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When Talking Gets Tough

Exploring the Ways Students Engage in the Polarized Political World Online and in the Classroom

Minnie Bardenhagen
Editor-in-Chief

While politics has been a contentious subject for many, the rise of social media and the volatile political environment has increased polarization, anxiety around

politics, and political disengagement—on college campuses and elsewhere. Gen Z, unlike previous generations of Americans, was raised in a society where politics is dominated by short-form content, an overflow of information, and tense conversations happening through our screens.

John Zachman, a social sciences professor who teaches political science and philosophy at NMC, has observed firsthand the political dynamics and how students have responded to them in the classroom.

“I think, because politics has become so, in many ways, polarized and antagonistic in our broader society, [and] some students may worry a bit about voicing opinions that are not shared by other students,” Zachman explained.

In the classroom, he tries to navigate this. “I’m very committed to just how important that is, how important it is for students, from a variety of perspectives, to put forth arguments and put forth their perspectives in an engaging way, in a way that other students, instead of having kind of knee-jerk reactions, really listen openly and try to find the value in this diversity of perspectives.”

A nationwide survey of 18-24-year-olds conducted by the Institute for Citizens and Scholars in 2024 found that less than half of the respondents planned to vote in the 2024 election cycle. A little more than a quarter were uninterested in politics, and of the politically disengaged responders, only 50% felt that their vote mattered.

“Democracy challenges average everyday folks to make choices about policy and about leadership and about where the country should go... and therefore, by putting that power in the hands of the people, that also puts a responsibility in the hands of the people,” Zachman explained, “and so it is somewhat discouraging to me when folks look at politics as just an option... that you could take it or leave it.”

A survey by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2024 called “Stress in America” showed that the majority of American adults found the 2024 election or politics in general to be a major source of stress. Sixty-two percent rated US politics as a major stress

factor. The political stress extended to stress in relationships, with 32% reporting strains in their family and 30% avoiding interactions with family due to differences in political ideology.

In the same APA survey, 72% of adults worried the election results could lead to increased violence. While this survey was taken the same year as the assassination attempts on President Donald Trump during the 2024 election cycle, this fear has surged in 2025. An increase in high-profile instances of violence against political leaders, such as the murders of conservative activist Charlie Kirk and Minnesota state representative Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark Hortman, has added tension in the political atmosphere.

The most recent of these acts of violence, Kirk’s assassination on Sept. 10, took place on a college campus in Utah. Founder of Turning Point USA, a nonprofit aimed at bringing young conservatives into the political process, Kirk was known for visiting university campuses and engaging in debate with people who held liberal or progressive viewpoints.

“For college students, the fact that he was assassinated on a college campus while he engaged in using his First Amendment right to freedom of speech and engaged in debate with college students...” Zachman said of the significance of Kirk’s murder, “Obviously, not everybody likes Charlie Kirk’s method of debate, but that’s a very minor detail of whether you like his method of debate or not. He was engaged with others who think differently from him, which is a wonderful thing.”

“I mean, it obviously very much saddens me to think that students would respond to this by wanting to withdraw from speaking about politics, but I mean, that’s also a natural [reaction]... It’s just a horrifying event... My students very much worry about how polarized we’ve become.”

Social media is one of the most influential ways people obtain information in the modern day. Hundreds of millions of Americans use apps such as Instagram, TikTok, X, and Facebook. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in February found that 42% of U.S. adults on social media find it important for involving themselves in political and social issues. Fifty percent say social media helps them find people who share their political and social views. Adults between the ages of 18-29 are the most likely age group to use social media for these purposes.

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For years, there has been debate on the pros and cons of obtaining information from social media can amplify voices that would otherwise be left unheard, creating a more inclusive network of people that policymakers can hear from and cater to. Others point out the quality of the information that is being shared on social platforms. False information and misleading information have been known to circulate on platforms, and how information is conveyed on social media can frame facts in ways that create emotional responses in viewers. Users also run the risk of becoming stuck in echo chambers, which is when a user's algorithm only recommends content that affirms their beliefs and ideas.

"This seeking of this emotional affirmation comes at a really high cost, because there are other groups that, in fact, may share a whole lot with you and may, in fact, contain a whole bunch of good people in them... conservatives, liberals, Democrats, Republicans... There are tons of really good people in this country who want the best for this country," Zachman said.

As communication and information on politics have become more social media-centric, politicians have adapted their strategies to that environment. With the rise of TikTok-style short-form video content across platforms, politicians have begun to use this style to promote themselves and critique their adversaries. More recently, politicians, President Trump in particular, have been using AI-generated content. While many Americans fear rising polarization and the spread of misinformation due to social media, Zachman explained that politicians will use these platforms to get elected.

"As a politician, you don't control what forms of information

people are consuming, what things persuade people. You have to take what's there," Zachman explained, "To some extent, if the people want this to change, it's the people who are going to have to change."

Zachman is not the only professor navigating the political climate with his students. Brandon Everest, a social sciences instructor at NMC, has noticed a trend of hesitance in the classroom.

"If anything, there is a hush or a chill compared to other semesters in my experience. This is evidence of a problem," Everest explained, "...It is pretty easy to see how, in the face of powers throttling individuals and institutions to modify communications, their practices and policies, alongside very real threats and committed acts of political violence against opponents, people may only speak with their trusted fellows."

"Unfortunately, that further segments and segregates us from each other, eroding the environment for public speech and discourse."

Paul Kolak, a personal counselor at NMC, has seen a slight increase in students who have negative feelings regarding politics. He attributes this rise to social media: "Students might have anxious feelings about engaging in political discourse because that is one of the goals of social media. If there is more uproar, then more people are engaging, and the social media platform is making more money."

"Students may want to engage in more political discourse if they knew they would be heard. Opinions aren't the problem; not listening is the problem," Kolak explained. "Take a break from social media and see if you feel differently about yourself

or your peers, or those who think differently from you. If you are thinking more clearly without social media, then maybe face-to-face discussions are called for rather than interactions without respect or repercussions."

Zachman also emphasized the importance of in-person discussions, "One of the antidotes to these digital lives that we lead is, in fact, face-to-face discussions with people that differ from you, that often then can reveal the humanity of the political groups that you feel are kind of opposed to your agenda."

"They can reveal that humanity, then they can also reveal a lot of commonality in terms of concerns and in terms of some of the core principles that people hold in core values that people hold, that there's actually a lot more shared ground there."

While Zachman admitted that many of the aforementioned issues worry him, he highlighted the productive conversations he sees in the classroom, which gives him optimism for the future.

After Kirk's assassination, he found hope in how students interacted in his classes, "I have liberal students, conservative students, moderate students, students that don't necessarily fit into kind of an easy political mold, engaged in real discussion as to how do we move forward?"

"Maybe my optimism is naive, right? Maybe if you're optimistic right now, that's just a psychological defense mechanism against what's really happening to us... But once again, because I see it in my classrooms, I know that it's possible."

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Minnie Bardenhagen

STAFF WRITERS Isabelle Plamondon
Eily Knight
Jace Dunlap
Brooklyn Bucy
Sydney Boettcher

PAGE DESIGNERS Tuklor Williams
Adeline DePauw

COVER DESIGN Adeline DePauw

PHOTOGRAPHY Jacob Dodson
Keiara Pettengill

DELIVERY Devon Bruner

FACULTY ADVISER Jacob Wheeler

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Beacon on the Bay

Traverse City's Freshwater Future

Isabelle Plamondon
Staff Writer

Traverse City is dropping its anchor on a bold new identity: from the “Cherry Capital” to a global hub for freshwater research and innovation.

With a \$28.9 million state-of-the-art Freshwater Research and Innovation Center (FRIC) planned for the Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) on Discovery Pier's campus, the region is staking its claim as the epicenter of the blue economy.

The FRIC will be a 38,000-square-foot facility dedicated to collaboration, education, research, innovation, and commercialization in freshwater technology. It is designed to accelerate the blue economy—the sustainable use of water resources for both economic growth and ecological health—by being a launchpad for the development and innovation of blue technologies.

It will be a shared space and community “where ideas become solutions, technologies become ventures, and opportunities become careers,” as put by Discovery Pier, a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting people of all needs, ages, and abilities to the Great Lakes.

NMC has been a national leader in freshwater research and education for nearly two decades. It was the first community college in the nation to offer a Freshwater Studies degree, and through its Great Lakes Water Studies Institute (GLWSI), it has trained students for careers in marine technology, ecology, and freshwater management.

FRIC builds on this legacy by expanding beyond education into applied research, technology development, and business incubation. It will give NMC not just a regional footprint, but national recognition in the blue economy.

“This [FRIC] is going to be a great way for NMC to show off how unique we really are in this country as a community college in what we offer,” said Amy Shamroe, the Mayor of Traverse City and the Industry Navigator under Extended Education and Training at NMC.

FRIC will not only advance research, but also provide concrete opportunities for NMC students to gain real-world experience in cutting-edge freshwater innovation. John Lutchko, Director of the GLWSI, said, “This project means so much, both for our students, for NMC, and for the community.”

Lutchko enthusiastically stated, “With new equipment and space designed for collaboration, we'll be able to integrate applied research into the student experience in a way that hasn't been possible until now.”

Students will have direct access to advanced labs, research vessels, internships, and collaborative projects with blue-tech

businesses. Students won't just learn from textbooks, but will practice with the same tools used in the industry.

Shamroe stressed that “the education component is a key piece because we will be educating future leaders and creating cutting-edge and industry-leading professionals.”

The FRIC goes further by integrating education with industry partnerships. “Now we're also partnering with businesses that are already in the blue tech industry and are developing the blue tech industry,” said Shamroe.

This means that students can transition directly from classroom learning to internships, and from internships into career pathways in the emerging freshwater economy.

Since NMC is positioned at the center of Traverse City's economy, it is uniquely suited to balance ecology, tourism, and year-round jobs. Shamroe said, “We are a community on the water that cares about ecology and the environment... we are a tourist destination, though, and we are a place that wants to have a strong year-round economy—this is how that all comes together, and NMC is at the front of that.”

The Great Lakes and Grand Traverse Bay are a big part of Traverse City's economy because tourism, shipping, and various local industries rely on their health.

Lutchko stated, “Healthy water isn't just an environmental issue; it's an economic one. Tourism, recreation, fisheries, and even local businesses depend on a healthy, vibrant freshwater ecosystem. Water is a resource that locals value deeply, not just for these recreational activities or for its importance in the economy, but as the foundation of their way of life.”

The FRIC hopes to emphasize this aspect of the Great Lakes and use it to stabilize Traverse City's economy year-round. This will be done through the creation of new jobs through the center, as well as the growth in blue technologies.

The center aims to create high-paying jobs within research, innovation, and technology, as well as create technical and support roles for locals, which NMC can train workers to fill through certifications and degree programs. It will train students in applied freshwater science, environmental monitoring, uncrewed systems, and hands-on research. Lutchko said, “This will give them the technical skills and problem-solving experience employers are looking for.”

Lutchko also said, “With the addition of new equipment, applied research, and stronger connections to industry, I expect to see new career pathways open that weren't available in the past.”

“There's going to be all kinds of things that trickle out of this new economy that aren't just high academic jobs; they're

going to be jobs at all levels that are needed to support all of the work that's being done here,” Shamroe stated.

The center has partnered with Michigan Tech for specialized research experience and technical guidance, as well as Traverse Connect for the local economic development perspective.

Lutchko emphasized, “Demand for these skills is growing rapidly in water resources, environmental consulting, and the broader blue economy, both locally and globally, ensuring graduates are prepared for careers that are in high demand and highly impactful.”

Shamroe mentioned that we have already had the opportunity to host international conferences, such as the International Fish Telemetry Conference, which highlight NMC's already existing reputation as a hub for blue technologies and research. FRIC will aim to expand that further and generate similar opportunities, drawing more global talent and recognition to our region.

“I think it's going to open up a whole world of economic possibilities for people from all kinds of backgrounds and [it will] not just bring people here, but cultivate the people we already have here,” said Shamroe.

Historically, Traverse City has been known as the “Cherry Capital of the World,” so does FRIC mark a rebrand of the region?

“I think we will always have cherries at our heart, but the bay and the water are so much a part of everything that we are, that these will blend together and give us a new facet of our personality,” Shamroe commented.

She then added, “I'm really excited to see the blue and green tech movements that are coming to town be integrated into part of our character and who we are.”

“The industries and the businesses that are going to come out of the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center are going to help shape the future of this community,” Shamroe then referred to it as the “beacon on the hill that's going to attract everybody to us.”

What will FRIC look like long-term? Shamroe said, “I hope in 20 years, it's an institution that's part of our community because it's producing so many great jobs and it's a connector for our economy and a connector for our environment.”

Lutchko emphasized, “Demand for these skills is growing rapidly in water resources, environmental consulting, and the broader blue economy, both locally and globally, ensuring graduates are prepared for careers that are in high demand and highly impactful.”

Photos by Minnie Bardenhagen



Construction site for the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center



Discovery Pier, one of the partners for the FRIC

Drone Dominance Unleashed

Michigan Invests in the National Future of Aviation

Eily Knight
Staff Writer

“The Advanced Air Mobility Initiative envisions a future where air travel is more accessible, efficient, and sustainable, offering a potential solution to traffic congestion and environmental concerns,” according to the Michigan Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) website.

Michigan is establishing itself as a leader in the future of aviation through the state’s new Advanced Air Mobility Initiative (AAM), implemented this past July. A total of \$4.1 million has been issued by the initiative’s activation fund, including nearly one million for Traverse Connect and its partners: Northwestern Michigan College, Munson Healthcare, and the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center. The funding is being used to test how drones can deliver medical supplies, monitor freshwater ecosystems, and potentially aid the Coast Guard in emergency response on the water, reports *The Ticker*. This local work reflects a larger national trend in the research and development of AAM technology and airspace, backed by a federal executive order, “Unleashing American Drone Dominance,” released in June.

For NMC, the Traverse Connect project could double as a workforce development opportunity. The Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) program is part of the Federal Aviation Administration’s UAS College Training Initiative (UAS-CTI), meaning that NMC provides “above and beyond” training to prepare its students for entering the UAS industry compared to smaller aviation schools. This includes providing hands-on learning experience with commercial drone technology.

“Initially, when the project was first coming together and being discussed with Traverse Connect and other entities involved, we attended the meetings and offered input wherever we could,” NMC’s UAS Program Coordinator Tony Sauerbrey said.

As of now, the project is mostly a smaller-scale pilot to “test feasibility and logistics.” Most of the development has been between Blueflight, the drone manufacturer, Drone-Up, the operations team, and Munson Healthcare. But, as the program continues to unfold, NMC’s role could become much more critical.

“It depends on how the program evolves and what they need. If they need operators, technicians, or observers, NMC would be the place to go to fill those ranks.” Sauerbrey stated. NMC’s UAS graduate students would fill these roles.

Since it was established by Governor Whitmer in July, Michigan’s AAM Initiative has issued over \$4.1 million to support multiple demonstration projects across the state, including Traverse Connect and partners.

A prominent effort being executed by Michigan’s AAM is M-Air, an approximately 40-mile “research skyway corridor connecting Detroit and Ann Arbor centered at the University of Michigan,” The Michigan News reports. The state has given one million dollars in support of M-Air as a broader AAM strategy. That project is a testing ground for beyond-visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations, electric vertical take off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, and other advanced aerial systems.

These state-wide efforts line up with the priorities outlined in President Trump’s executive order, Unleashing American Drone Dominance, issued this past summer. The order calls for accelerating safe commercialization of UAS technology, prioritizing American-manufactured drones, integrating eVTOL operations into national airspace, and the use of data from pilot programs, like Traverse Connect’s, to aid in long-term regulation and planning.

Michigan’s efforts are part of a much broader movement across the country to test and integrate AAM. For example, North Carolina partnered with Georgia to establish the nation’s first interstate AAM corridor in August. The corridor will connect Charlotte, NC, to Atlanta, GA, and allow drones to pass between the states for testing, according to sUAS News.

In California, the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP), a non-profit organization that seeks to “improve economic health and quality of life in the tri-county region of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz,” secured a grant of \$7.45 million from the California Jobs First Council in support of the development of their first multi-airport flight corridor. According to MBEP News, the corridor will

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facilitate drone testing, certification, and commercialization of UAS technology, and is a key component of improving the Central Coast’s AAM ecosystem.

Each of these projects feeds into the same national effort: gathering data, developing technology, and informing FAA rulemaking to ensure drones can eventually be safely integrated into the US national airspace.

For Traverse City, although the Traverse Connect project is in its early stages, its potential impact is significant. Not only will its success expand access to critical healthcare supplies and environmental monitoring, but it will also help prepare the future workforce with training for one of aviation’s fastest-growing industries.



Photos Provided by NMC

The University Center Moves to Main Campus

Jace Dunlap
Staff writer

At the start of the Fall 2025 semester, the University Center left the Boardman Lake Campus and integrated itself into NMC's main campus, based in the Beckett building. Since opening the University Center in 1995, NMC has had the goal of providing the Traverse City area with the ability to earn four-year degrees while staying local. However, before the Fall 2025 semester, the University Center was not located on the main campus, requiring those taking classes through the University Center to commute off campus. NMC currently has five University Partners: Grand Valley State University (GVSU), Ferris State, Davenport, Central Michigan, and Michigan State's School of Agriculture. With half of NMC's student population enrolling with goals of transferring, the move was an easy decision to make.

Within the Beckett building, both Grand Valley and Ferris have their own designated areas where meetings can take place, as well as lots of room for students.

While many of the classes that the University Partners offer will take place in the Beckett building, Cari Noga, a Public Relations Specialist for NMC, says the move gives the partners many more resources than they previously

had. Noga hopes that with this move, the University Partners will be more integrated into daily life for students. With the move being new this semester, Noga says that they have yet to see a significant change in enrollment or engagement, but commented that these new changes "can only help". The University Partners are always looking for interested students. Noga recommends that any students who are interested in being involved with one of them find a faculty member in the Beckett building to get started.

Due to the relocation, the Boardman Lake Campus will no longer be inhabited by the University Center. Noga explained that instead of NMC's business division, the Human Resource office and Extended ED programs will take over the space, with The Greenspire School taking over the upper floor. The future for the building is still unsure, as NMC's board of trustees will need to decide what will be the best use of the space.

One of the services that the University Partners will continue to offer is Direct Connect. Direct Connect allows students to be enrolled in NMC and simultaneously be enrolled in GVSU, Ferris, or Davenport. This program is recommended to students who want to earn their four-year degree from one of these schools, while cutting

down the price and being able to stay local. Sebastian Eaton-Ellison is enrolled in the Direct Connect program through GVSU, majoring in Allied Health and minoring in Political Science. While Eaton-Ellison's classes are taken online, he commented that with the recent changes, he feels very well supported and that he has "help from two different universities".

Moving forward, NMC is hoping to provide Direct Connect programs through all five of its University Partners. They are also hopeful that these new developments will empower students who are continuing with the University Partners and encourage new students to look into the possibility of earning a four-year degree through NMC and one of their partners.

Photo by Jace Dunlap



Photo by Minnie Bardenhagen



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Up North Pride Brings Pride Week to Traverse City

Brooklyn Bucy
Staff Writer

Every year, Up North Pride hosts Traverse City Pride Week. This year, the events took place from Sept. 23 to Sept. 27, filling the city with celebration, solidarity, and reflection. The weeklong series of events highlighted queer voices, supported the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and drew people together through art, activism, and entertainment.

The week kicked off on Tuesday with “Queer: Say,” a storytelling event held at The Alluvion and sponsored by Grocer’s Daughter Chocolate. This intimate gathering featured community members sharing personal stories about their lives, identities, and experiences. Through raw honesty and vulnerability, the event fostered a deep sense of connection and emphasized the importance of visibility and sharing lived experiences.

On Wednesday, the focus shifted to creativity and activism with a Sign-Making Party at Little Fleet. The event offered attendees a chance to prepare signs for the upcoming march while enjoying food from local trucks, drinks, and an atmosphere of community spirit. It was a relaxed but meaningful night that combined artistic expression with social action.

Thursday night brought the Intimi Affair, a unique and inclusive lingerie fashion show hosted at the Indigo Hotel. The event embraced body positivity and gender expression in all forms, offering a lounge-style runway that celebrated diversity in a bold, empowering setting. Models showcased a range of identities and styles, demonstrating that pride is not only about acceptance but also about self-love and freedom of expression.

On Friday, the spotlight turned to laughter with Comedy Night at the Traverse City Opera House. The show featured headliner Kristin Key, a musical comedian known for her sharp humor, along with guest Nicole Melnyk. The performance provided a much-needed outlet

for joy, offering moments of levity while still reflecting on the shared experiences of the queer community.

Saturday marked the biggest and most vibrant day of the week: Big Gay Day. It began with a Visibility Rally at F&M Park, where local activists and community leaders gave speeches about the history and ongoing importance of Pride. The rally was followed by a Visibility March to the Open Space Park, where colorful signs, flags, and chants filled the streets. The march was a powerful reminder of how far the community has come—and how far there still is to go.

At The Open Space, the celebration continued with a Resource Fair featuring local nonprofits offering health, housing, and legal resources tailored to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. A high-energy drag show followed, bringing together drag performers from across Michigan. The final act of the evening was a Pride Concert headlined by EMM, followed by a lively Silent Disco that kept the crowd dancing well into the night.

The energy during Big Gay Day was undeniably high, especially among the NMC students who came out to show their pride and support. The event fostered a strong sense of community and belonging, offering a vibrant space filled with connection, celebration, and meaningful conversations. From social activities to informational resources, it served as both a joyful gathering and a vital support system for members of the local queer community. For students and non-students alike, Big Gay Day wasn’t just about having fun—it was about being seen, heard, and celebrated. It was a reminder that inclusion matters, and community makes all the difference.



Photos by Keiara Pettengill

“They Wanted Something Special”

NMC Audio Tech Coordinator Writes Score for Horror Film

Sydney Boettcher
Staff Writer

Audio Technology Coordinator Sam Boase-Miller composed the score to the upcoming horror film, *Good Boy*. He was offered the role in 2024, when Brian Goodheart, co-producer of the film, reached out.

“I sent some stuff over and forgot about it,” Boase-Miller said. “And four months later, I hear back that I’m one of two people being considered for the film.”

Boase-Miller later said that he was chosen not because of the sample work he gave Goodheart, but because of the work presented on his personal website.

Shortly after, Goodheart sent Boase-Miller the rough cut for the movie, and he immediately fell in love. “I watched it three times in one day.”

The rough cut had some placeholder music tracks, which Boase-Miller said gave him a good idea of what the filmmakers were looking for from him. “They wanted something special; they didn’t want something you could take and put onto another movie.”

In his pursuit of this goal, Boase-Miller discovered the work of Fron Reilly, an Ontarian clockmaker who designed instruments in his free time. One instrument in particular, the “fron2”, caught his eye.

Inspired by the fron2, Boase-Miller spent five weeks designing his own variant of the fron2 with his step-father. The final result, dubbed the “celloscillator”, is similar to the fron2, but distinct in some important aspects. It has eight strings and is tuned to a Bm chord instead of the standard cello tuning. The result, according to Boase-Miller, is a dark, very creepy sound.

Since the film is shot from the perspective of a dog, that unique point of view had an impact on the philosophy of Boase-Miller’s style. He said he went for “more elemental or fundamental sounds.”

He also focused on using incredibly high pitches or incredibly low ones to mimic the increased range of senses a dog has. Boase-Miller employed the help of NMC faculty member Jeanmarie Riccobono for those low tones; her bass clarinet playing is featured in the film on several occasions.

Boase-Miller also described a specific technique he used called “Mickey Mousing,” where accompanying music syncs up with actions on screen. Film scores that use this

technique aren’t confined to traditional time signatures, giving the music a freeform rhythm more akin to a sonic moodboard.

Boase-Miller spoke about the special role film scoring fills compared to traditional composition. “Music is there to paint the wallpaper of the house... It should be subservient to other aspects, enhancing other aspects, or in rare instances, taking over and becoming the focal point.”

Boase-Miller worked closely with the sound team, Goodheart and Kelly Oostman, to make the music and the supernatural sound elements harder to distinguish.

The film is currently in theaters and will be coming to streaming sometime in the future. A streaming release of the film’s soundtrack is also planned for the near future.

Photo by Sydney Boettcher

Sam Boase-Miller standing in front of the poster for the movie *Good Boy*



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A Water Trail

A Powerful Film by an NMC Student, Comes to the Dennos

Staff Reports

A Water Trail, a film featuring the story and perseverance of Amber Hasan, will premier at NMC's Dennos Museum on Oct. 18 at 4 pm. Written, produced, and filmed by NMC student, and Hasan's husband, Tuklor Williams, the film follows the ways in which water is weaponized against marginalized communities, and how grassroots action can reclaim it.

From poisoned pipes to hurricane winds, *A Water Trail* follows a mother's journey from artist to activist. Out of grief and separation, she co-founds The Sister Tour, a platform where women build through art, storytelling, and enterprise.

"I use film as a catalyst for social change!" said Williams.

After leaving Flint, Michigan, following the 2014 Flint water crisis, a public health disaster where the water was contaminated with lead—Hasan found herself in Puerto Rico, where she endured the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017 and the painful loss of contact with her youngest child.

Hasan, who is an actor, musical artist, and activist, will visit the Dennos after the screening for a panel discussion that includes Williams and invited guest Jeff Gibbs, a film producer who has worked on documentaries such as *Planet of the Humans* in 2019.

A Water Trail is more than a call for water justice, it's one woman's deeply personal journey through survival, loss, and activism.

According to the Dennos Museum, this event marks the 53rd anniversary of the Clean Water Act and together, the panelists will reflect on the film's themes, share personal insights, and discuss the ongoing fight for clean water.

The Dennos Museum

COMMUNITY SCREENING

Panel Discussion following the documentary!

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A WATER TRAIL

Birth of a Water Protector

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Staff Picks

What Song Gets You in the Fall Mood?

Minnie Bardenhagen
Editor-in-Chief
Song: Everywhere, Everything by Noah Kahan Explanation: "Fall is a time for adventure for me. I love all the sights, the activities, and all the things uniquely autumn. This song really feels like the perfect backing track to an adventure."

Eily Knight
Staff Writer
Song: Linger by The Cranberries Explanation: "It is a classic fall song for me. The instrumentals sound so peaceful and airy, and that just reminds me of looking at all the colorful leaves on a chilly day."

Jace Dunlap
Staff Writer
Song: Danse Macabre by Camille Saint-Saens Explanation: "It reminds me of school in the fall, and it is a classical piece that is used in a lot of modern shows and movies to create a fall/haunted feel."