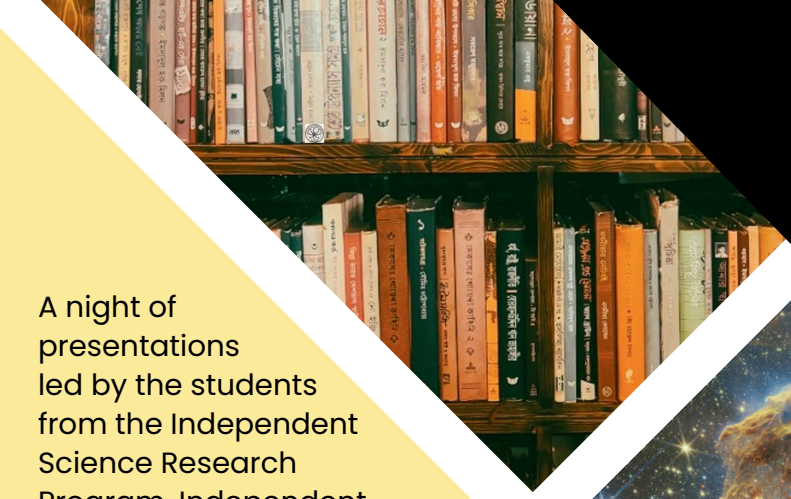

A night of presentations led by the students from the Independent Science Research Program, Independent Research classes in English, History, Oral History, as well as Russ Hogg Creative Expression Grantees

2026

5th Annual

Hackley Research Symposium

May 27, 2026

Welcome to the 5th Annual Hackley Research Symposium.

Tonight, you will hear presentations that represent a year or more of independent research. We are incredibly proud of the high-quality work the students have achieved and know you will be impressed with them too.

In this program booklet, you will find program descriptions, room assignments for each student that is presenting, a short synopsis of their work, along with student profiles for our seniors.

Schedule of Events

7:00pm	**Opening Remarks | Allen Memorial Hall**
7:15pm	**Session I* | Saperstein and Science Classrooms**
7:45pm	Break | Light refreshments served in Allen Memorial Hall
7:55pm	**Session II* | Saperstein and Science Classrooms**
8:25pm	Break | Light refreshments served in Allen Memorial Hall
8:35pm	**Session III* | Saperstein and Science Classrooms**

* We respectfully ask you stay in a single room for an entire session so as not to disrupt the student presentations.

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Cover artwork created by Kayla Reardon (ISRP '28)

Independent Science Research Program (ISRP)

The ISRP provides students with a passion for science the opportunity to participate in authentic scientific research in a genuine setting. This three-year program is designed to give students first-hand experience in conducting research, thus bridging the gap between a traditional high school science curriculum and the process behind real-world scientific discoveries. Students in the program spend each summer after sophomore and junior years working closely with research scientists to conduct self-designed experiments, either in academic, medical or industrial labs. The program culminates with the students submitting their results to regional, national and/or international science and engineering fairs.

Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors
Claire Kim	Cooper Ho	Annie Sheikh
Edmund Rose	Emi Dotter Tse	Elan Suttiratana
Hilah Shklarski	Layan Sow	Ethan Deng
Isabelle Genden	Leila Ibrahim	Jacob Nadol
Kayla Reardon	Sebastian Jiminez	Macey McLane
Marcus Song	Sophia Atkins	Nima Jones
Sophia Germano		Obinna Nnamdi
Tian Cheng Wu		Phillip Ianchulev
		Shikhar Misra
		Sophie Huang

STUDENT	ROOM	SESSION
Annie Sheikh	S117	I
Claire Kim	S118	III
Cooper Ho	S117	I
Edmund Rose	S117	II
Elan Suttiratana	S118	I
Emi Dotter Tse	S120	I
Ethan Deng	S120	II
Hilah Shklarski	S118	I
Isabelle Genden	S120	I
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Macey McLane	S117	II
Marcus Song	S118	II
Nima Jones	S118	II
Obinna Nnamdi	S117	III
Phillip Ianchulev	S118	II
Sebastian Jimenez	S117	III
Shikhar Misra	S118	III
Sophia Atkins	S120	II
Sophia Germano	S120	II
Sophie Huang	S118	I
Tian Cheng Wu	S117	I

Science S117

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Identification of mitochondrial abnormalities in neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders
Annie Sheikh '26

Over the last two years, I have worked to establish a relationship between mitochondrial dysfunction and neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders including bipolar disorder, Parkinson's disease, and autism.

A Novel Photometric Framework for Detecting Potential Dyson Swarms
Cooper Ho '27

My research focuses on detecting Dyson swarms by analyzing millions of light curves from the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) for potential signatures.

Using AI to Predict Atrial Fibrillation Using Electrocardiograms
Tian Cheng Wu '28

My research plans to use AI and machine learning to predict atrial fibrillation using large-scale amounts of patient electrocardiograms, aiming to improve detection of this frequently undiagnosed and potentially fatal disease, if left untreated.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Preventing Blank Phage Formation in Cyclic Peptide Phage Display Library Development
Macey McLane '26

The goal of this work was to develop a step-by-step method that helps scientists build larger and more reliable bacteriophage libraries, which can be used to quickly discover new drugs.

Effect of CLPB's inhibition and deletion in Myelodysplastic Syndrome
Leila Ibrahim '27

Analyzing and targeting CLPB in Venetoclax-resistant Myelodysplastic Syndrome, in order to re-sensitize cancer cells to treatment without impairing hematopoiesis (blood development).

Terminal Asteroid Interception Using Disruption-Optimized Hypervelocity Kinetic Penetrators
Edmund Rose '28

I aim to develop a hypervelocity impactor design that is optimized for the disruption of hazardous asteroids via advanced ballistic simulations.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Deep Learning for 3D Molecules
Obinna Nnamdi '26

I am researching graph neural networks for 3D representations of molecules and applying this to property prediction for drug discovery.

Disease Changes in Multiple Sclerosis Patients Treated with Ocrelizumab
Sebastian Jimenez '27

This was a data analysis study conducted to compare differences in disease severity over the long term in patients treated early and late with the high efficacy treatment Ocrelizumab.

Simulating Neutron Star Eruptions to Examine Magnetospheric Dynamics
Kayla Reardon '28

This presentation explores simulating and modeling neutron star eruptions, surface motions, and their effects on neutron star magnetospheres, particularly plasma dynamics.

Science S118

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

OrbitMT: Leveraging Linguistic Relationships in NMT to Translate Low-resource Languages without Data
Elan Suttiratana '26

OrbitMT is a step toward making neural machine translation (NMT) cheaper, faster, and more accurate for endangered languages. By enabling reliable translation with far less data and computational resources, it makes it practical for small communities and researchers to build natural language processing tools without massive infrastructure or having to manually translate large corpora.

Investigation of a crucial protein for DNA protection
Sophie Huang '26

I researched a protein called CTC1, which protects DNA by suppressing excessive DNA repair.

Nanoparticle synthesis to improve cancer treatment
Hilah Shklarski '28

This research investigates the efficacy of magnetoelectric nanoparticles as a targeted therapy for pancreatic cancer to trigger localized cell death while minimizing harm to healthy tissue.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Differentiating MSC's to Create a Model for Developmental Diseases
Nima Jones '26

The goal of my work was to create a model for diseases caused by the deterioration or malformation of fat and bone cells. This model defines a baseline of correct development, which is helpful for earlier disease detection and tracking diseases over time.

Congenital Loss of Corticospinal Connectivity in Mice Reveals Ancestral Role in Skilled Movement
Phillip Ianchulev '26

This research quantifies the motor implications of the developmental loss of the corticospinal tract in mice using a genetic model, an AI pose-estimation tool, and a narrow balance beam task.

Investigation of Ulcerative Colitis' effect on PT73-Rab10, Rab10 and LRRK2 Autophosphorylation Levels
Marcus Song '28

My research will explore the effect of ulcerative colitis on Rab10, a biomarker for Parkinson's Disease, levels in mouse models.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Amplitude Based Re-weighting to Tag Polarization States in Higgs Vector Boson Processes
Shikhar Misra '26

Improving techniques to locate the Higgs Boson in order to understand the nature of its mass-giving properties.

Developing low-cost hibiscus biochar cellulose ultrafiltration membrane for methylene blue dye removal
Layan Sow '27

My research focuses on repurposing hibiscus tea waste as a low-cost absorbent to enhance water purification membranes.

Integrating liquid biopsy data in machine learning models for early detection of pancreatic cancer
Claire Kim '28

This research investigates how machine learning models can integrate liquid biopsy biomarkers for earlier, more accurate, and non-invasive detection of pancreatic cancer.

Science S120

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Examining CD95 Knockout as a potential reinforcement to an allogeneic CAR-T cell treatment
Jake Nadol '26

Allogeneic CAR-T cells offer a potential off-the-shelf advantage, but are hindered by safety and effectiveness due to an immune mismatch with the patient. My research looked to improve the compatibility of the two by eliminating CD95, a marker found on the CAR-T cells.

Pathway Inhibition Enhancing Apoptosis and Modulating PD-L1 Expression in Lung Cancer
Emi Dotter Tse '27

My study aims to test whether drugs that block the PI3K signaling pathway can kill lung cancer cells and affect immune system markers that tumors use to hide from the body's defenses.

Birth Method, Microbiome Composition, and Allergy Risk in Infants
Isabelle Genden '28

The purpose of my research is to explore the comparison of the microbiome and its effects on the development of allergies in C-section and vaginal delivery infants.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

A Multi-Agent System for Personalized Autism Support and Therapy
Ethan Deng '26

This project introduces an AI multi-agent system based website to support children with autism through interactive, adaptive and personalized tasks that promote cognitive and social development.

The Effect of Legislation on the Battery Industry Using Stock Price Analysis
Sophia Atkins '27

As electronic devices and electric vehicles become more popular, the batteries in these devices experience an increase in demand. My research looks at legislation related to the battery industry and uses the stock prices of different companies to determine their effect.

Analysis of a horse's gait using a SC computer vision model combined with surface electromyography
Sophia Germano '28

I plan to analyze lameness in a horse's gait with a single-camera computer vision model, and aim to combine it with the results of surface electromyography to produce a more accurate diagnosis of the horse's condition. Simultaneously, I would compare the two data sets, examining the correlation of neuromuscular compensation to lameness.

Senior Science Research Student Profiles

Annie Sheikh

Field of study: Cellular Biology & Neuroscience

I have been researching the cellular biology behind neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders.

Throughout my time at Hackley, I have developed interests in travel, sports, and literature. In addition to conducting science research, I run Hackley's South Asian Student Association, I am involved in policy research regarding firearm safety and injury prevention, and play tennis. When I initially began IRP, I was interested in studying bipolar disorder (BD) as a close friend of mine has BD. I was shocked to discover how little we understand about BD and how to treat it. This led me to researching the cellular biology behind the disorder, specifically analyzing mitochondria. I worked with my lab to help find cellular-based evidence of BD through mitochondrial abnormalities. I then went on to study the mitochondria as well as protein production in other disorders including Parkinson disease and autism.

Elan Suttiratana

Field of study: Language Modeling

I have been working to expand the range of languages that AI-powered translation tools can serve.

Growing up reading science fiction, I was always fascinated by the idea of universal translators, like the Babel fish in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. I started my IRP journey at UT Austin, researching how multilingual language models dealt with code switching and sudden context switching. This summer, I transferred skills from that research to work on an independent project improving AI translation performance for underrepresented and endangered languages. Outside of my research, I play varsity squash, lead Hackley's Model United Nations program, and participate in math and linguistics competitions. I also love reading, cooking, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.

Ethan Deng

Field of study: Autism Support

I have been developing AI models for autism support and therapy

Originally inspired by the story of Max Park, I have been doing autism support work for 7 years now, and developed my research idea after learning the struggles of autism families. Last year, I developed a virtual human companion, able to interact with autistic children similar to an actual human. This year, I developed a multi-agent system website that is able to output personalized tasks (interactive games, storytelling, etc.) based on user requests in real time. Both projects provide accessible, adaptable support and therapy. Outside of science, I enjoy speedsolving Rubik's cubes competitively (peak ranked top 800 in the world), I'm a member of Hackley's varsity basketball team, I like to play drums, listen to music (fav artist J Cole) and hang out with friends.

Jake Nadol

Field of study: Cellular Therapy

I am studying the usage of cells in treatment of chronic diseases such as cancers

As a senior in the class of 2026, I've held many interests across the course of my IRP career. I started at exercise physiology and moved all the way over to cellular engineering! Although my interests have shifted and continue to do so, my love for science and learning remain the same for each and every topic. My recent project has focused on the improvement of an allogeneic CAR-T cell treatment. By editing the genome of prospective CAR-T cells to eliminate the expression of a certain marker, I hope to reduce the friction caused by immuno-mismatch of the treatment and patient. Outside of science studies, I like working out, reading, and larping. I also enjoy keeping up with world news, and traveling with my family.

Macey McLane

Field of study: Bacteriophage biology

I improved a tool that will help scientists rapidly and systematically discover potent therapeutics.

In middle school, I was obsessed with defeating video games whose AI opponents could adapt to my every move. This segued into a fascination with dangerous bacterial pathogens, which are similarly capable of evolving resistance - this time to antibiotics.

This past summer, while working in a biological chemistry lab at Boston College, I worked with a virus-based drug discovery technique called phage display. These tools have historically been difficult to develop because their construction involves inserting foreign DNA into bacteriophage viruses, which naturally resist such modifications. I designed a reliable workflow for the phage display construction process that will spare future researchers a significant amount of time and resources. Outside of the lab, I compete on Hackley's varsity cross country and track teams, and in my free time I enjoy lifting, hiking, writing, listening to music, and exploring new places.

Nima Jones

Field of study: Stem Cell Modeling

I utilized stem cells to make detecting and observing diseases easier.

I originally became interested in science research because I wanted to learn more about Alzheimer's Disease but eventually that curiosity grew into a more general interest in all incurable diseases. That led me to creating a disease model using stem cells that helps with early disease detection and tracking diseases over time. I did this as part of the Regeneron Mentorship Program which is an application-based program that gives high schoolers the opportunity to do research with real scientists. I'm also returning to Regeneron this summer as an intern to continue my stem cell research. Outside of science research, I enjoy fencing, chess, sewing, and drawing. I also love spending time with my friends and often enjoy watching anime.

Obinna Nnamdi

Field of study: Machine learning

I am researching graph neural networks for 3D representations of molecules and applying this to property prediction for drug discovery.

As a senior in Hackley, I've always been interested in applications of machine learning in biomedical research. While learning about machine learning, I found out how useful it is to help speed up many processes which would normally have taken us years to get done. One of these processes is drug discovery, in which scientists need to have a clear understanding of molecule properties in order to identify viable targets. My project focuses on using machine learning models to help understand and predict the properties of molecules and relating this research to drug discovery. Outside of science, I am a member of Hackley's fencing team, and love watching basketball, listening to music and playing video games with friends.

Phillip Ianchulev

Field of study: Neuroscience

I am studying the role of the largest descending neurological pathway (corticospinal tract) in mice motor control.

From a young age, I was fascinated by STEM and innovation, largely inspired by my parents' work. In high school, a conversation with my mentor, who at the time was a professor from a summer course I had taken, stuck with me. He said that humans currently understand only a small fraction of neuroscience. This conversation inspired me to pursue neuroscience research through the Independent Science Research program (ISRP) because it fulfilled my passion for discovery and meaningful change. My project focuses on the corticospinal tract, the largest descending pathway in rodents, using a mix of machine learning, behavior tasks, and gene editing. Beyond this research, I am also a founding member of DropMate, a biomedical device company focused on preventing eye infections from equipment used in ophthalmology clinics. Outside the classroom, I enjoy playing the guitar, learning new languages, weightlifting, cooking, and above all, spending time with my family.

Shikhar Misra

Field of study: Particle Physics

I have been researching the process in which fundamental particles acquire mass.

For the past two years within IRP, I have been studying the behavior of the Higgs Boson. This particle mediates mass and explains essentially why everything around us has mass. However, the math that describes how the Higgs boson interacts with other particles does not fully capture the processes we observe in nature. Hopefully, my research can help point to new physics that will bridge theory and experimentation. My motivation to pursue particle physics research comes from my excitement to examine the building blocks that make up the foundation of our universe. At Hackley, I am on the Soccer team, community council and lead the Classics club.

Sophie Huang

Field of study: Protein Sciences

I used a yeast cell model to research proteins that protect our DNA.

When my pet hamster Milky passed away from a cancer called lymphoma, I learned that humans and other organisms develop similar diseases because they conserve many of the same cellular processes. I joined the science research program to explore my growing interest in cellular biology. For the past two summers, I researched proteins that protect DNA in both yeast and human cells. Specifically, I manipulated the proteins in a yeast model to understand how they work. Outside of science research, I enjoy fencing, writing Chinese calligraphy, eating poke, running The Vision (Hackley's literary arts magazine), and taking care of my pet hamster Mooshu.

HACKLEY RESEARCH
Est. 2015

Independent Research in English (IRE)

IRE offers students the opportunity to conduct advanced research and writing at the college level under the guidance of Mr. James Flanigan. Students will develop their own topics or research questions, review the scholarly literature in the relevant discipline(s), understand and employ the research methodologies relevant to their research, and write on the research question, ultimately producing significant research essays.

Juniors	Seniors	Seniors (cont.)
Beni Okamoto	Ethan Tseng	Samuel Sugiura
Matthew Calder	Madison Cruz	Sarah Rotenberg
Pierce Roc-Sennett	Nkechi Aalia Ude	Zion Bennett

STUDENT	ROOM	SESSION
Beni Okamoto	S201	I & III
Ethan Tseng	S205	II & III
Madison Cruz	S204	II & III
Matthew Calderon	S205	I & II
Nkechi Aalia Ude	S204	II & III
Pierce Roc-Sennett	S201	I & III
Samuel Sugiura	S205	I & III
Sarah Rotenberg	S202	I & II
Zion Bennett	S202	I & II

Saperstein 201

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Presence and the Space It Inhabits
Beni Okamoto '27

This paper explores how the meaning of objects, people, and moments emerges from the spaces they inhabit. Across different settings, these spaces shape our experience and invite us to reflect on the world around them.

TikTok, God, and Anime :p
Pierce Roc-Sennett '27

An exploration into modern-day discussion about religion and how this discourse has evolved into.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Break

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

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Saperstein 202

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

"She Needs a Little Fabulous": The Intersection of Disney Channel and Female Disempowerment
Zion Bennett '26

"Sharpay wasn't the villain, she was the blueprint for women who want more" -- a random TikTok. Exploring how Sharpay Evans – the mold for the "Mean Girl" – is actually an underestimated and highly motivated feminist, and what that says about society at large."

"A Message Far More Universal": Catch-22, Censorship, and Christianity
Sarah Rotenberg '26

"A god to regulate God, essentially" -Sarah Rotenberg. Come figure out what I mean by this... and about the relationship between censorship and war-time religion in Catch-22.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

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Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Break

Saperstein 204

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Break

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

"It Would Degrade Me": Cruel Optimism and the Changing Aesthetics of Suffering in Wuthering Heights

Nkechi Aalia Ude '26

Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights endures because the obsessive bond between Catherine and Heathcliff creates a form of psychological discomfort that readers find both disturbing and compelling. I argue that adaptations continually recalibrate how that discomfort is expressed, from Kate Bush's dissonant vocals to the aestheticized suffering of "sad girl" pop and the grotesque imagery of recent film, allowing the story to evolve alongside audiences' growing tolerance for emotional and aesthetic unease.

Devouring the Self : Exploring Cannibalism, Gender and Intimacy in Bones and All

Madison Cruz '26

Traditionally depicted as either savage outsider or calculating predator, the cannibals in Western literature rarely speak for themselves. This essay argues that Bones and All disrupts this narrative tradition by granting interiority to its cannibal protagonist while tracing the traditions across narratives like American Psycho, Silence of the lambs and Robinson Crusoe.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

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Saperstein 205

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Eerie Spaces & Trespassing the Liminal
Matthew Calderon '27

An exploration (rather series of explorations) of why spaces evoke feelings of liminality or eeriness through personal experiences with New York City's urban exploration community and representations of liminal spaces in pop culture.

Gender?: On the "New" Phenomena of the New Gender
Samuel Sugiura '26

A (sometimes critical) analysis of various texts, be they Stone Butch Blues, Slavoj Zizek, or Tumblr posts to gain an understanding of the phenomena of the 'xenogender'; how it emerged, what it means, how it relates to the post-genderist vision of the world, and how it can be theoretically justified.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Psychological Horror Tropes in Modern Media
Ethan Tseng '26

What makes psychological horror movies and video games so unsettling to audiences today even without relying on common horror tropes like jumpscares? This essay explores the core tropes that make psychological horror effective by examining films like "Hereditary" and video games like "Silent Hill 2".

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Senior English Research Student Profiles

Ethan Tseng

Field of study: Psychological Horror

I've been researching tropes within the Psychological Horror genre to find what makes it so terrifying

After four years of experience as an amateur filmmaker, I realized that a majority of my films naturally gravitated toward horror or horror-adjacent storytelling, even though I personally avoid most horror films/games due to finding them too unsettling. This contradiction led me to question what makes horror (and psychological horror specifically) so compelling as a genre. In my project, I explore common tropes and conventions of psychological horror by analyzing films like Hereditary (2016) and video games like Silent Hill 2 (both the 2001 original and the 2024 remake). I aim to understand how psychological horror works and why it's so effective across different mediums in hopes that I can become a better filmmaker.

Madison Cruz

Field of study: Subversion of Consumption and Cannibalism

I have been researching ancient and modern forms of cannibalism while studying subversion of its commonly masculine imagery.

As a lover of reading and writing who has been obsessed with all things creepy and crawley it's only natural that what I thought would be a distinguished paper on narrative collapse and decay ventured a little more into the macabre than I expected. As I dove further into my research I became intrigued by western cultures' strange fascination with consumption in many forms, drawing on not just mindless zombies but the aestheticized and calculated persona that seems to be placed on cannibals. Outside of my IRE endevours I am a member of the Hackley Track and Field Team and leader of the Creative Writing Club. In my free time, I enjoy listening to music on my ipod shuffle and making mixes to run to.

Nkechi Ude

Field of study: Reproductive Politics, Victorian Literary Studies

I study the causes and consequences of reproductive politics, with a focus on embryo personhood, alongside the continued relevance of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights.

Over the course of my time at Hackley, I have developed a deep interest in both English and History, an interest reflected in my participation in the creative writing track, IRE, IRH and Economics. As a student ambassador for The Chick Mission, I organized an art auction and educational fundraiser supporting its Hope Grant Program, which helps cancer patients access fertility preservation. I later expanded that work through policy outreach, tracking legislation and researching advocacy efforts, which inspired my interest in Reproductive Politics for my IRH project, with a particular focus on fetal personhood. As an AP Artist in the senior studio, I have also spent much of my time painting. I was also a member of the Field Hockey and Track teams, as well as a Hudson Scholars mentor and leader. Outside of Hackley, I enjoy watching movies, drawing and reading.

Samuel Sugiura

Field of study: Neo-Digito-Post-Stone-Genderology

I have been creating a novel understanding of gender in the digital and post-modern age

I have always had a desire to synthesize my trans identity with philosophy, and especially seeing how new forms of gender (termed "xenogenders") can be understood in terms of theory. These identities have always seemed an outsider even within the LGBTQ+ community, and I wished to give them a theoretical basis to stand on. I have been interested in philosophy since sophomore year, especially with interests in Lacan, Deleuze, Marx, Hegel, and Fisher. I have previously completed another IRE paper on avant-garde music. I spend much time reading, but also playing video games and listening to music. I am the co-leader of Hackley's LGBTQ+ club.

Sarah Rotenberg

Field of study: IDK… & Maybe That's The Point.

The intersection of Joseph Heller's Catch-22 and censorship, which concerns the regulation and manipulation of Christian practices by those in power.

On the day of my birth I was confronted by Christianity. About seventeen years later, I read Catch 22. IRE has been a complicated yet worthwhile journey, and I feel more confused about my opinions on both anti-war novels and Christianity since I began reading back in August. Great Books, a philosophy class, has furthered my lack of an understanding. Ethics Bowl has made my confusion…palpable. I can't say if this incertitude will ever be remedied, but I can say that I **** *** ******. I never really know what my papers are about, as I often end up diving down rather niche rabbit holes. When I'm not binkying, I'm arguing about meaningless historical or literary technicalities, asking questions that decidedly do not have answers, or writing the same sentence over and over until the words sound like listless mush.

Zion Bennett

Field of study: Female Rage is ALWAYS Justified

I am exploring how the "High School Musical" universe is a trap to make young women hate themselves and each other while also having an absolutely fire soundtrack.

Troy Bolton resonates with me. He is a natural born athlete, amazing team captain, and a secret theater kid. My qualifications to say this is my culty obsession with HGVS, along with my theater debut as Ms. Trunchbull in the 2023 camp musical. While Troy has the most perfect dirty blonde hair and I rock curls, he tragically has a lack of understanding of menstruation whereas I've had the female reproductive system memorized since diapers. My grip on female anatomy has pushed me to be an incredibly self-confident and empowered woman. I might be a bit too empowered since I'm constantly told that I'm "too much"specifically when I'm rapping in the hallways. Anyways, all of this certifies me as an expert on Disney Channel and the feminist movement – my favorite mingling of culture – so you should check out my symposium and hear me yell about the Sharpay hatred crisis.

Independent Research in History (IRH)

IRH offers students the opportunity to conduct advanced research and writing at the college level under the guidance of Mr. Stephen Fitzpatrick. Students develop their own topics or research questions, review the scholarly literature in the relevant discipline(s), understand and employ the research methodologies relevant to their research, and write on the research question, ultimately producing significant research essays or other summative projects.

Juniors

Charles Napach
Gabriel Fossner
Kayla Menon
Layla Kesh-Heil
Lily Hegener
Max Desai
Nico Kim
Noah Meng
Sophie Kim
Theo Anderson

Seniors

Andrew Carpenito
Ben Iaderosa
Jake Katz
Jiya Dhakad
Julian Mann
Mateo Arencibi
Miles Leighton
Nkechi Aalia Ude
Oren Wildstein
Peter King
Phillip Ianchulev

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Max Desai	S110	II
Miles Leighton	S109	II
Nico Kim	S110	I
Nkechi Aalia Ude	S109	I
Noah Meng	S112	III
Oren Wildstein	S113	II
Peter King	S109	II
Phillip Ianchulev	S110	III
Sophie Kim	S109	III
Theo Anderson	S113	I

Saperstein 109

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Matilda Effect and Systemic Credit Erasure
Jiya Dhakad '26

I researched the Matilda Effect, the systemic exclusion and credit erasure of women in STEM fields due to socioeconomic and racial factors.

Ambiguity by Design: Dobbs v. Jackson and the Politics of Embryo Personhood
Nkechi Aalia Ude '26

Before the Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision, in vitro fertilization was politically insulated not by clear legal protection, but by deliberate legal ambiguity: a fragmented system of vague definitions that left embryo personhood unresolved. By removing the constitutional framework that helped sustain that ambiguity, Dobbs pushed IVF into partisan conflict and created a new kind of structural entrenchment that continues to reshape the political landscape.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Economic Rise of the Nazis - Anti-Semitic Business Practices
Miles Leighton '26

I researched the the rise of the Nazis through their economic policies and how they allowed them to gain favor with the citizens of Germany and how this led to Anti-Semitic Business Practices.

The Empire of Japan and the Fascist Movement
Peter King '26

Despite their authoritarian government, beliefs in racial hierarchy, and participation in the Axis, the Japanese Empire is rarely called fascist by scholars. I researched why this is, and also how Japan used fascist tactics and ideas to empower their own government.

Saperstein 109 (cont.)

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Saving Their Stories: Evaluating the Preservation of New York's Historical Homes
Sophie Kim '27

This paper compares the preservation of three local historic homes, Morris Jumel Mansion, Lynhurst Mansion, and Bartow Pell Mansion Museum and Gardens, to define what constitutes as successful preservation as well as analyze the factors and effects that shape it.

Senatorial Obstruction and the Rise of the First Triumvirate
Lily Hegener '27

My project examines how the Roman Senate's repeated obstruction of reforms drove Julius Caesar, Marcus Licinius Crassus, and Pompey the Great to form the First Triumvirate, an alliance that ultimately destabilized the Roman Republic.

Saperstein 110

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Chinese Influence on the US One China Policy
Charles Napach '27

The Chinese government employs numerous spy agencies in order to shift perception of impactful people, ultimately leading to policy changes.

American Anti-Intellectualism and Its Effects on American Politics and Race
Nico Kim '27

How Jacksonian populism and Anti-Intellectualism have evolved under the politics of figures like Joseph McCarthy and Donald Trump, and how these changes have affected American politics and attitudes about race.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Evangelical Christians & The Grand Old Party: Fusion Over Time
Julian Mann '26

This project covers how, contrary to popular belief, Evangelical Christians merged with the Republican Party not because of issues around abortion, nor at one specific moment, but over the course of the 20th century through decades of social and political upheaval beginning with the Great Depression.

The history of how Greenland is seen today
Max Desai '27

Throughout history, more and more information has become known about Greenland through various expeditions and discoveries there, as well as through bases set up for military purposes largely connected to World War 2 and the Cold War. However, as increasing information gets back to the public, while much more knowledge about Greenland is obtained, there is also a large degree of misinformation that is wide spread and has gotten mixed up with the truth, being presented in a compilation that is evident in our current political world.

Saperstein 110 (cont.)

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Two German Regimes, One Story of Silence
Jake Katz '26

This paper examines how authoritarianism wields fear to force shut the doors of freedom and liberty, using 20th century Germany as a case study.

Communist-Era Secondary Schooling in Bulgaria: The Merits and Drawbacks of Ideological Indoctrination
Phillip Ianchulev '26

Communist-era Bulgaria had a surprisingly rigorous and equal school system: free education, world-class academics, and strict discipline molded highly accomplished students. However, that same system was built on censorship and ideological control that forced students to live double lives by publicly praising communism while doubting it in private.

Saperstein 112

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Shaping the Art Market Privately: The American Art-Union
Kayla Menon '27

My research will be exploring how private institutions such as the American Art-Union used secret marketing strategies to influence what kind of art/artistic ideals Americans values. It shows how underground artistic organizations helped shape an entire national artistic identity in the 1800s.

State Influence on Shintō during the Tokugawa Shogunate
Layla Kesh-Heil '27

Exploring how the state influenced Shintō's revival in the 1600's through regulation policies, separation from Buddhism, and support of shrine practices.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

The Enforcement Gap: Evolution of Republican Immigration Executive Power
Ben Iaderosa '26

This research examines how Republican presidents used executive discretion to fill the vacuum left by congressional gridlock. It tracks the party's shift from Reagan's labor-focused "market model" to Trump's "cultural-deterrence model."

Economic Nationalism and the Evolution of American Tariff Policy: The Return of Protectionism in the Trump-Era
Andrew Carpenito '26

This paper explores how U.S. tariffs have historically protected American industries and promoted economic growth. It analyzes the controversies surrounding President Trump's tariff policies and argues that, despite criticism, they have the potential to bolster the national economy.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

The Anatomy of Brutality: Japan and America in the Pacific War
Noah Meng '27

A study of the Pacific War between the US and Japan and why the conflict reached excessive levels of brutality.

Saperstein 113

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Institutions and Nation Building in the Marshall Plan
Gabriel Fossner '27

A study on how the liberal democratic institutions of Western Europe enabled the Marshall Plan to rebuild the continent in the aftermath of World War II.

Religion's Impact on Abolition in Britain and America
Theo Anderson '27

This presentation will outline how religion built the abolition movement in Britain, the abolition movement in America, and pro-slavery arguments in both countries. In researching this, I aim to analyze why similar religious backgrounds in Britain and America resulted very different abolition outcomes.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Why Some Banks Survived 2008 and Others Didn't
Oren Wildstein '26

I explored why some Wall Street firms survived the 2008 crash while others collapsed despite facing identical conditions.

IMF and U.S. Treasury Policy Prescriptions in Argentina and Brazil
Mateo Arencibia '26

My paper focuses on The Latin American Debt Crisis of the 1980s, particularly how the U.S. Treasury and IMF recovery policies may have contributed to differing economic outcomes for Argentina and Brazil.

Senior History Research Student Profiles

Andrew Carpenito

Field of study: Evolution of U.S. Tariff Policy

I have been studying how U.S. tariff policies have evolved, from the colonial era to the Trump administration.

The Class of 2026 is full of students with all kinds of interests, and I've always been drawn to history. At Hackley, I've written many history papers, but my favorite was my junior-year paper comparing the health effects of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings to the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. I'm especially fascinated by 20th- and 21st-century history and current events. Because I find myself watching the news, reading contemporary articles, and taking the initiative to learn about our world today, I became particularly interested in President Trump's recent tariff policies.

Outside of academics, I love sports, soccer and baseball, and spending time hiking and camping. I also really value time with my family. I am grateful to be part of Hackley's community because of its many opportunities, including programs like those in independent research. I am excited to keep exploring my passions and making the most of every opportunity here at Hackley.

Beniamino Iaderosa

Field of study: Immigration and presidential politics

I studied how Republican presidents shaped immigration policy and changed national debates over citizenship, borders, and belonging.

I am deeply interested in government, politics, and the way presidential leadership shapes American life. At Hackley, I have become especially involved in history, public speaking, and political discussion through classes, debate, Model UN, and student leadership. My research this year focuses on immigration and Republican presidencies, looking at how different administrations shaped immigration policy and influenced the national debate over citizenship, identity, and belonging. I am drawn to this topic because it connects policy, rhetoric, and power in a way that feels central to modern American politics. In the future, I hope to keep studying politics, history, and public policy in ways that connect ideas to real institutions and people.

Jake Katz

Field of study: Authoritarian Regimes and Dictatorships

I have been researching the two primary dictatorships of Germany in the 20th century to understand the correlation between fear and the regime's survival

Since the very beginning of my 13 years at Hackley, I have had a strong interest in geopolitics. Starting with a book of flags that I checked out of the lower school library every week, I steadily dug deeper and deeper into what shapes the borders and relationships between all the countries, territories, factions, and socieities of the world. As I grew up, my drive evolved from simple curiosity to an intent drive to understand the world around me in real time. I wanted to be able to follow current events and actually understand them, instead of just blindly trusting whatever I was told. I quickly gathered that in order to do this, I'd need to trace each event back in time, and that's what led me to my inquiry into the construction and maintenance of regimes. Nazi and Communist Germany, two of the most famous dictatorships of history, exhibited a wealth of unique features that have taught me a lot about how people become pawns to authoritarianism.

Jiya Dhakad

Field of study: Historical Documentary

I researched the Matilda Effect, the systemic exclusion and credit erasure of women in STEM fields due to socioeconomic and racial factors.

My time in the Upper School has given me the space and opportunities to flourish as a History Research Lover. Freshman year, I began by taking the "Storytelling through Oral History" class with Ms. Stanek and Ms. Leffler. My final project was a documentary about Hackley's Faculty Gargoyles, detailing the gargoyle teacher's legacies and impact on the community. Junior Year, I took my first year of Independent Research in History, producing a documentary about Female Figures of the Indian Independence Movement, and how the leaders of the movement rallied ordinary women around them to take part. I've loved experimenting with visual ways of storytelling and oral histories, utilizing photos and audio to make sure my messages resonate. Outside of the classroom, I'm a member of the Varsity Girls Squash Team, Treble Choir, and the Admissions Ambassador Leader team. While it's truly difficult to say goodbye to Hackley after 13 years, I know that the skills I've learned will take me far into my collegiate and career level years, especially those I've learned through History Research.

Julian Mann

Field of study: Political & Religious Intersectional History

This project covers how, contrary to popular belief, Evangelical Christians merged with the Republican Party not because of issues around abortion, nor at one specific moment, but over the course of the 20th century through decades of social and political upheaval beginning with the Great Depression.

I'm a senior who is passionate about subjects such as history, film, and philosophy of mind. My favorite movies include Memento, The Perks of Being a Wallflower, and Donnie Darko. I'm excited to be attending the University of Texas at Austin in the upcoming fall where I will continue to research the humanities and will enjoy winters without below freezing temperatures. I'm also a decorated Track & Field athlete who achieved a 4:58 mile at the end of my junior year, a high I have continued to chase since then. My favorite historical topics include the French Revolution, the Nuremberg Trials, and anything related to art (even modern). Two things I will miss about Hackley are eating lunch outside with my friends on sunny days and hearing Mr. Gruenberg share his niche interests in AP Statistics. I hope you enjoy my presentation.

Mateo Arencibia

Field of study: Latin American Debt Crisis

I have been researching the IMF and U.S. Treasury Policy Prescriptions in Argentina and Brazil

I am a senior in the Class of 2026 at Hackley. I have been at the school since sixth grade. My paper focuses on The Latin American Debt Crisis of the 1980s, particularly how the U.S. Treasury and IMF policies may have contributed to differing economic outcomes for Argentina and Brazil. This paper is the third in a series on the role of the U.S. in Latin America, a topic I first became interested in my freshman year.

While I greatly enjoy history, my primary interest is in engineering and robotics. I am the captain of Hackley's underwater robotics team and plan on studying mechanical engineering next year. Additionally, I am Hackley Boys Varsity Soccer captain, and a Hackley Lacrosse player, a second degree black belt in Taekwondo.

Miles Leighton

Field of study: History

The rise of the Nazi's had many aspects one of the biggest was their economic promises to German Citizens; through these they pushed their anti-semitic agenda through heavy burdens on Jewish Businesses.

I decided to study this particular topic because it has deep meaning for me. My grandfather was a business owner in Germany during the rise of the Nazis and was heavily impacted by the anti-semitic business practices. I am also going to be studying economics with financial applications in college with a minor in history though I am not sure which era of history I intend to study. By choosing this project it allowed me to combine both of the fields I want to study in college and have a good base of research should I choose to continue in this era of time further into college.

Oren Wildstein

Field of study: 2008 financial crisis

I explored why some Wall Street firms survived the 2008 crash while others collapsed despite facing identical conditions.

I'm a senior in the class of 2026 at Hackley School. For my paper, I've been exploring why some banks survived the 2008 crash while others failed, investigating whether executive decisions or structural forces determined outcomes. I've always been drawn to understanding how systems work, and I particularly love physics and its intersection with business, which is part of why I chose this topic. At Hackley, I co-founded HackMeats, our grilling club, and serve on the Board of Magistrates. I also love learning and gaining skills in coding and AI tools. Outside of academics, I've competed in varsity wrestling and most days you'll find me at the gym, on the golf course (a recent interest), or cooking. At home, I hang out with my dog Ollie and two older sisters when they're home from college.

Nkechi Ude

Field of study: Reproductive Politics, Victorian Literary Studies

I study the causes and consequences of reproductive politics, with a focus on embryo personhood, alongside the continued relevance of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights.

Over the course of my time at Hackley, I have developed a deep interest in both English and History, an interest reflected in my participation in the creative writing track, IRE, IRH and Economics. As a student ambassador for The Chick Mission, I organized an art auction and educational fundraiser supporting its Hope Grant Program, which helps cancer patients access fertility preservation. I later expanded that work through policy outreach, tracking legislation and researching advocacy efforts, which inspired my interest in Reproductive Politics for my IRH project, with a particular focus on fetal personhood. As an AP Artist in the senior studio, I have also spent much of my time painting. I was also a member of the Field Hockey and Track teams, as well as a Hudson Scholars mentor and leader. Outside of Hackley, I enjoy watching movies, drawing and reading.

Peter King

Field of study: The Japanese Empire and Fascism

I studied the Empire of Japan before and during World War II and how they coopted the Fascist movement

I have long been interested in the history of ideologies, and how movements form. Last year, I was rather shocked to learn that Mussolini and Hitler were once opposed to each other, due to disagreements on Austrian independence. This prompted me to look into the differences between the many fascist movements, and what exactly it means to be fascist. I learned the scholarly consensus on Japan is that they were not fascist, but ultraconservative and militaristic. I sought to figure out why that is, and what parts of their government could be considered fascist.

Phillip Ianchulev

Field of study: History

I am studying the merits and drawbacks of communist-era secondary schooling in Bulgaria to further understand the background of my family.

From a young age, my Bulgarian parents instilled in me their language, traditions, and superstitions. I absorbed their culture deeply, yet I felt hesitant to share it with the world. By researching communist-era secondary education in Bulgaria and writing a research paper, I had the opportunity to weave in personal stories from people who experienced that schooling firsthand and shed some light on its merits. Outside of history, I also do research for my independent research class (IRP). My project focuses on the corticospinal tract, the largest descending pathway in rodents, using a mix of machine learning, behavior tasks, and gene editing. Beyond this research, I am also a founding member of DropMate, a biomedical device company focused on preventing eye infections from equipment used in ophthalmology clinics. Outside the classroom, I enjoy playing the guitar, learning new languages, weightlifting, cooking, and above all, spending time with my family.

Independent Research in Oral History & Storytelling

Students explore how memory shapes our understanding of the past through the creation and interpretation of oral history under the guidance of Ms. Jenny Leffler and Ms. Melissa Stanek. The first part of the course focuses on building interview skills through both hands-on practice and the study of interview-based works like podcasts and documentaries. In the latter part of the course, students design and carry out an inquiry-based project rooted in their own original oral history research. These projects might include a documentary-style film or podcast, traditional research paper, or a journalistic or literary piece. Put another way, students will learn how to listen to people's stories in order to tell a story of their own.

Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors
Abigail Swan	Brigid Doherty	Andrew Carpenito
Cadey Mook	Graham Klabin	Angelina Hummel
Kendall Joseph	Harlo Navas	Kareena Parasnis
	Lucia Marucci	Leila Dillow
	Morgan Begley	Rodrigo Severin
	Tommy Kendall	Zena Hume

STUDENT	ROOM	SESSION
Abigail Swan	S101	I
Andrew Carpenito	S105	I
Angelina Hummel	S104	III
Brigid Doherty	S107	III
Cadey Mook	S101	III
Graham Klabin	S102	I
Harlo Navas	S102	III
Kareena Parasnis	S104	I
Kendall Joseph	S101	II
Leila Dillow	S105	III
Lucia Marucci	S107	II
Morgan Begley	S107	I
Rodrigo Severin	S105	II
Tommy Kendall	S102	II
Zena Hume	S104	II

Saperstein 101

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Immigration: We All Come From Somewhere
Abigail Swan '28

To combat negative stereotypes, I've curated a collection of stories based on personal interviews. Inspired by my mother's immigration from Malaysia, this project showcases the vast range of motives and outcomes behind moving to a new country, reminding us all that we all come from somewhere.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Bite Sized Nostalgia: How Food Gets It Meaning
Kendall Joseph '28

For this project, I interviewed family and friends to explore what makes certain foods meaningful to them. Using their recipes and stories, I created a scrapbook that highlights the memories and personal connections behind each dish.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Stories Behind the Stones
Cadey Mook '28

Inspired by my family's connection to Akin Common, and grounded in interviews with members of the community, this project explores different locations and specific programs on our Hackley campus, focusing on the rich personal stories behind the names.

Saperstein 102

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Hornell: A Story Of Many Small Towns
Graham Klabin '27

In my project I am looking at the shift of Hornell - a small town in upstate New York - through my parent's and Grandparent's eyes over the past 60 years. The lively town they grew up in has become bare and I want to understand why and how this shift has occurred.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Highlandtown Hero: Henry Wohlfort
Tommy Kendall '27

My project is an examination of the issues in college sports looked at through the story of my grandfather, a college baseball/soccer player from a small immigrant town in Baltimore, compiled from a combination of scrapbook photos and interviews.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Reshaping the Pattern: Environmental Change in Fashion
Harlo Navas '27

In this project, I have explored how sustainability has grown within the fashion industry and how everyday people's attitudes towards environmental responsibility are changing as well.

Saperstein 104

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Edible History: How History Has Shaped What We Eat
Kareena Parasnis '26

Every plate is a story: the ingredients used, each step of the recipe, the generations of people who have inherited a recipe. This project is a culmination of personal stories from my community, and the historical context in which they exist.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Land We Love - Rebuilding Post Melissa
Zena Hume '29

My project investigates how Hurricane Melissa and its aftermath affected the land and people of Jamaica — The Land We Love. As the daughter of Jamaican immigrants this is not just a research project, but also a look into the place I call home.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Two Courts, Two Cultures: Basketball in America vs. Europe
Angelina Hummel '26

My project examines the cultural and technical differences between American and European basketball through the personal lens of my family's experiences and my own research. The final product, a journalistic piece, is grounded in my dad's time playing at Tufts, my mother's background with the Soviet system, and my brother's career playing abroad.

Saperstein 105

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

AI's Integration into American Governance
Andrew Carpenito '26

As AI becomes an essential part of U.S. political campaigning and legislative decision-making, human judgment is gradually losing its prominence, with governments increasingly relying on non-human intelligence. This new era highlights just how valuable AI has become, and my article effectively captures its growing influence.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

The Life of Bozidar; Simic to Severin
Rodrigo Severin '26

This project traces my late grandfather's family history and their WWII-era escape from Yugoslavia to Hackley to Venezuela. To connect with the grandfather I never met and preserve his story, I am creating a detailed family tree and a slideshow for relatives unfamiliar with the story.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Barbie
Leila Dillow '26

Through a series of interviews with my great aunt, Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, and other family members, my project honors the woman behind the legacy. Through her memories of World War II to personal stories of everyday moments and relationships, it reveals who she was beyond her celebrated roles.

Saperstein 107

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

Finding Chrissy
Morgan Begley '27

The journey of my family bringing home my aunt Chrissy while battling schizophrenia.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Company Kept
Lucia Marucci '27

Using interviews with family members and a historian, I created a museum-style project with a layout of small exhibits that explore daily life and my grandfather's experience in a company town.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

Mary Doherty: Making the Impossible Possible
Brigid Doherty '27

My project honors my grandmother's story, emigrating from Ireland to New York at 14 years old. This inspiring journey is told by her friends and family who knew her best.

Senior Oral History Research Student Profiles

Andrew Carpenito

Field of study: AI's Integration into American Governance

I have been studying how artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly influential in political campaigning and legislative decision-making.

The Class of 2026 is full of students with all kinds of interests, and I've always been drawn to history and current events. At Hackley, I've written a number of argumentative papers in both history and English classes that required extensive reading and research, but I've never had the opportunity to connect and talk face-to-face with experts in the field. That's why I chose to enroll in Oral History. I chose this specific project because the topic is both fascinating and highly relevant today, especially as AI begins to play a larger role in politics and government. Studying these developments will help me better understand the world around me and become a better informed citizen.

Outside of academics, I love sports, soccer and baseball, and spending time hiking and camping. I also really value time with my family. I am grateful to be part of Hackley's community because of its many opportunities, including programs like those in independent research. I am excited to keep exploring my passions and making the most of every opportunity here at Hackley.

Angelina Hummel

Field of study: Basketball

I have been researching the difference between American and European basketball.

As a senior in the class of 2026, basketball has been a defining part of my life since lower school. My four years on Hackley's varsity team, including two as captain, and my time on the club circuit have allowed me to view the game as both a personal passion and a leadership responsibility. This connection is deeply rooted in my family: my dad played at the collegiate level at Tufts, all of my 3 siblings followed suit, and my mom's upbringing in the former Soviet Union has given me a unique global perspective on the sport's culture. Beyond the court, I bring that same competitive spirit to the Varsity lacrosse field and my leadership roles in the Russian and One Love clubs. Whether I'm traveling, reading or spending time with family, I am driven by a desire to understand different perspectives and build community.

Kareena Parasnis

Field of study: Food & History

I researched food as a marker of tradition, religion, & identity, and the historical context in which cultural staples exist.

Food, as it is for anyone, has been an important part of my identity. Cooking with my grandfather, I often listened to stories of his own childhood and the memories behind every recipe. The art that we see in museums is often used as a marker for cultural revolutions, yet food is often overlooked as a possible lens through which to view moments in history. In the minor class Oral History, I interviewed community members regarding familial recipes and compiled them into a recipe book entitled Edible History. Outside of my research, I am an AP Art student concentrating on oil portraits of women and items associated with femininity. With my family, I enjoy travelling and watching soccer.

Leila Dillow

Field of study: Life of Barbara Coudenhove

I have researched the life of the renowned journalist, my great aunt, Barbara Coudenhove

As a first generation American, with family scattered throughout the world I've always been curious of the varying stories and memories of the people who share my blood. It is that same interest in storytelling that has driven me to seek out new experiences, living them not just for the moment but the stories they leave behind. Guided by my fathers motto, "Experience is the fabric of life", has always led me to approach the unfamiliar not with hesitation, but with excitement to transform discomfort into opportunity. Besides my love for stepping out of comfort zones in pursuit of my own stories, I enjoy being with friends, going on walks, and eating out.

Zena Hume

Field of study: Hurricane Relief

I have explored the effects of Hurricane Melissia on the Island and People of Jamaica

When Hurricane Melissa hit the island of Jamaica, I immediately wanted to understand its full impact on the land and its people. I conducted interviews with individuals directly affected by the disaster and people who call home, in order to gain a firsthand perspective on the devastation and more importantly the resilience of the people of Jamaica. Through my research, I have learned so much about Hurricane response from communities and the government. I have always been passionate about helping others and through my research I have gained a deeper understanding of how systems made to support people work. Outside of my research, I enjoy running track and playing lacrosse, and love spending time with my friends and family.

Russ Hogg Grants for Creative Expression

Russ Hogg Grants for Creative Expression provide an opportunity for students to further their interest in creative expression and innovation in ways that fall outside the normal course offerings at Hackley. Jason '89 and Alexandra Hogg P '19, '22 established The Russ Hogg Endowment for Creative Expression to honor the life's work of Russ Hogg, Jason's father and a former Hackley trustee. The Hoggs' philanthropic leadership inspired friends and family to join them in creating this endowment in Russ's name to foster creativity and innovation in myriad forms and fields, including technology, the creative arts (performing, visual, and digital), science, entrepreneurialism, global challenges, and interdisciplinary inquiry.

7th Grade	Freshman	Seniors
Akash Kundu	Aila Robertson	Phillip Ianchulev Riyaan Ratliff Will Koranteng

STUDENT	ROOM	SESSION
Aila Robertson	S209	III
Akash Kundu	S209	I
Phillip Ianchulev	S209	I
Riyaan Ratliff	S209	II
Will Koranteng	S209	II

Saperstein 209

Session I (7:15 – 7:45)

DropMate, an Automated Point-of-Care UVC Disinfection System for Reusable Ophthalmic Devices
Phillip Ianchulev '26

As a founding team member of DropMate, I helped build a patented, FDA-cleared biomedical device that uses UV-C light to quickly and automatically disinfect ophthalmic tools like eye droppers, tonometer tips, and gonio-lenses, reducing patient exposure to contaminants, increasing sustainability, and cutting costs in ophthalmology clinics worldwide.

The Plastic EATR: Nature's Little Helper
Akash Kundu '31

In this project, I create a submersible ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) that goes underwater to pick up plastic waste.

Session II (7:55 – 8:25)

Hackley Sports Media
Riyaan Ratliff '26

Student-run hub for coverage of Hackley athletics through photography, videography, and graphic design.

Hackley Sports Photography
Will Koranteng '26

Photography project to help with the outreach of sports for Hackley student-athletes, but also to help with self-confidence.

Session III (8:35 – 9:05)

The Intrinsic Value of The Copepod in Our Marine Ecosystem
Aila Robertson '29

The instrumental role Copepods play in the ocean ecosystem and beyond, as well as how they are currently being impacted by plastic waste; depicted in 3 multi-media acrylic paintings, as well as a VR simulation.

Senior Russ Hogg Grantee Student Profiles

Phillip Ianchulev

Field of study: Medicine

I am building a medical device to prevent eye infections caused by equipment used in ophthalmology clinics.

From a young age, I was always fascinated by STEM and innovation, inspired largely by my parents' work in medicine. Witnessing firsthand the inefficiencies and risks present in clinical settings drove me to take action. This passion led me to co-found DropMate, a biomedical device company focused on preventing eye infections from equipment used in ophthalmology clinics. Through this venture, I have had the opportunity to work at the intersection of engineering, medicine, and entrepreneurship, all while designing solutions that create meaningful impact for patients. Beyond DropMate, I also conduct neuroscience research through the Independent Science Research Program (ISRP), focusing on the corticospinal tract using machine learning, behavior tasks, and gene editing. I am also part of the Independent Research in History program, where I study the merits and drawbacks of communist-era secondary schooling in Bulgaria, weaving in personal stories from people who experienced that schooling firsthand. Outside the classroom, I enjoy playing the guitar, learning new languages, weightlifting, cooking, and above all, spending time with my family.