

Izzy Puchalla: Reflecting on the St. Norbert Experience and Changes
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Deciding what college to attend is a difficult and personal decision that is often based on many factors. After making that choice of where you will spend the next four years of your life, most people should feel confident in their decision. However, what happens when the school that has given you so much begins to change? This is what senior Izzy Puchalla has recently been contemplating.

Izzy Puchalla, a Music Liberal Arts major and Psychology minor, has been involved in a variety of extracurricular groups over the past four years. Despite being the president of No Nonsense and a visiting member of LGBTQ+ Spectrum Alliance, they have remained steadfast in their educational journey. In sophomore year Puchalla developed an interest in music therapy, leading them to begin applying to master's programs.

Reflecting on their journey to St. Norbert College, Izzy described the importance of music in their life. Piano was important from early on as their great-grandmother noticed they had "piano hands." They then began piano lessons at the age of four, continuing on with the same teacher until high school graduation.

When it came time to pick a college, Puchalla saw that "at St. Norbert a lot of the programs were very prestigious," especially the music program. They continued, "SNC did stick out to me, I'm not Catholic, but they embodied this view that everyone deserves dignity and everyone deserves to be respected."

This aspect of respect was very important to Izzy as a non-binary and gender-questioning student. They shared some insight into their personal journey, adding that they began questioning their gender around the age of 13 and began using 'they/them' pronouns at 16.

Being at an institution that "seemed to embody these values of community and that everyone belongs to this community" was important to Puchalla, however they disagree with

recent changes that they have seen. These changes came from St. Norbert College selecting new gender-related policies through the adaptation of *Dignitas Infinitas*.

“These recent changes make me feel like I don’t have a place here, like they don’t respect my dignity. You can’t say that everyone has human dignity and then turn around and ignore them.” Izzy continued, saying that as a person of color these changing cultural understandings of gender can be especially damaging. “It has come to make me think now that SNC doesn’t care about their students anymore, especially their queer students.”

In closing, Puchalla reflected on their positive memories with friends and professors while wishing that such changes had not occurred. “[Coming here] has genuinely been one of the most positive things I’ve experienced in my life. I love this place, even with all of the flaws it has had throughout the years. I have met some of my best friends here.”

They concluded with their hope for the college, “I don’t want any of this to happen because I feel like [being here] has been such a great experience, and I think it could be again, but the admin needs to listen to students more. Just listening to us even if there is not much they can do would help to repair the damage.”