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IB SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION OVERVIEW

MATHIS LEVESON
STAFF REPORTER

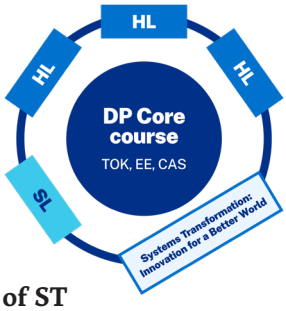
Starting last year at UCC, students entering Year 11 have been given the opportunity to take part in a new IB pilot course, spearheaded by only 4 IB schools across the globe. This pathway, the Systems Transformation (ST) pathway, is a significant departure from the traditional course structure of the IBDP. ST counts for two Standard Level DP courses, with the aim of exposing students to interdisciplinary ways of thinking and big-picture design principles, so that they can better understand the systems that enable our world to function. As its first cohort approaches the halfway mark of this school year, Year 10 students are also approaching course selection time, where they can choose to apply for the ST course as well. To provide an objective perspective to future students who may consider the ST pathway for their future, we have gathered insights from several current ST students regarding the program's structure, benefits, and inherent challenges.

Structural differences with the DP

The most immediate difference between ST and the traditional DP is the structure of the curriculum. While DP students have discrete subjects for different areas of study, ST students examine how these fields interact within a specific "system," such as a city's infrastructure or a global food supply chain.

A defining characteristic of ST is that at the end of the course, every student will have learned something different depending on the direction they decided to take their projects. ST is a course focused on teaching students approaches to problem-solving and change on a large scale. This is taught through projects and experiential learning, meaning that although students may direct their project towards a different practical area of focus, they will still learn about how systems interact and the concepts of context and causation.

One current ST student, William Chandra '27, says, "A typical lesson in the ST involves a group setting where we all sit in a sort of circle, and get a chance to pitch in and discuss." The ST course is structured so that lessons "aren't entirely teacher driven, but dependent on student involvement."



Benefits of ST

When asked about the primary factor influencing their choice of the ST pathway, students often cited a desire for greater control over their learning, and a more group-based approach to assignments. "I don't think something like this could have been done in a regular classroom setting," says Will. "The projects that we've been able to tackle so far were so unique in the sense that they were reliant on each person pitching in, and really bringing something unique to the table."

ST also incorporates important thinking and presentation skills into the curriculum, says Lincoln Dugas-Nishisato '27. As you go through the process of your own self direction and problem solving, "what you learn can also be applied to every other course, in terms of problem analysis, multimedia presentation, logical processes, and more."

With a less structured approach like the one taken by ST, students will also learn to work independently and responsibly. Self directed learning does not just refer to the direction and topic of one's learning, but also one's self regulation and responsibility. In ST, you will need the ability to stay on task and be organized, "even if it's a P4 work period on a Friday", because that is the nature of self-direction.

Weaknesses and trade-offs

However, every new system has its growing pains, and the ST course is no different. Students have cited concerns with the structure of the course and their role in it.

Lincoln noted that the lack of defined structure, due to both the course's inherent objec tives and its being in a state of infancy, could sometimes be hard to manage. A general sentiment from him and other students is that it has been difficult to gauge progress in the course, due to "stringent rubrics" that can be hard to link to students' work, given the often complex and shifting curricular experiences.

The nature of ST involves the marking of a broad reflection on a project, rather on the work done in the project itself. Another student, when asked about challenges being faced by ST's first cohort, describes a lack of clarity, making it difficult for students to wrap their heads around what is being asked of them; "Systems should be about not following the norm, being the leader that initiated change, but the way that the rubrics work and the ways we are assessed often contradicts these objectives." It is clear that transforming the system of education, rooted in its traditional structures and processes, could be one of the most complex challenges students and teachers might face.

Is ST for you?

All in all, if you prefer a course designed to be a transdisciplinary exploration with more freedom for self-direction, you would enjoy the ST course. ST students also have an inclination towards big picture thinking, and with the course's focus on that, you will learn skills relating to problem solving on a larger scale, rather than a focus entirely on discrete subject knowledge. Conversely, if you struggle with less precise course structure and broad self-reflection, or with self-regulating large projects, Systems may not be the choice for you. An anonymous student states that ST "incorporates a lot of self learning and self responsibility, so if staying on task and time management is not your strong suit, it won't be well suited for you."

Nonetheless, we at *Convergence* would encourage you to speak to current students, teachers and faculty, about the ST course, to perform your own research and make a decision based on your own strengths and interests. Choose wisely and with consideration of all factors, including your strengths, weaknesses, interests, and post-secondary prospects, and do not choose ST on a whim simply because you want to drop a given course. Given that it is a pilot course, ST has its own set of challenges, as well as enriching learning experiences, all of which you must take in stride if it is for you.

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A FULLER CAMPUS: AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. WALKER

BOB LIU, ETHAN FREI
MANAGING EDITORS

Could you give an account on what you thought happened with the admissions number for this year and how the cohort size exceeded projections?

We often over-offer on purpose, because there's a natural amount of attrition that we expect to happen over the summer. For example, typically not all families accepted our offer in the past. But this year, which is a really good problem to have, many or most of the families accept to the offers. So that led to not necessarily larger than expected, because we did offer these places, but maybe a larger than typical amount of students and families accepting our office. So, rather than not expecting this, it was bigger than usual. I mean, we always offer knowing that we do have the capacity to accept that moment. But it's rare that the families, all the families, all take us up on that offer.

After this was apparent, what were the immediate priorities or options to address this situation?

Yeah, of course. The communal areas. And you spoke to it earlier, the communal areas, like assembly. Yeah, that was going to be tight. And we immediately had a look. We did some, you know, back of the envelope math to see how many students would fit in a pew and then how many pews you need. We ended up extending forward the number of pews we had and putting in chairs at the back. That was meant to be one solution, but it didn't quite provide the space that we had expected. So in the end we asked our student leaders or heads of house or prefects to stand in the aisles and in the wings. One, as a kind of crowd management strategy in terms of not getting the pews to be as crowded. And the second to kind of, you know, support the teachers who stand in the aisles and on the wings.

Who was involved in developing the responses?

Of course, the Assistant Heads, and Mr. Mac, the Head of the Upper School, and of course, Facilities as well, because we had to let them know about our plans for expanding the seating options in Laidlaw. And of course, the Senior House Advisors were involved because they really encouraged the idea of the student leaders standing to make space for everyone else as well as to provide that crowd management support. And yeah, and of course, Mr. McKinney, just about everyone in the leadership team. Facilities were instrumental in making a lot of it happen.

Aside from assembly, have class sizes, faculty workload, facilities been affected as a result?

No, thankfully not. Thankfully not. And to be honest, definitely not as much as we had anticipated. So the class sizes are pretty much the same and the workload is the same. We had a large intake in Year 9. But to answer your question directly, no, the workload is pretty much the same. The class sizes are approximately what we'd expect them to be. And of course, we're always looking for options for communal spaces. Luckily, it's worked out well. So for year-level meetings, we've rotated using Laidlaw among the years. Sometimes MB has been used, but we've found ourselves having to use a lot of our large spaces more frequently.

Was there anything that could have been done differently in hindsight?

No, it just happens, right? And this is like the perfect example, right? You oversell seats and nine times out of ten it works out fine. And what will happen eventually is that as the years go on, we'll get the numbers to normalize back to our usual level. Because as I said before, it's atypical for all families to accept all our offers. But if it happens two years in a row, then we'll have a problem. But one spike for one year is not so bad. I mean, it's certainly a good problem to have.

Building onto that, do you think this is a one-off year because of the new Pathways that are being added? Or is it part of a larger trend for the future?

Yeah, I don't know. We got some new students in Year 11. So if it were the Pathways, you would have expected a larger than usual increase in that year level, and I'm not sure that that happened. There was something in that year level, but not something that was, you know, atypical. So I'm not sure that it is the pathway. Anyway, we're standing quite well amongst our peer schools. Like in our boarding program, for example, we know that we have a smaller boarding cohort, and whereas our peer schools are having issues filling their boarding houses, we were filled up. We're still filled and looking forward to all our spots being filled for next year as well. So we are positioned uniquely in the independent school market. I don't know if that means that it's a one-off or not. We'll have to see. It might be a factor, but not the most significant one — more like the institutional strength of the College as a whole. Yeah, that's a good way to put it — the institutional strength, the popularity of the College, and the reputation of the College really standing out to the point where we have this one year. Statistically, this year was bound to happen. It just happened this year.

Looking back, how would you evaluate the administration's response?

We saw the numbers immediately. I mean, we were responsive. We were really, really responsive. What we tried to do, because our house system means a lot to us, was ensure that in distributing some of our new students, we had approximately equal numbers in all the houses. We tackled it head-on while still maintaining the quality of our models, like the house system, for example. We were able to identify the pressure points early. We already had systems in place, like separating lunches, and even if we needed further separation of lunches or different groups, we had structures that could maintain an influx of students. So we were already standing well before. The capacity existed. We would not have offered if we didn't physically have the capacity. It would have been tight — as you can tell from Assembly — but we would not have extended offers if we didn't believe we could do well for the students.

A FULLER CAMPUS: STUDENT REFLECTIONS

BOB LIU, ETHAN FREI
MANAGING EDITORS

UCC has never been a small school in spirit. We often pride our school on its breadth of programs, voices, and opportunities. Recently, however, that breadth has begun to manifest in a literal sense. Every hallway seems to feel tighter between periods, getting a seat at assembly is noticeably more difficult to come by, and every study space fills earlier. The school feels fuller, and that's because it is. At the beginning of the 2025-26 school year, it was announced that UCC would have a larger-than-normal influx of new students across all grades. While it can be argued that growth in our school is a marker of success, the consequences of increasing student numbers become more complicated when we experience it from within the community.

Upon first glance, the immediate effect of overcrowding is physical. Every classroom feels more compressed, study spaces more competitive and appear to be nearly full all throughout each day. Naturally, questions are raised by students and faculty alike on whether the school's infrastructure is sufficient.

The Pressure Points

According to the administration, the most immediate strain was spatial. The pressure surfaced first and most visibly in communal environments, particularly Assembly. Additional pews were added, and Prefects now stand in aisles to manage compression. Larger venues such as Laidlaw and the MB Theatre have since been rotated more frequently for year-level gatherings.

However, it is important to note that these adjustments are just temporary measures meant to address a larger than expected cohort that remains within the institutional capacity of the College.

Importantly, the administration maintains that class sizes and faculty workload have remained largely consistent with projected expectations. Enrollment growth was distributed across year levels rather than concentrated entirely in one space. On paper, academic ratios have held.

Yet spatial pressure and academic metrics do not operate in isolation. Even when classrooms remain within capacity, other environments absorb the density. Lunch lines from the Student Centre to the Upper Dining Hall have noticeably increased. House meetings require more logistical coordination.

The administration also emphasized that contingency systems were already in place. Existing measures like staggered lunches and adaptive scheduling have already been in place to allow the influx to be absorbed without major structural overhaul.

Community

Beyond logistics, density changes how a community feels.

The administration maintains that academic structures and class sizes have remained stable. But this does not prevent shifts in the atmosphere. Community is measured by whether students feel unique and whether spaces feel accessible.

UCC has long emphasized personal mentorship and a culture where students feel known. When enrollment rises, even within capacity, it is also worth questioning how that fullness shapes daily experience.

At a private institution where families invest not only financially but emotionally, the perception of belonging matters as much as infrastructure. A school can technically accommodate growth while keeping in mind how that growth shapes its culture.

UCC clearly can hold more students. The question is how density affects the community at the college, and whether a fuller school feels the same as a full one.

Are There Positives?

Growth, in itself, is not inherently problematic. A larger student body can expand the range of diversity and embodies the college's value of pluralism. It can feed ample amounts of students into the new pathways and support niche clubs that have historically struggled with membership. By many metrics, increased enrollment reflects favorably upon the institutional strength of the College. There is also a practical argument that navigating a fuller environment mirrors realities beyond secondary school, where access to opportunities is rarely unlimited.

The question is not whether growth has value, but whether the systems surrounding it like physical space, logistics, and culture evolve proportionally. When expansion is matched with the aforementioned considerations, it will strengthen the school. When it is not, even manageable growth can feel constricting.

The Question Going Forward

The issue facing UCC is not whether it can accommodate growth. This year suggests that it can. The existing infrastructure could accommodate it without major strain, and according to the administration, the pressure points were quickly identified and adjustments were made. By most operational measures, the school absorbed the influx.

The more consequential question is what happens next.

If this year represents a statistical anomaly, enrollment will normalize and the moment will pass as a test of elasticity. If high-yield admissions continue, the considerations shift from short-term adjustment to long-term planning in admissions and the broader College. Growth then becomes a trend, even though it is a "good problem" to have, that needs to be planned for.

Capacity is measurable. Culture is less so. As the school evaluates future admissions cycles, the challenge will be ensuring that expansion, whether temporary or sustained, aligns with the qualities that define the UCC experience.

A WORLD CUP FOR THE WORLD, BUT NOT ITS PEOPLE

DYAUS PAN, NICHOLAS JIRSCH
JUNIOR EDITOR, SENIOR EDITOR

In the heart of downtown Toronto at Nathan Phillips Square lies a countdown clock marking the days until the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Canada, co-hosting the tournament for the first time alongside Mexico and the United States, looks forward to the historic milestone of the nation's opening match on June 12 at BMO Field. But as the clock ticks down towards zero, another number climbs steadily upwards: ticket prices. FIFA's dynamic pricing strategy, combined with Ontario's elimination of resale regulations, has transformed what should be a celebration of national pride and culture into a crisis of accessibility. Tickets for the home opener now range from $2,000 to $47,000 per seat, raising questions about who this World Cup is actually for. For Toronto's working-class majority, the answer is becoming increasingly clear: not them.

How Tickets Spiraled Out of Control

When FIFA opened Phase 1 of sales in October 2025, the cheapest tickets for the opening match, Category 4 seats far from the field, started at nearly $500 each. Meanwhile, Category 1 seats, offering the best views, began at around $2,400. As the tournament approached and tickets grew scarce, prices escalated dramatically through each sales phase. By the time Phase 3 sales began in December, prices had climbed more than 30% from their October baseline, a pattern FIFA designed intentionally to maximize revenue as excitement peaks. FIFA calls this "dynamic pricing," a model where ticket prices fluctuate based on demand, match significance, and remaining inventory. Supposedly intended to eliminate scalpers through automatically adjusting prices relative to the market, dynamic pricing instead raised costs exponentially. This led to incredible demand at unparalleled prices, where FIFA benefited from decreasing supply and spiralling demand. As Phase 3 began and Category 4 seats were completely deplenished, limited Category 3 seats quickly sold for almost $1,300 each. Even at these prices, seats vanished within hours.

Those left empty-handed turned to the resale market, where a brutal reality awaited. Platforms like Ticketmaster, StubHub, and FIFA's Resale/Exchange Marketplace charge fees up to 15% of the ticket price. This, coupled with scalpers preying on limited availability and fans' desperation to attend a once-in-a-lifetime event, has led to resale prices far beyond the already inflated primary market. The very Category 3 seats that cost $1,300 in Phase 3 now sell for $2,300 on the secondary market, nearly the same amount as premium Category 1 seats from Phase 1 of presales. But this explosion of resale prices is not a mistake; it is enabled by a deliberate policy choice in Ontario that has faced scrutiny before.

The Policy That Made This Crisis Possible

Back in October 2025, when the Toronto Blue Jays reached the World Series for the first time in over three decades, Ontario faced a similar crisis. Tickets that originally cost $345 were reselling for nearly $1,200, with Game 7 tickets listed for as much as $16,000. Premier Doug Ford called the situation "gouging," but his concern rang hollow to critics. Among them was Leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party and the Official Opposition Marit Stiles, who pointed out that the Ford government was partly to blame for the crisis. In 2019, shortly after taking office, Ford's Progressive Conservatives scrapped a ticket resale cap introduced by the previous Liberal government. That cap had limited resale prices to 50 percent above the original face value. Ford's government called the cap "unenforceable" and claimed it would drive consumers to the black market. As a result, Ontario has become a resale free-for-all, with no legal protection stopping scalpers and resale platforms like Ticketmaster from charging whatever they want. Now, as World Cup 2026 tickets spiral out of control, Stiles and the NDP are demanding Ford reinstate anti-scalping legislation to corral prices within reasonable limits.

However, the Ontario government is not the only entity drawing criticism from fans: FIFA itself faces a global backlash over its dynamic pricing strategy. Fan organizations worldwide have condemned FIFA's approach as shortsighted and exclusionary, questioning the organization's commitment to making the World Cup available and affordable. One group, Football Supporters Europe, called FIFA's policy, "a monumental betrayal of the tradition of the World Cup, ignoring the contribution of supporters to the spectacle it is." Even elected officials have joined the outcry. In New York City, Mayor Zohran Mamdani launched the "Game Over Greed" petition, demanding that FIFA implement three core measures: eliminate dynamic pricing entirely, place

A WORLD CUP FOR THE WORLD, BUT NOT ITS PEOPLE

a cap on resale prices to prevent unlimited markup, and set aside 15% of all tickets for local residents at a discounted rate.

FIFA's Limited Response

In response to mounting pressure from Mamdani and numerous critics, FIFA introduced a limited "Supporter Entry Tier." These tickets were set at a fixed price of USD $60 (around CAD $83.50), available for all 104 matches, including the final. However, availability was scarce. Each national team received roughly 400-750 tickets per match, representing just 10% of each team's total ticket allocation. The tickets were distributed exclusively through each nation's soccer association, such as Canada's Voyageurs supporter group, with each association determining its own eligibility criteria. This theoretically prioritized "loyal fans," but offered no transparency or consistent standards. As a result, fans were left feeling "betrayed." The USD $60 entry tier, despite its symbolic importance, only applied to a tiny fraction of tickets; the vast majority of fans would still face prices that FIFA itself admitted were "astronomical." As fans continued to express their avid discontent, FIFA president Gianni Infantino finally responded to criticism in late December. He cited "absolutely crazy" demand: 15 million ticket requests per day across a 33-day application window. Infantino further argued that revenue generated through ticket sales would be reinvested into development programs: "Without FIFA there would be no football in 150 countries in the world. There is football because, and thanks to, these revenues we generate with, and from, the World Cup, which we reinvest all over the world." In other words, FIFA's unprecedented ticket prices serve not primarily the fans attending

the World Cup, but the global development agenda, a calculation that has left working-class supporters on the outside looking in.

Conclusion

Critics often claim that the blame falls entirely upon FIFA and regulating bodies for negligence, but the truth is, there is no objective solution for this crisis. There are simply more fans across the world who want to witness the World Cup live than seats in stadiums. Perhaps the answer to the question of how to fairly price tickets when demand transcends supply is that there exists none. Yet, this is no excuse. FIFA's poor governance has only perpetuated this issue beyond imagination, where profit subverts availability, erodes community values, and prioritizes revenue over people. There will never be a perfect solution, but the first step is to try, not to turn away and claim that scarcity justifies abandoning accessibility completely.

The Blue Page

The Case **FOR** Artificial Intelligence

COLLEEN FERGUSON
DP COORDINATOR

When ChatGPT arrived in 2023 it rocked my world in two profound ways.

First, as Diploma Coordinator, my responsibilities then and now include supporting Academic Honesty in Years 11 and 12 and conducting disciplinary conversations when malpractice occurs. I was horrified by this new technology's ability to write complete and convincing responses to any prompt, no matter how niche. I feared an explosion of cheating and plagiarism. Surely, I thought, education will never be the same.

Second, as an English teacher I worried that from that point forward, people would lose the skill and inclination to write. I view writing as core to a person's ability to not just to communicate clearly and convincingly, but also essential in thinking critically and creatively. In my view, writing is thinking.

So perhaps it is surprising that I now believe GenAI may be a net benefit especially for education.

I still believe writing must be taught and practiced. I still believe AI changes school forever. What has changed is this: I now believe we have more control than we think
.
When social media transformed our world, we didn't stop to ask what it was doing to our attention, our relationships, or our mental health. With AI, we have another chance. We can decide what we value before the technology decides for us.

And in truth, education was already due for change.

Long before ChatGPT, we were drifting toward a transactional model of school: complete the task, earn the grade, move on. The final product became the focus. The learning process which is often messy, iterative and collaborative, became secondary.

GenAI has exposed the fragility of that model. If a machine can produce a polished essay in seconds, then a polished essay cannot be the point.

What AI cannot replicate is the deeply personal experience of a new insight. It cannot feel the excitement of connecting two ideas in an unexpected way. It cannot experience the satisfaction of working through confusion and arriving at clarity. Those experiences belong to humans. They are what shape intellect and character.

The arrival of GenAI pushes schools to re-center what matters. We must focus less on the transaction of producing a final product and more on the process of thinking, questioning, drafting, revising, and building understanding together.

Perhaps this is the unexpected gift of GenAI. It forces education to clarify its purpose. If we cannot compete with machines on speed or polish, we can double down on what machines cannot do: cultivate curiosity, resilience, ethical judgment, and the willingness to engage in productive struggle.
I am not certain we would have made this shift without the disruption AI has caused.

But this shift is not just about teachers redesigning assignments.

It is about you.

Every time you open an AI tool, you are making a choice. Are you using it to avoid thinking or to deepen it? Are you trying to finish faster or to understand more fully? Are you trying to make something easy or are you using it to help you do something difficult?

The decision of when and how to use AI needs to be a thoughtful one and that decision cannot simply be about efficiency. It must be about growth.
And I believe you are seeing the value in using AI in ways that preserve learning but not undermine it. AI can help students get un-stuck, or can give really good feedback when it's needed. It can help plan out a workflow or give advice on how to deepen an argument.

When you invest thought, creativity, and sustained effort AI can be an extraordinary amplifier. It can challenge your assumptions, surface new angles, help you refine language, extend your research, and accelerate revision. It can expand your success.

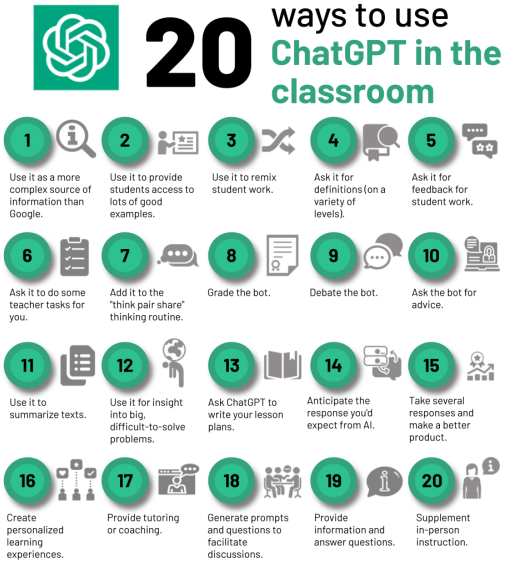
But it cannot supply the original thinking. It cannot care about the idea. It cannot wrestle with confusion. It cannot choose to struggle.

If you skip that messy middle, AI may produce something impressive but you will not grow.
That is why the process matters. The drafts, the brainstorming, the reflection, the revision, that is the real work of learning. If we continue to reward only the final product, we should not be surprised when AI produces it. But if we value the thinking behind it, the equation changes.

Perhaps that is why I am no longer horrified.

Education will never be the same. But that does not mean it will be diminished. The future of learning in an age of AI will not be decided by the technology itself.

It will be decided by the kind of learners you choose to become.



The Blue Page

The Case **AGAINST** Artificial Intelligence

ANDRE CANTO CUBAS
JUNIOR EDITOR

AI has already seeped into every facet of our lives, from school, to work, to creative expression. Optimism for AI is being brought forth from leaders in the government and in companies, because of the ways it makes our lives easier in ways that you have probably seen when it comes to completing schoolwork and other boring tasks.

Although it is an emerging technology, it has already shown an incredible potential for negative effects on our society, for the average person's mental health, physical health, finances, freedoms, and education.

AI has been lauded by Big Tech CEOs as a way to revolutionise the way we live for the better, that sustainable abundance will erase the need for money, and that everything will be fine if enough money is put into research. The use of AI in companies has spread like an infection, put into ads from Coca Cola, in reported pricing experiments by Wendy's, and in Duolingo's efforts to churn out more language courses quicker. All of this has been done to boost stock prices, yet the upside isn't high for most cases.

Public opinion on AI has soured significantly and when companies use AI for reasons that most people don't like it costs money. An MIT study says that 95% of AI initiatives at companies make zero additional profits. The trillions of dollars spent that have grown stock prices comes as circular investing has become more common, with companies like Nvidia, OpenAI, Oracle, Microsoft, and a series of smaller companies.

What happens is that money exchanges hands, keeping up the appearance of growth while boosting stock prices. Right now, the top 10 companies in the S&P 500 are a whopping 38% of the whole index, with companies like Tesla having absurd P/E ratios in the hundreds that are based on hype. These high valuations based on the promise of AI are a financial danger to the livelihoods of most people; if these prices crash in the case of a bubble bursting, people will suffer just like after the dot-com bubble.

The Canadian government is spending billions on this technology while the future surrounding it is uncertain, and the harms it does to the populace make it a risky strategy. The federal AI minister Evan Solomon is very optimistic about AI and is telling Canadians not to worry about the negative effects that it will have on people's jobs by saying it is better to move forward and retrain.

The WEF has said that by 2030 AI will have displaced 92 million jobs, while creating 170 new ones, resulting in a net gain. AI optimists say that this will be like the internet where a net gain of jobs were created. The difference that isn't addressed is the nature of AI, in that it improves itself rapidly and is able to replace more and more workers as time goes on. Those who lose their jobs won't be able to retrain easily since millions across a multitude of industries will have already spent their life studying a certain field, because the implementation of this tech has been so rapid. Only 5 years ago AI was only emerging into the spotlight, and now it is already replacing jobs in various sectors. Companies aren't only replacing workers for the purposes of efficiency, or supposed quality, but to cut costs which has come at the expense of the incomes of many.

The speed of AI in creating content has also led to the rise of AI slop and poor quality work. If you've been on any social media you've probably seen AI-generated content in long-form videos with those "x explained in y minutes" videos, or brainrot content. It can seem harmless, but the real danger in this content comes from how it influences tech illiterate people like older people and young kids, who can fall for misinformation and disinformation. AI hoaxes have caused damage; some examples that come to mind are the fake Hurricane Helene photos and bunnies on a trampoline video. The increasing quality and quantity of this AI content has reduced critical thinking about what people perceive, and this issue will worsen as technology improves. Algorithmic bias in AI is also an issue because the data sets they are trained come from humans, who are notoriously prejudiced.

A recent 2025 MIT study has shown that using generative AI in order to do work causes lower brain engagement and leads to people underperforming neurological, linguistically, and behaviourally. ChatGPT users show the lowest brain activity, and the predictive nature of AI makes content generated generic and repetitive, even if decent at first glance. AI can be used for education, but the issue is that most people use it to finish work, not learn how to do it. The ability that AI has to do tasks usually means that people don't learn skills since they don't view it as a necessity.

AI is bad for mental health because it is specifically designed to keep the user hooked by being incredibly agreeable. There have been cases where AI has encouraged users to commit suicide, or amplified their delusions in a dangerous manner. The rush to develop the technology has left safety behind, and models like ChatGPT have a tendency to please people. It even mimics the way you speak to it in order to gain your trust, which has led to people spending insane amounts of time with the model. Within our school, you may know that there are people among us who talk to AI as if it was a human, or as if it was their girlfriend, as if it was anything more than a poor imitation for a real person.

In the US particularly, companies like Palantir have been using AI for mass government surveillance. This has included facial recognition and license plate tracking technologies used under the guise of safety. These companies have collected the data of millions, and have used the information to facilitate mass deportations and tracking of those critical of the US government.

By now, you've probably heard of the harmful effects AI has on the environment, from massive energy and water consumption that increases carbon emissions, and toxic waste from the mining of rare earth metals in order to create GPUs for AI data centres. The worst part is not that so much is being used for AI; it is what AI being used for — pointless slop that is designed to make a quick buck or simple tasks that really could've just been googled. The downside is high for essentially nothing.

For some people, the future looks bleak because of AI. We must be optimistic, since we have overcome greater challenges, and by adapting to AI, there is the chance that we could use it to our benefit and learn to deal with it, just like humans have done done with new technologies for millennia.

The Blue Page

Why The School Hymn Should Be Abolished

FERRARI ZHANG
BLUE PAGE EDITOR

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven, written by Henry Francis Lyte in 1834, is one of the most popular Christian hymns in the Protestant tradition, and it has been UCC's school hymn since at least 1911. Many traditions eventually become obsolete, and in my opinion, this tradition should be one of them.

School hymns are a reflection of their time. In 1911, when the school hymn first appeared on school records, Canada was very religious. Over 90% of the country was Christian. Due to Blue Laws, most businesses were closed on Sundays for religious observance. The Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal association, had an iron grip over the politics of Toronto, suppressing non-Protestant social values. This school hymn was very representative of our school population, who was even more Protestant than the rest of Canada at the time.

Canada is a very different place in 2025. While Christians are still a slight majority, only 15% of Canadian Christians actually regularly attend church, and religious institutions are almost invisible in daily life. The UCC student body is likely a reflection of Canadian society as a whole. That is not to say that a religious hymn can offend people, but a good school hymn does have to be representative of the school as a whole, and to be that, it has to transcend religion and encompass every student at the school. *You'll Never Walk Alone* might be that song.

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven does not transcend religion, and so is not representative of our school as a whole. Our school culture must change to reflect our modern society, and that is why the school hymn should go.

Is the school hymn relevant to student life? What is and is not relevant to student life is subjective, but a very good metric to assess how culturally relevant something is to our school is how much a student publication mentions it. From 1911 to 1990, the school hymn was mentioned in the *College Times* and the alumni magazine *Old Times* practically every year. From then on, corresponding to a liberalization of school culture and the adoption of the IB curriculum, it fell off the map, with the last time either publication mentioning it in a serious manner being in 2012. The Feb 2014 issue of *Convergence* did publish a parody version of it — it is still on our website — but that was all. By contrast, *You'll Never Walk Alone* was mentioned in every College Times edition of the 2010s.

Should a school hymn still be the school hymn if the student body has forgotten about it collectively for more than a decade?

Is the school hymn consistent with UCC values? School values are represented by school symbols. The school motto, *Palmam Qui Meruit Ferat,* signifies that UCC values meritocracy. We should, and we do value meritocracy. That is why there is a lot of excellence at our school both in academics and sports. *You'll Never Walk Alone* signifies that UCC values hope and solidarity. We should, and we do value hope and solidarity. That is not to say we are perfect to each other, but a lot of us do help new students feel welcome, support each other in times of need, and cheer on our school in our sports games. The school hymn signifies that we should love God. As an institution, UCC does not promote this value in practice. UCC shouldn't promote this value either, because even though loving God is not inherently bad, promoting one religion is exclusive to members of other religions, which is contrary to our school value of pluralism. To conclude, a school symbol that is unrepresentative of school values should not be a school symbol at all.

As UCC approaches its 200th anniversary, it must not stagnate in exclusionary and outdated traditions. The school hymn is one of those traditions, and it must go.

Special thanks to Ms. Khaleeli of UCC Archives for allowing Convergence access to its expansive database. Student opinions on this issue are welcome.

The Blue Page

A Case For More Speech & Debate Education

KEERTI JOSHI
BLUE PAGE REPORTER

In the modern age, truth is more and more muddled. Too many politicians use misleading rhetoric reinforced with misinformation to control citizens. At this time, having critical thinking skills, speaking skills and knowledge of the world is necessary to make sense of this political paradigm. UCC must incorporate public speaking into its curriculum to adapt to the modern day.

Public speaking comes in many forms, many of which are incredibly popular competitively within high school, including Model UN, Debate and Speech. While some efforts have been made, such as practicing oral skills within English or class discussions in Global Politics and Civics, a more standardized approach will have more success. A standardized approach does not require uniform assignments, but rather consistent growth: regular oral components, clear assessments, and deliberate skill development across grade levels. Each subject offers an opportunity to practice another aspect of these skills.

Within English class, practicing skills through oral assessments and socratic seminars provides an important medium to start the discussion surrounding oral presentation. Most English classes already discuss the importance of word choice and rhetorical appeals. One such example is NBE3U, an English course taken in Y10 that analyzes speeches and persuasive articles, allowing students to understand persuasion and public speaking on a technical level, thereby improving their oral skills.

English provides students with the tools of rhetoric. Humanities courses, such as history, civics and politics, offer the arena to use them. Students can learn about the importance of communicating their perspectives and understanding different lenses in society. These courses are taught with an explicit focus on the importance of analyzing issues with different perspectives. Having class debates and discussions to explore topics would provide a chance to foster critical thinking and implement the skills developed within English class.

These two simple modifications already provide a strong foundation for the development of these skills within classes. However, these ideas can be built upon within other disciplines as well. Math and Science classes can explore how choosing statistics can greatly influence the perceptions that people have of your topics. Students can learn the tricks that will be used against them within the world and learn how to avoid these traps.

In a world where rhetoric obscures truth, integrating public speaking into the classroom equips students not only to speak well, but to think clearly, listen critically, and engage responsibly.