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# THE EAGLE

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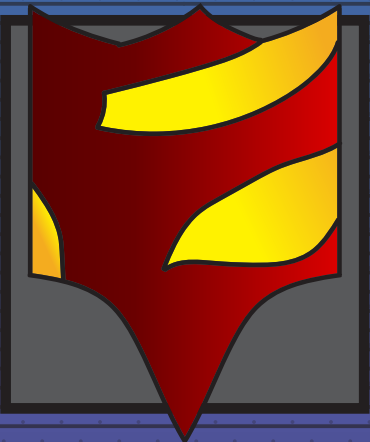
WITH INTERVIEWS FROM...

BUNMI KUSIMO-FRAZIER  
VIOLETTA PETROSYAN

Will the Eagle save the city?  
Will the meteor pummel  
Charleston?  
Find out in this edition!

...AND STORIES ABOUT

KENJI UEDA'S NEW BUSINESS  
SAVINGS AND YOU



# FROM BEHIND THE LUNCH COUNTER TO BETWEEN BORDERS, VIOLETTA PETROSYAN FULFILLS HER MISSION

BY: ELIJAH NEWELL

Long before Violetta Petrosyan had an award-winning film produced about her and her family called *Between Borders*, long before she became the Director of International Students at University of Charleston and made a life-long impact on the international community at UC, she and her family had to escape some of the most horrific evils imaginable.

Petrosyan, her husband, and two children--Julia and Olga--had to leave their home in Baku, Azerbaijan to escape the ethnic cleansing of Armenians in the collapsing Soviet Union from 1988-1991. During this time, pogroms broke out across Azerbaijan, with ethnic Azerbaijanis attempting to eradicate all Armenians within given areas.

Petrosyan and her family ended up moving all over the Eurasian continent to escape the riots and persecution. Eventually they made their way to Volgograd, Russia, where they were met with humiliation and discrimination due to their ethnicity and Christian religion. Nevertheless, they persevered, serving their community in a Church of the Nazarene and living as best they could.

After surviving in Volgograd for 8 years, Violetta's daughters married and moved away to other countries, but she and her husband continued to deal with discrimination. Her husband, Ivan, had grown tired of having to look over their shoulders everywhere they went in Volgograd.

"Every human being has a tolerance breaking point," Petrosyan said.



When Violetta and Ivan visited their daughter in Charleston, WV in 2007, Ivan asked his wife to apply for asylum in the United States. They began the asylum application process that year and were approved two years later, on April 15th, 2009. They became U.S. citizens in 2016.

Moving to the U.S. did not mean Violetta slowed down at all. She and her husband applied to work at the school cafeteria at the University of Charleston. She applied to cook and bake for the many hungry students at the university, and on the same day she filled out the paperwork for her cafeteria job, an H.R. employee convinced her to accept a contract to teach English as a second language to the international students on campus.

# PETROSYAN, CONT.

BY: ELIJAH NEWELL

Violetta worked several odd jobs at the same time, serving in her Church of the Nazarene, providing services for West Virginia State University, and even going to school and getting a job as a medical coder for a radiological office. Eventually, Virginia Moore, who had become good friends with Violetta, encouraged her to apply for Director of International Students.

On paper, Violetta's job is to help the approximately 260 international students on campus get through the process of registering in the United States as a foreign student, get necessary documents filed, navigate the gray areas of immigration law, and ensure that they have support. But Violetta sees the role as far more than just a job.

"I consider it to be my mission, I consider myself to be a missionary here to the whole world... my favorite part is when I take them to the church every Sunday, anyone who wants to come; I like cooking for them, baking for them, I like taking them somewhere. So, they become part of my family, because I don't have my family with me... these are my children. I treat them as my children because I know what it is" Violetta said.

Two and a half years ago, an American missionary family, who worked with Violetta in Volgograd, reunited with the Petrosyans, catching up with them and sharing their families' stories. Deeply impressed by the nature of Violetta's tale, they asked for permission to make a film about it.

The Petrosyans agreed, and on January 26th, 2025, the film, *Between Borders*, premiered in the U.S., portraying the life and struggle of the Petrosyan family in Eurasia.

Violetta said that while the massive amount of attention she has received because of the film has been hard on her, she accepts it in hopes that it will advance her mission of service and hope to others.

"If it is needed, in terms of getting a message of something very special to someone. Either they were restored in their faith, because they saw that through the movie, or maybe they need some hope, or see the resilience, or the healing process, because they've had so much going on in their life and they can't bear it, and they see that someone actually has done that, and was persistent in that, maybe the message comes out of the movie and helps someone, I'm happy that it actually happened" Violetta said.

*Between Borders* will be released for streaming on Amazon Prime March 4th, 2025.

# UEDA ON THE UPSWING

BY: COLE FRIEND

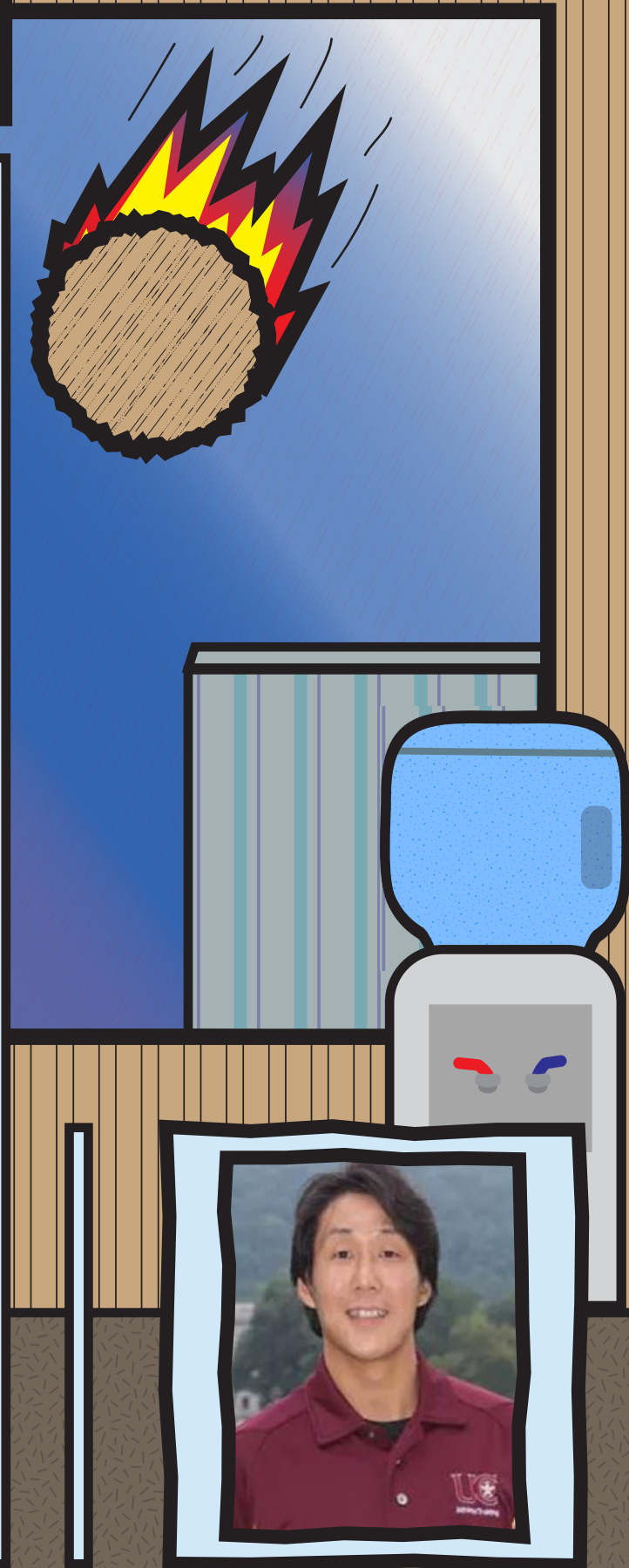
Kenji Ueda, an athletic trainer at the University of Charleston, has recently started his own athletic training and deep tissue massage business in Charleston.

Ueda has been working at the University of Charleston for 10 years and has formed many relationships with student athletes in that time. Something many students struggle with after graduating is the lack of physical therapy they receive. Kenji Ueda's new business, Zen Deep Tissue Release, will be able to help athletes, high school athletes, manual labor workers, and even desk workers with muscle problems.

"Physical activity is not only sports but also in daily life. A lot of manual workers and even desk workers can injure a muscle. My goal is to help those people and keep them active."

At the 2024 UC home track meet, Kenji had a conversation with UC Track star, Timber Huysmans, about Huysman's need for an internship. This gave Kenji the idea to begin creating his business.

"Since I am in the medical field, I have never studied business. I don't have experience on how to attract people or start the business. Fortunately, I got help from a student athlete, Timber. He helped create the business website and social media accounts. I was lucky to work with him but at the same time there is still a lot I need to work on."



# UEDA, CONT.

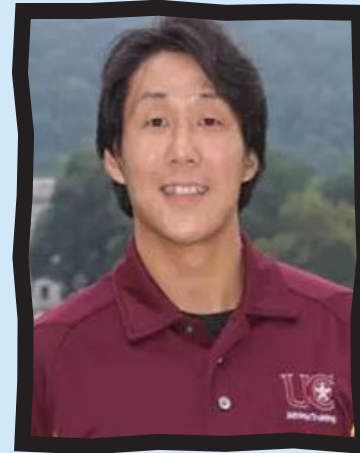
BY: COLE FRIEND

Kenji and Timber have grown very close over the years because Timber has been receiving treatment from Kenji since his freshman year (now in his senior year).

“Over time, I’ve gotten to know Kenji really well. When I was a freshman, it was a little awkward because I didn’t know him. He was just the person giving me treatment. But as the years passed, he learned more about my body and became more personal with me. Now, I see him as a friend, not just an athletic trainer,” Timber said, “It’s really nice to know I can still go to him if I stay in Charleston. If I keep doing sports or heavy workouts, I’ll have someone I trust to help with my recovery.”

Kenji has been working on this business for almost a year now but has wanted to open his own athletic training and massage business since he was at a university in Japan. He said this had always been his dream job but was worried because he wasn’t sure how to start. He only has a few clients right now but is slowly building.

For anyone interested, Kenji Ueda’s business can be found on Instagram at ZenDeepTissueMassage.





# EARNING, SAVING, AND BUDGETING: HOW TO LIVE ON A LIMITED INCOME IN COLLEGE

BY: ELIJAH NEWELL



College has never been easy. Keeping up with assignments, making it on time to music rehearsals or sports practice, and having a stable social life, all while trying to keep your G.P.A. high is extremely hard. College life makes earning money during college difficult. The key to living on a limited income during college is to learn how to make money during school, reduce the amount of spending required to make do, and budget total savings effectively.

The easiest way to find part-time work is at the university itself. The University of Charleston offers programs called [work studies](#), in which students can apply to get part-time jobs on campus, such as the library or cafeteria. A work study can help students earn money on a schedule that is shaped around their academic calendar while also gaining work experience in different fields.

Another option for making some extra cash is taking a paid internship position. UC can help students [find an internship or part-time job](#) with the Handshake career management website. Many of the organizations looking for students on Handshake offer paid internship positions to UC students. UC's [Center for Career Development](#) can offer assistance to students looking for part-time or full-time jobs/internships.

After finding a way to make some money, students will need ways to save their funds as best they can, and using coupons is one easy way to do that. According to an [article](#) by NerdWallet, signing up for rewards programs at stores you frequently visit, searching in coupon databases online, checking the Sunday newspaper in your area, picking up weekly ads from grocery stores, and scanning your junk mail folder for discounts from retailers are all ways students can find discounts on items they regularly purchase. If regularly used, coupons can save students a massive amount of money on expenses over time.

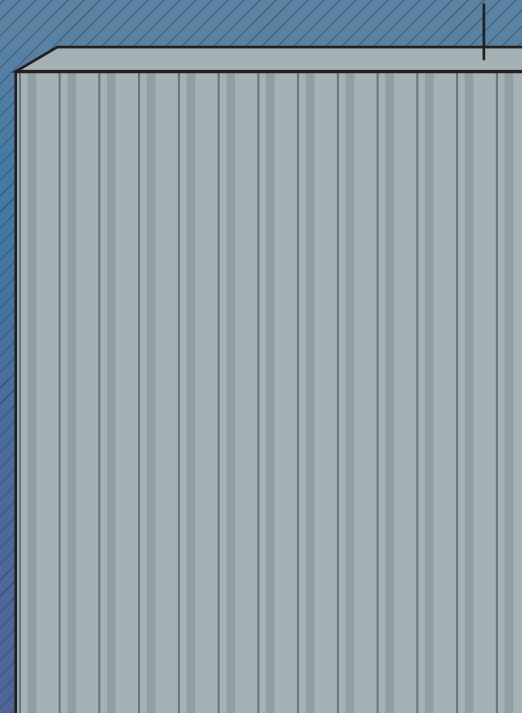
# BUDGETING, CONT.

BY: ELIJAH NEWELL

Rewards programs from stores can offer other benefits besides coupons. As an example, Kroger offers a Fuel Rewards [program](#) that allows shoppers to save money at Kroger gas stations the more they shop. Walmart has a program called [Walmart+](#), which offers benefits such as fuel savings, free shipping, and even a free Paramount+ subscription. In addition, rewards websites like [Rakuten](#) can pay students to use certain chain stores, keeping more money in students' wallets.

Finally, after students have earned income and found ways to save money on expenses, they need to make sure they craft and stick to a thoughtful budget. While budgeting can sometimes get overly complicated, there are online tools that can simplify the process. Another [article](#) published by NerdWallet offers a selection of budgeting apps that can help students keep track of their spending, estimate their monthly budget, and stick to whatever spending decisions they need to make.

Living on a budget is hard, especially while also attending college full-time. By earning cash through part-time opportunities, saving money through coupons or rewards programs, and sticking to a tight budget, most people can help ease the financial strain of college.



# BUNMI KUSIMO-FRAZIER: DO SOMETHING, DON'T BEG

BY: ALEX COCHRAN

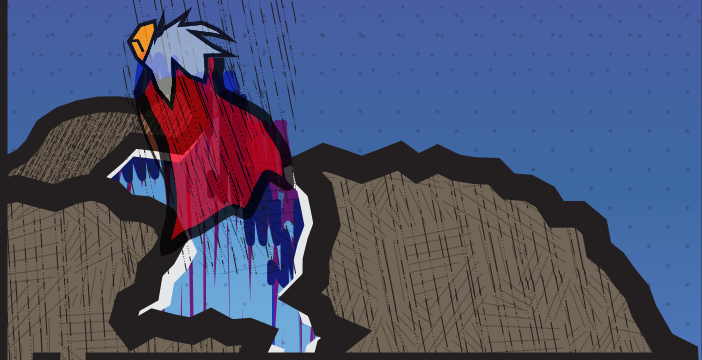
This January, Bunmi Kusimo-Frazier discussed MLK Jr and civil rights as the keynote speaker for UC's Enlightened Living Week of 2025. On stage, she discussed the traumas of systemic racism, and in her post-speech interview, she highlighted systemic injustice in West Virginia and the state's exploding foster care system and rampant poverty. However, perhaps the best thing she shared was a lesson in humanity: the best thing you can do to fight injustice is to be you.

When discussing civil rights, sometimes people become idols. It is easy to forget that MLK was a human being and not an incomparable figure. Figures like him aren't found often, but average people are everywhere. This was apparent when Kusimo-Frazier shared such an influence of hers: a woman named Fannie Lou Hamer. In her life, she was a completely ordinary woman.

"She was a poor, dark-skinned, overweight black woman from Mississippi who was sterilized by the government and then started speaking out and found herself on the floor of the Democratic National Convention."

Like Hamer, Kusimo-Frazier related that she didn't need to be special in the eyes of history to make change, but instead just herself.

"This idea that I don't have to be Miss Black West Virginia, that I can be who I am and with my own experiences speak out."



You don't need to be MLK to make a change. Being a doer that can take personal experience and do something with it is just fine.

"People don't understand that there are people in McDowell County who really don't have indoor toilets and never had them, so they think the government is tripping when the government comes and says you need a toilet in your house..."





# KUSIMO-FRAZIER, CONT.

BY: ALEX COCHRAN

Kusimo-Frazier continued to explain how the state's poverty feeds into a perpetual cycle, and while it may be easy to blame the state's history with the opioid crisis, she said the chief culprit still comes from the lack of jobs, and that when employment occurs, it can be too easy to think the problem is solved.

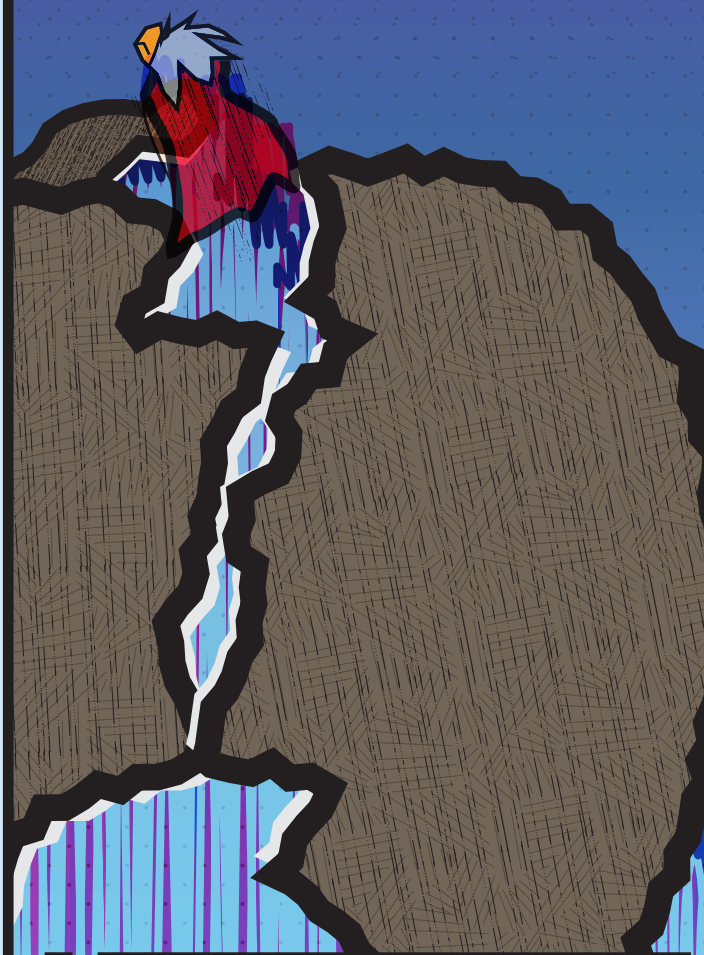
"It comes from the fact that there's not any real jobs... The pet negro system isn't just black people—it's poor people in these counties, too."

Kusimo-Frazier further illustrated another byproduct of the poverty cycle: its direct connection to the foster care system.

"We remove more children from their homes in the state of West Virginia than anybody in the country... there are some schools in WV where you will go and 60% of the population is in foster care... We need to look at whether this is child trafficking, quite frankly."

Poverty and foster care are large problems. There is no easy solution. However, now more than ever, it is important to know that these solutions don't come from figures of the past. They come from people of the present who decide to act. Plus, while MLK accomplished much in his lifetime, he didn't act alone, and neither should you.

In that manner, Kusimo-Frazier emphasized the importance of community, especially in West Virginia. While big groups like the ACLU and the Poor People's Campaign provide their own leadership and networking opportunities, they cannot replace the effects of individual action at home. For students, the most immediate community is one's circle of friends and the larger student body. In these groups, small steps for change can become big leaps of progress.



Thus, Kusimo-Frazier stated that the best thing that one can do to make change is simply to do something.

"It's not just to get to meet and do something. You have to do something... You create the community so people can come. You don't wait for them to create it for you and you don't beg for them to create it for you, you do it yourself... and suddenly its regular, its normalized, we know you."

# FINDING A FAMILY FAR FROM HOME

BY: COLE FRIEND

The University of Charleston has become a second home for many international students. Some of these students have simple trips to UC but others have very long and complicated adventures from their homes.

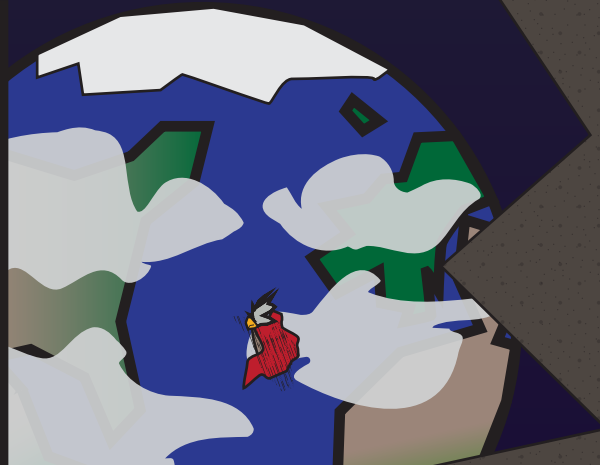
Many of these students have found learning opportunities and have been awarded scholarships for their academic and/or athletic accomplishments. They stay because they find a second family and friendships that last a lifetime.

Maya Clark, a sophomore from Utrecht, Netherlands is attending UC on academic and athletic scholarships. Clark said she had always seen U.S. schools and universities in movies and shows, thought they looked cool and was interested, but never thought she would have the chance to attend one.

“I could have studied back home in the Netherlands but then I couldn’t have competed in sports.” Clark said, “There are no sports in school, only clubs outside of school.”

Because of this, she wouldn’t have had the financial opportunities she found at UC.

Athletics play a large role for many international students in coming to school in the U.S. It was Clark’s athletic abilities that originally showed her she could go to school in the U.S. But what about UC makes it more attractive than other schools?



“The main reason was the number of international students that attend UC. All the other schools I looked at were primarily American, but here there are a lot of international students to connect with.”

Matthew O’Shea, a freshman from Bettystown, Ireland said a part of his decision in coming to the U.S. are the deep roots that the Irish have in American culture.

“During the 1840s-50s almost a third of our country immigrated to America because we had a huge famine.” O’Shea said, “There is a good connection between America and Ireland, and I think people understand that and notice the similarities.”

O’Shea said because of this, he felt his transition to the U.S. was very smooth. Even though there are similarities between the U.S. and Ireland, he said it isn’t always easy being at UC.

# FINDING FAMILY, CONT.

BY: COLE FRIEND

“Sometimes you would like to just go home, but obviously it’s a lot more difficult,” O’Shea said.

He explained that being so close to his team and finding similarities in other students makes these issues easier.

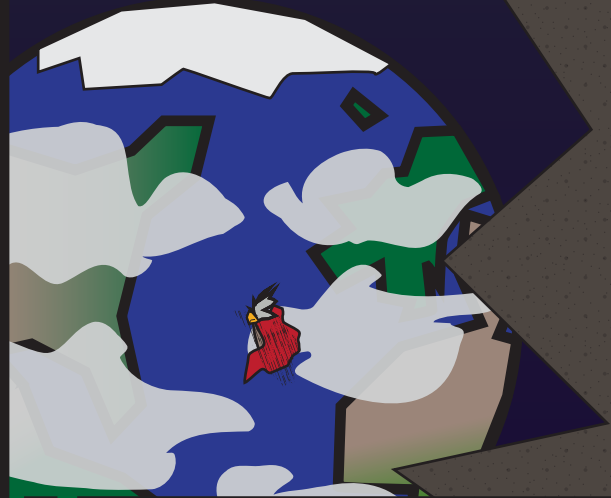
“I don’t know of another school that can bring together so many cultures in such a small area.”

Mercy Jepleting, a senior from Eldoret, Kenya, hadn’t considered going to school in the U.S. until a few months before Covid hit, so when it was time for her to choose a school, she found out she wouldn’t be able to attend the school for the foreseeable future. During this time, many schools and coaches recruiting her grew distant because she wouldn’t be able to compete for them that season.

“I continued talking with Coach Bias (University of Charleston Head Cross Country and Track Coach), and he was so concerned talking to me, and I started to think ‘this is where I want to go.’ He always asked about my training and how I was feeling. I felt a real relationship,” Jepleting said.

She decommitted from the previous school she had committed to and recommitted to Charleston.

Jepleting explained she had many difficulties in her first semester in the U.S. She didn’t like American food, and it took her a few weeks to get used to it. She also had trouble with the education system.



“In Kenya, we write our essays in English, but it’s a different English than is written here,” Mercy said, “I received a C on my first essay at UC and didn’t understand why. At home, I was the best essay writer in school, but I had to learn how to write in American English.”

Jepleting is finishing her final semester at the UC and will be graduating with Nursing and Exercise Science degrees with a minor in Organizational Leadership but says she has a lot more than just her degrees and running experiences to be thankful for.

“I appreciate UC because they have molded a person I wasn’t before. I am now more confident. Another thing I appreciate is Coach Bias. He has been so nice to me since day one and he has played a lot of roles in my life. He is not only a coach, but he acts like... I don’t have a dad, but Coach Bias acts like a dad to me.”

# FINDING FAMILY, CONT.

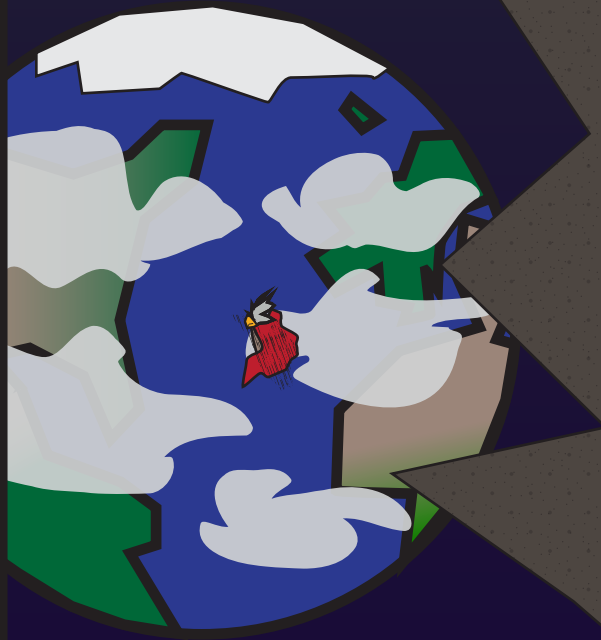
BY: COLE FRIEND

Violetta Petrosyan has been the Director of International Students at UC for the last 8 years.

“If you have come here, you have a goal. You have to make it through that first semester, no matter how difficult it is. No matter how much they miss their home. They have to develop the right attitude. Don’t focus on the negative and find the right group of people that will build them up and support them.”

International students spend months away from their homes and family but all of them seek to find a new home and a second family at UC. Petrosyan said that it has been her mission to make these students feel like they have a home at UC.

“They’re like my children. I treat them like my children because I know what it takes and what they need, which is love and care.”



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