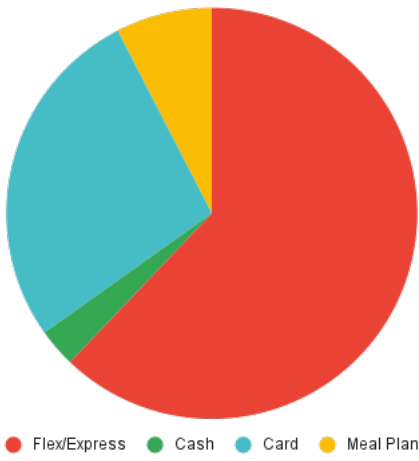


## What's Your Opinion?

We asked our followers on Instagram what payment method they typically used for Sodexo food services.

Out of 66 responses:  
Flex/Express – 41  
Cash – 2  
Card – 18  
Meal Plan – 5



● Flex/Express ● Cash ● Card ● Meal Plan

## Next Poll:

**M&Them**  
Which M&M character is your favorite?

Students can answer the poll on The Herald's Instagram page, [@astateherald](#). Instagram polls are posted on Mondays. Previous poll results can be found on [the-herald.home.blog/category/opinion/poll/](#). Have an idea for a poll? Send your ideas to [heraldopinion1921@gmail.com](mailto:heraldopinion1921@gmail.com).

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website. All comics and memes can be found in the Comics section.

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR



Lily Cabibi-Wilkin is a senior music composition major from Hot Springs.

Since COVID-19 first turned the world upside down, there have been debates over the steps required to protect against the virus. Wearing a face mask is one of the easiest methods to prevent the spread, so places have started requiring people to wear masks. This has sparked debates from people who do not think masks provide any benefit or who simply do not want to be forced to wear a mask. Several times the debates have surfaced on the A-State student app, where students who disagree with the mask mandate have taken to the

## The First Amendment and Mask Mandates

public platform to voice their opinions. Arguments spanning several hours and several posts usually follow. Now, they're totally allowed to do that. Constitutionally, you have the right to voice your opinion. The whole point of the Opinion page, of my job in general, is to voice opinions. But that doesn't mean you can voice your opinions without consequence.

The first amendment in its entirety reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Many have interpreted this to mean "I'm allowed to say whatever I want wherever I want and nobody can stop me." But I've always read it as "Congress can't pass a law

saying you can't say, report on or practice whatever you want; and you're allowed to assemble protests if you don't like what the government is doing." There's nothing in the first amendment that says your free speech has no consequences – it just grants you the freedom to speak.

Are people who post in the A-State app using their right to protest that they don't like what rules the school has put in place practicing their first amendment rights? Maybe you could say that. Technically a college is a government-funded entity. But I would argue it's a little different – because you're also announcing to all of campus that you plan on breaking a rule put in place to protect them.

Let's say, hypothetically, that I wanted to bring alcohol to campus, and was absolutely incensed that the university had mandated that I couldn't. Say I publicly posted on the A-State student app that

I was against the rule stating I wasn't allowed to bring alcohol to campus, and that I planned to bring a bottle of vodka to campus the next day. At the very least, I would expect to be reported to Student Conduct.

That's what we all expect and agree to when we register to attend a university – you break the rules, you get in trouble. You threaten students, you get in trouble. So why is refusing to follow the mask mandate any different? By refusing to follow guidelines meant to prevent the spread of COVID-19 I would definitely argue that you are threatening the health of your fellow students.

I don't want to waste words explaining why wearing masks keeps people safe. If you believe they work, or you don't, I'm not going to be able to change your mind. This isn't about your political beliefs or whether you think COVID-19 is a hoax – it's about following the rules you agreed to when you got here. If you don't want to follow the rules, fine. But shut up about it.

## NFTs Are Bad. So Why Do People Keep Making Them?

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR

Last weekend was an absolute onslaught of celebrities and companies announcing their new NFTs. Troy Baker, Matthew Lillard, AP Photo and even the USPS all announced new NFT projects, leading to frustrated backlash.

For those who haven't been keeping up – Non-Fungible Tokens are unique digital items bought and sold with cryptocurrency (like Bitcoin or Ethereum). The idea is that you're buying something that no one else can, even if it's just a link to an ugly picture of a lion.

The problem with NFTs is that they rely on blockchain technology, which uses up a lot of electricity and generates greenhouse gas emissions. The computer parts needed to mine bitcoin (mining is how you generate bitcoin and involves supercomputers running calculations) have led to tons of e-waste and have made it harder for people to find video cards and RAM sticks (you need RAM for your computer to run). They're also not great for the art community. Several artists, some deceased, have had their art stolen and sold as NFTs.

Despite this, celebrities and companies keep deciding to sell NFTs, and seem to be surprised by the backlash every time. Baker announced a collaboration with VoiceVerse, which promised an AI-based voiceover and text-to-speech platform

using celebrity voices. Purchasing their NFTs with Ethereum "provides you an ownership to a unique voice in the Metaverse." After a wave of backlash (especially after the "demo" VoiceVerse shared on their Twitter turned out to be made with 15.ai, an already existing AI text-to-speech program which has no connection to Voiceverse), Baker stated that he had "a lot to think about" and encouraged his followers to "resume the conversation."

Lillard, meanwhile, doubled down, changing his display name to include "Will block. 0-F's-given (sic)" and insisting that people who disagreed with him just didn't understand. (He has since deleted the tweets those conversations were on, but not the replies, which I will link on the web version of this article.) He claimed that he wouldn't attach his name to a scam and said that "it's not just a money grab."

Lillard announced a collaboration with Midnite Movie Club, which claims to be a community for movie lovers that will "use funds from the community wallet to produce feature length genre films" and features a Discord server for the community which hosts movie nights and chatting. To join MMC, you purchase one of their NFTs, which consist of tokens on the Ethereum blockchain that lead to images of cartoon popcorn boxes.

AP Photo and the USPS have not responded to the backlash yet. AP

Photo's scheme is a Xooa marketplace where people can buy NFTs, which include photos and "original metadata offering collectors awareness of the time, date, location, equipment and technical settings used for the shot." Users will also be able to resell their images and print them for personal use, though they will not receive copyright for the photos and must delete all content from their devices if they resell the NFT. AP claims that "the NFTs will be minted on the Polygon blockchain, which is...environmentally friendly," and that proceeds will fund AP journalism.

Meanwhile the USPS has partnered with VeVe (which has also released NFTs from Marvel and other brands) to create... stamps. Their NFTs are just stamp art. Sold in blind boxes for some reason. VeVe claims they're "committed to 100% carbon neutral NFTs" but they use Ethereum, which is notorious for being bad for the environment.

The thing that gets me about all these NFT schemes is that they could all work on their own without NFT involvement. You can just HAVE a Discord server or a movie studio or AI text-to-speech or photo sales or stamps. You don't NEED to mine bitcoin for those things. But for some reason, these people and groups have convinced themselves and their cryptobros that

a technology that uses more power than actual living people is necessary.

How have they not done the research on the environmental impacts? How have they not seen the backlash countless others have faced for so much as potentially announcing NFTs (like Shonen Jump last week)? They have just as much access to the internet as we do. Do they not care about the consequences as long as they make a quick buck?

I don't see NFTs going away anytime soon, even after the cryptocurrency market price drop last Friday. But I think it's bizarre that a celebrity or company can just jump into something like NFTs without any visible consideration. And I hope I don't see any Howl NFTs pop up any time soon.



Art by Fran Bollinger | Content Creator

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