or like a warning of some sort. I still want them to be entertained, but I do think they should be warned about people like John Wayne Gacy.”

After Crawlspace finishes its run, the Backdoor Playhouse will begin preparing for Winterfest - An Evening of One-Acts. Winterfest will run Feb. 9-18, 2023.

Tech Vice President from page 1



The Office of Planning and Finance is one of the offices that allocates how university funds are to be spent. Photo by Sarah Aku.

es, who doles out the raises, out from under planning and finance and Oldham, according to meeting minutes, said he was “agnostic” about the suggestion.

With the first Faculty Senate meeting just around the corner, Internal Audit has not yet concluded their investigation, and it is rumored that it has been turned over to the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, who investigates waste and

fraud.

Comptroller spokesperson John Dunn could not confirm or deny the allegations of such an investigation into the matter.

“The Comptroller’s Office has broad authority to review public colleges and universities including Tennessee Tech,” Dunn said. “It is our policy to not comment further.”

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result of fliers, allegedly made by Smith, of another Tech professor, Andrew Donadio, an assistant professor of nursing and Putnam County commissioner.

The fliers, Smith and Gruber have said, were the result of an interaction in February of 2021 at a Putnam County School Board meeting where the governing board decided to not form a mascot renaming committee for Algood Middle School – which still holds the mascot name “Redskins.”

Donadio had been vocally in favor of keeping the mascot in his capacity as county commissioner, and Gruber – along with local indigenous friends – had campaigned against it.

The flier also referred to Donadio’s involvement as the advisor to a student organization on Tech’s campus, Turning Point USA.

TPUSA is a national organization founded in 2012 that claims to “identify, educate, train, and organize students to promote the principles of freedom, free markets, and limited government.”

At the same time, however, the organization has a professor “watchlist” that has been perceived by many as a scare tactic used against so-called liberal educators.

The flier that was made by Smith, and distributed by both Smith and Gruber, read as follows:



Tech has allegedly neglected to include Dr. Gruber and Dr. Smith in the raises that many other faculty saw. Photo by Elliot Payne.

“This racist college professor thought it would be a great idea to help start a Tennessee Tech chapter for this national hate group where racist students can unite to harass, threaten, intimidate and terrorize persons of color, feminists, liberals and the like, especially their teachers. Their organization created a national ‘Professor Watchlist’ to harass and intimidate progressive educators, including many women, African-American and Muslim professors.

“Professor Donadio and Turning Point USA. You are on our list. Your hate & hypocrisy are not welcome at Tennessee Tech. No unity with racists,” the flier stated.

Following a formal investigation into the flier by university officials, sanctions were placed on Gruber and Smith in May of 2021.

Sanctions identified in the lawsuit filed by Gruber and Smith include not being allowed to participate in study abroad activities, namely faculty-led field trips with students; not being eligible for non-instructional assignments; revocation of a grant awarded to Dr. Gruber; requiring meetings to discuss classroom behavior; undergoing observation in the classroom; and threat of termination.

Smith and Gruber also allege that they were denied a \$1,000 bonus because of the sanctions,

and that they are also now ineligible for two years of salary increases.

The recent motion for the preliminary injunction to remove the sanctions states Gruber and Smith have a strong likelihood of success on the merits; they would suffer “irreparable harm” without the injunction; issuing the injunction would not cause substantial harm to others; and that “the public interest would be served by granting the injunction.”

Tennessee Attorney General Herbert Slatery III, representing Bruce, however claims Gruber and Smith’s request “falls short in light of their own delay,” as the sanctions were imposed in May of 2021.

Robert Bigelow, representing Gruber and Smith, asks the court to quickly grant the injunction “so that the punishments in place will not affect yet another school year.”

“[They] very much desire to serve as faculty advisors for the student organizations they love and have guided in years past,” he said. “They also hope to be able to participate in faculty-led field trips and receive raises. And, in the case of Dr. Gruber, she wants to take advantage of an opportunity to pursue a grant like the one she was awarded but was unable to accept because of the sanctions. This is the irreparable harm [they] seek to avoid.”

Sports

Eagles win First Home Game vs. Lions



Tech takes the field at Tucker stadium on Saturday September 10 versus Texas A&M Commerce. Tech won its first game of the season 26-25 in the closing minutes of the fourth quarter.. Provided by Jim Dillion

EVERY NETTLES
Sports Editor

Tech just came off a big loss to Kansas with a score of 56-10. But this past Saturday, Sep. 10 Tech played Texas A&M Commerce (TAMUC) this is the first time Tech has played TAMUC since the Tangerine bowl in 1953. This also marks the 1,000th game in the 100 years Tech football has existed. The game kicked off at Tucker Stadium on the Overall field at 6 p.m. on Saturday. The first half of the game was rough

for Tech as they could only score a field goal while TAMUC scored 16 points. But things seemed to turn around slowly for Tech as Hayden Olsen Tech's kicker made another field goal making the score 16-6 in the third quarter. Quarterback Jeremiah Oatsvall said "I feel like I could have played better and cleaner as well as limit the number of turnovers so he can put the offense in the best possible scenarios. We as a team need to be more consistent and this starts in practice. When we do

the right thing and execute we are very efficient but it needs to be consistent." Then Jeremiah Oatsvall number 4 Tech's quarterback rushed the ball to TAMUC's 1-yard line and then on the next play David Gist ran the ball into the in-zone for Tech's first touchdown of the game in the 4th quarter. This set the tone for the rest of the game. Then TAMUC scored with a touchdown making the game 19-13 and TAMUC made the extra point. Tech got the ball back but could not do anything with the ball and turned

it over on downs. Then TAMUC scored again making it 25-13 and they tried to go for a two-point conversion but Tech

stopped them from getting the two extra points. But then 2:11 minutes left in the game Tech got the ball back and drove it down the field. TAMUC had some big penalties that gave Tech free first downs which ended up costing them in the end. This was because with 2 seconds left of the game Jeremiah Oatsvall threw the ball to Willie Miller for the game-winning touchdown. The final score was 26-25 and Tech's first win of the season and first win at home as well. Tech's record is now 1-1. Oatsvall also said "This upcoming week will be a normal week for us where we will be watching Samford's film. And our coaches are

coming up with a great plan and we just have to be ready to execute it." As a QB I am always looking to improve my decision making skills because the ball comes through me every play and as a team like I said earlier consistency is something we have to improve on." Tech's next home game is September 17th against the Samford Bulldogs. Samford just came off a big loss to the Georgia Bulldogs on the road with the score being 33-0. Tech's next game will kick off at 6 p.m at Tucker Stadium for Tech's family weekend. If you are not able to watch the game you can always watch it on ESPN+.



Tech captions at the middle of the field before kickoff Saturday September 10 versus Texas A&M Commerce. With the win, Tech is now 1-1 on the season. Provided by Jim Dillion

Tech wins Invitational brings home trophy



On September 3, Jazmine Yamilkoski (6) set the ball to help set up Tech for the next play. Tech then went on to win that set and the tournament on September 10 in Ohio. Photo provided by Jim Dillion.

CALLIE SMITH
*Sports Reporter/
Social Media Editor*

The Golden Eagle's volleyball team returned home to Cookeville from the Bobcat Invitational with a championship title after going 2-1 in Athens Ohio this weekend. The Eagles began the tournament on Friday with a not-so-easy three set sweep against Loyola Maryland (LMU). Tech found themselves quickly falling behind in set one as LMU took a 3-0 lead. However, the Golden

Eagles answered with a 8-2 rally giving them a 7-point lead. LMU were able to catch back up, tying the score at 21-21. Tech was able to finish the job and took the first win of the match, winning 25-22. The Golden Eagles were able to keep a more comfortable lead in the second match, extending it to 7 and never letting LMU get closer than the two-point difference in 20-18. Tech secured their second win of the match, 25-21. The third set of the match started similar to the first as

Tech fell behind 9-3. The Golden Eagles clawed back, but still found themselves down 22-18. Refusing to give up, Tech tied the score 23-23 as a two-point battle began between the opponents, once again tying at 25-25. The Eagles were able to secure the win by a kill from Madolyn Isringhausen, claiming the overall victory for Tech and putting them up in the tournament 1-0. Saturday did not start so sweetly for the Golden Eagles as they fell behind in a 3-2 set against Bradley. Tech fell behind 0-2 as Bradley took the first set 25-21 and the second set 25-17. The Eagles were able to take some ground as they won sets three and four with scores of 25-23 and 25-18, tying the match 2-2. Unfortunately, Tech was not able to hold their ground as Bradley won the tiebreaker 15-11. This loss put Tech 1-1. The Eagles were still able to make their way to the tournament finale based on set percentage, winning 8 of 12 sets in the event. Tech fell behind Ohio, losing the first set of the championship 25-19. However, the Golden Eagles were able to bounce back a rally as they took the next three sets, claiming the match victory.

Taking an 8-point lead in the second set, Tech was able to secure the win 25-20, tying the opponents 1-1 in the match. Even after falling behind by 6 in the third set, Tech was able to climb back to a win of 25-22. Ohio and Tech found themselves neck and neck for the entire fourth set until the Eagles were able to jump ahead at the end and secure the championship by taking the last win of the weekend, 25-20. Tech's victories were lead by Skylar Boom with 15 kills and 4 blocks while hitting .393, Skylar brought home All-tournament and MVP honors. Madolyn Isringhausen has a match-high of 16 kills, as well as 9 digs and 3 service aces. Taylor Dorsley had 9 kills and 2 blocks. Both players were given All-tournament accolades as well. The Golden Eagles will take flight again at the Western Kentucky (WKU) invitational on Sept. 15-16, starting the weekend against WKU at 11 a.m. and Indiana (IU) at 5 p.m. on Friday. The tournament will continue on Saturday as the Eagles are scheduled to play against Texas A&M at 12 p.m.