

WMCN shifting from pause to play  
Betsy Barthelemy, Arts Editor

With their studio currently inaccessible to students, their FM broadcasting license nearing expiration and new broadcasts at a standstill, WMCN may seem like it's on the brink of extinction, but it's just the opposite. Student managers Vivian Bauer '21, Sophie Gleason '21 and Auden Sundeen '22 have been working tirelessly with their staff for months to make sure Macalester's radio station not only survives but thrives throughout the campus' COVID-induced closures. Even without the summer management staff the station usually employs, there has been no absence of brainstorming, drafting and redrafting what WMCN will look like this fall.

"We're working really, really hard to stay around." Sundeen said, "We don't plan on leaving anytime soon."

Each of the three managers is spearheading one major task over the coming weeks, with a team of student staff members working by their sides. Sundeen is working on social media and planning online outreach events, including movie nights to recruit first-years and converting WMCN-published zines, which are traditionally handed out outside of the Ruth Stricker Dayton Campus Center, to an online format. Their regular online blog and playlist content will be posted frequently. The station's [website](#) is in the process of what Gleason calls "a complete overhaul" to prepare for the greater online presence.

"We're also going to expand on our user-submitted stuff so that people not only within our [WMCN] community, but also students at large and people in the neighborhood around Mac who listen to us can send in stuff," Sundeen said, "and we can put it on the website, or promote albums, whatever people want to do."

In non-pandemic times, WMCN hosts a segment, "Live from Garth's Living Room," which is a live band performance broadcast from the studio. Though nothing new is currently being broadcast on air, and the managers don't know when they'll next be allowed in the studio (Gleason even left her own cassette player there before spring break, and hasn't seen it since) WMCN remains committed to boosting Macalester and local community artists. They'll do this via the website's blog section, social media outreach and soon, a return to new content.

Gleason is working on eventually streaming remotely-recorded shows on air and over the web. Once the combined efforts of her, Information Technology Services (ITS) and the station engineer are able to create a setup for this, the core 15-person WMCN staff will be the first to broadcast pre-recorded shows. Gleason's goal is to get regular DJs — of which there are usually around 50 in a given semester — on the air by module two.

“We [were] talking over the summer about like, how can we keep WMCN running if we can't do shows in-person?” Gleason said. “Because that's kind of our whole thing: we're a radio station, we need people in the station to talk on the shows. And so we were feeling a bit hopeless earlier in the summer, but in August we figured out that we had a possibility to do remote shows, which is exciting.

“I personally am almost excited to see what we can do with this situation,” she continued. “It's really helping us grow in a way that we weren't expecting to. And it gives us an opportunity to do things we wouldn't do before. Like, remote shows? I didn't even know that was possible — no one knew that was possible. And, I mean, we can probably keep doing them even after we go back in person, too.”

“It's really important that we maintain media for our community at large,” Sundeen added, “especially in this time where we're all super disconnected and all the first-years aren't necessarily able to access and interact with all of the rest of us [in-person].”

With trained DJs spread out around the country and world for the foreseeable future, the managers are taking this opportunity to create a wider WMCN community than ever before.

In addition to those radio shows WMCN normally broadcasts, Sundeen is working on having a representative from the Laurie Hamre Center for Health & Wellness record daily updates on the COVID-19 situation on campus. This information would be similar to what's being emailed to the campus community, but in a short podcast format.

“If we can set up a regular time for that, that could be helpful for folks who are listening in,” they explained. “We're trying really hard to update our PSAs to be current to keep people informed of what's going on.”

Bauer's focus, meanwhile, is with an issue completely separate from the COVID-19 pandemic: the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Every 10 years, FM stations must renew their licenses to stay on air — and, of course, 2020 just happened to be the year this task would fall on WMCN. Bauer is keeping in contact with the staff at the University of Minnesota's radio station, Radio K, in order to navigate this tricky legal situation. Her goal is to have this taken care of by mid-October.

“Usually you have to get lawyers and it's very complicated... So I'm just making contact with people that know more about it,” Bauer said.

Although their website is being redone and online content is currently WMCN's focus, being an FM station is still a priority — enough that Bauer and her team are taking on the challenge in the midst of all the pandemic-induced changes. It's a key tool for WMCN to engage with the greater community, not only Macalester students.

Though the student managers are just that — students — and are not paid by Macalester, Bauer is confident that they have the passion and the drive to keep WMCN alive. Having run for a number of decades, Macalester's radio station is a special corner of campus, and a large incentive for many prospective students, including Bauer and Sundeen, to join the Macalester community. Once involved, it's common to keep with it for more than four years. Alumni often perform on "Live from Garth's Living Room," or even continue to DJ. The FM bandwidth also helps with their community reach, as it reaches those who may not think to go to the station's website otherwise.

"We have a really dedicated community, both within Mac and in the community around Mac. We have alumni and all these people who really want things to continue," Sundeen explained. "This is a special place in my heart, as it is with all of our staff, and we will fight to keep this going as much as we can. And it's like, if we have that much will behind it, hopefully that hope we're putting in is warranted."

As the module progresses and the managers' plans come to fruition, they will be sending out staff and DJ applications. In the meantime, if you'd like to be a part of WMCN and help turn the pandemic into something that helps the station grow, contact the managers via email ([vbauer@macalester.edu](mailto:vbauer@macalester.edu), [sgleaso1@macalester.edu](mailto:sgleaso1@macalester.edu), [asundeen@macalester.edu](mailto:asundeen@macalester.edu)) and follow WMCN on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and other social media platforms.

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