As campus life resumes, student stress hits like it never left

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

Well, everyone, it's time to head back to school. It was nice while it lasted — sleeping late, enjoying family time and taking some moments to relax. That was the good life, but now we're back on campus, where life continues to move forward.

As a commuter, I don't experience winter break as a complete farewell to school. It's more like the volume is lowered for a few weeks, then turned up again immediately after the calendar changes. My house remains my house and my responsibilities remain my responsibilities. The key difference is the routine that connects them.

That routine is important to me because I handle my mental health daily. I live with anxiety, depression and ADHD, which causes my focus to be sharp one moment and gone the next.

A break allows me to rest, but it can also disrupt the structure that keeps me stable. Returning requires quickly rebuilding that structure.

As a freshman, I am still learning how to manage everything without burning out. I juggle classes, student media and a work-study job, feeling the pressure to get everything right from the start.

Many Quinnipiac students experience similar stress, even if their routines differ from mine. According to the 2025 Healthy Minds Study, which surveyed college students nationwide, 37% of students reported moderate to severe depression and 32% reported moderate to severe anxiety.

The challenge is that stress is not always visible. Sometimes, it appears when a student shows up to class carrying the same mental burden from the fall.

Other students come back with fresh goals and renewed energy, prepared for the challenges ahead in the coming months.

Further research confirms that commuting can impact well-being. A 2025 study on university commuting and student well-being shows that commuting effort influences student autonomy and subjective well-being, thereby affecting their overall mood throughout the day.

This doesn't imply that commuting causes mental health issues, rather, it suggests that the commute can make an already heavy week even heavier. If I begin my day feeling stressed, I tend to carry that stress into my first class unless I take a moment to slow down and reset.

Sleep can also become the first battleground. My alarm goes off and I start negotiating with myself like it's a debate. Then I get ready and have my usual beef with the morning traffic, the weather and the parking.

I need to switch my mind from home to campus mode while I am still driving. If I lose sleep, my focus drops. When my focus drops, my anxiety increases. As a result, I start overthinking everything, from a missed email to an unfinished assignment.

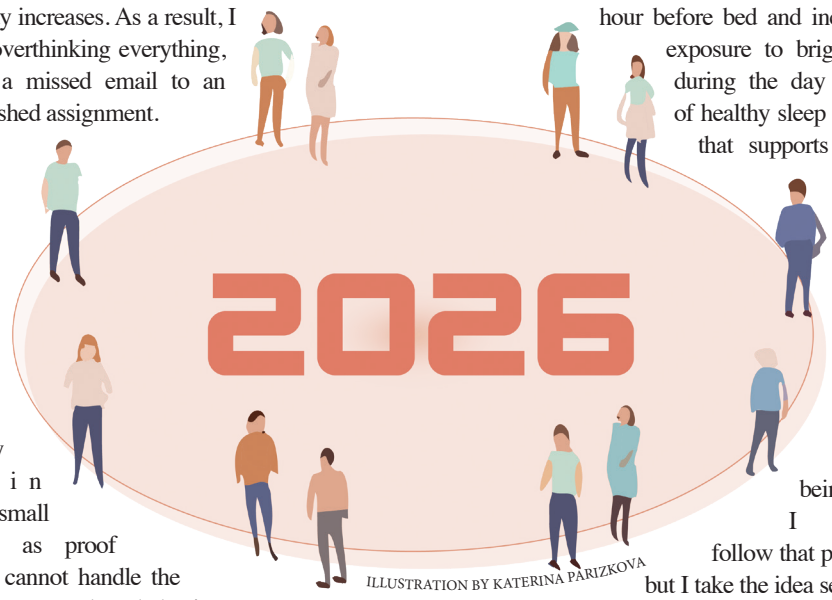


ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

My brain treats small things as proof that I cannot handle the semester, even though that is not true.

Connecticut winter adds additional pressure. Dark mornings and early sunsets make it easier to stay inside and isolate.

The National Institute of Mental Health explains that seasonal affective disorder is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern and lists treatments such as light therapy, psychotherapy, antidepressant medication and Vitamin D.

Even when it is not seasonal depression, the shift in seasons changes the feel of campus life. Cold air pushes people indoors, and short days make schedules feel tighter. When I already feel anxious, these conditions will shrink my world if I let them.

If you let the world define you, you will never find peace. That's why I adopt a mindset of viewing the reset not as a test of toughness, but as a process I can develop. When my mental health is fragile, I find small, repeatable habits more effective than setting large goals.

Sleep habits are a good example because they can influence nearly every part of daily life.

The American Psychiatric Association recommends avoiding screen time at least one hour before bed and increasing exposure to bright light during the day as part of healthy sleep hygiene that supports mental well-being.

I don't follow that perfectly, but I take the idea seriously. When I wake up earlier for class, I try to get at least six hours the night before.

You might think that's not enough, but when my body signals it's time to sleep, I'll go to bed, and it usually works.

If I stay up scrolling, I will pay for it the next morning with my mood and my focus. I notice that pattern more now than I did in high school.

Routines also mean learning how to exist on campus as a commuter. I always make sure I have enough time to park and get to my classes on time. Trust me, I learned this lesson the hard way several times last semester.

Support matters when routine and self-management are not enough. Quinnipiac offers resources that students can use before stress becomes a crisis.

Quinnipiac University Counseling and Mental Health Services shares information on support options, including 24/7 resources like the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The university has also committed to JED Campus, a four-year partnership that began in fall 2022 to strengthen student mental health, substance use and suicide prevention efforts.

I know how easy it is to delay seeking help. It is tempting to tell yourself you should handle it alone, especially when you look around and everyone else seems fine.

The truth is, many people are not fine; they're just quiet about it. National data shows that many students experience symptoms of anxiety and depression while going to class and trying to keep up.

When I talk about my mental health in my own life, I do not do it for attention; I do it because pretending I am okay does not make me okay, it just makes me worse.

I know many people facing similar struggles, so having a platform to discuss mental health allows me to support others and remind them they are not alone.

This week, I have tried to approach the return with a little more patience. I give myself extra time before my first class, so my commute does not affect my mood. I plan my day so there's space to breathe. I focus on doing the next right thing instead of trying to win the entire semester in one morning.

Winter break has officially ended. The journey back may take longer than you expected. That's OK. Right now, it's about building a rhythm that leaves you room to be human.

While we cannot manage every stressor, we can focus on the next small step. It's a process, but we'll keep showing up, one day at a time.

Why 'The Ghost and Mrs. Muir' still resonates

By JAMES DOBSON
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There is a particular kind of Hollywood fantasy — gentle, insinuating, almost embarrassed by its own yearning — that flourished briefly in the years just after World War II. "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir" (1947) belongs squarely to this moment.

The movie is a black-and-white romantic fantasy about a widow who falls in love with a ghost, and yet it is also about solitude, integrity and the struggles of compromise. Managing to be all of these things without collapsing into whimsy or sentimentality is the film's greatest strength.

The premise sounds whimsical to the point of self-parody. Lucy Muir (Gene Tierney), newly widowed and stubbornly independent, rents a seaside cottage haunted by the irascible spirit of its former owner, Captain Daniel Gregg (Rex Harrison). He is at first blustery, sexist and vocally contemptuous of women, qualities that somehow only sharpen the pleasure of watching Gene Tierney's Lucy refuse to be cowed by him. The movie's real plot begins there, in this calm, rational refusal to be intimidated.

What follows is not romance so much as cohabitation under sustained scrutiny. Lucy and the Captain argue constantly, but their arguments have the rhythm of domestic life rather than seduction. He bellows; she reasons. He asserts tradition and authority; she invokes necessity and self-respect.

Slowly, a system emerges. They share space. They make compromises. Their shared contempt for falseness and social pretense becomes most apparent when Lucy's in-laws attempt to reassert control over her life under the guise of concern. All the while, the Captain comes to respect Lucy while discovering that she cannot be frightened out of her convictions or worn down by bluster.

What makes the film endure is refusing to reduce romance to either destiny or instant chemistry. Lucy's own love for the Captain similarly is not a thunderbolt but an accretion of shared space, shared labor, shared seriousness and a mutual intolerance for falseness. They eventually collaborate on a memoir of the Captain's life at sea, a partnership in which he dictates and she shapes, edits and disciplines his voice into something the world will accept. Through this partnership, she publishes the book and achieves financial independence, ultimately buying the seaside cottage in full despite her in-laws' objections.

Rex Harrison's Captain Gregg, all curling lip and the bitterness of a man long accustomed to being obeyed, could easily have tipped into caricature, but the film grants him a real loneliness beneath the bluster. His authority is the residue of a working life at sea. His death, ruled a suicide is eventually revealed to have been a mere accident as he kicked a gas valve in his sleep, leaving his pride to harden where purpose once was. He is trapped not merely by his ghostliness but also by that pride, unable to move on, unable to fully give himself to the living woman who sustains him.

The Captain's most consequential act is also his quietest. Recognizing that his continued presence binds Lucy to a love that cannot age or appear in daylight, he deliberately withdraws, pretending to be nothing more than a figment of her imagination.

It is a gesture of self-sacrifice that carries none of the drama of renunciation and all of its cost: he chooses Lucy's life over his own longing, allowing and even quietly encouraging her to pursue a flesh-and-blood suitor not because that love is greater, but because it is survivable.

The film's final movement is devastating precisely because it is so restrained. Time passes. Lucy ages. The world narrows. Her young daughter has grown up and is preparing to marry an airline pilot, and in a visit to her mother back to the seaside cottage, casually mentions that she, too, had seen Captain Gregg growing up. This confirms that he was never merely Lucy's private private invention; the ghost was real, the love shared, and the life Lucy lived was never delusional.

When Lucy finally dies, it happens without ceremony or fear: she tips over a forgotten glass of milk, rises from her chair, and walks away from her own body. Captain Gregg is waiting for her, no longer blustering, just merely smiling gently and telling Lucy that now she'll never be tired again. Now, both ghosts leave the house together, hand in hand, the romance finally made possible only once time, compromise and the demands of the living world have released their claim.

Watching "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir" now, its emotional gravity remains strong and unsoftened by nostalgia. The movie trusts its audience to sit with longing that cannot be resolved, with love that does not conquer death so much as coexist with it.

It is a film that understands how often the deepest attachments in our lives can often be the ones we cannot explain, defend and cannot fully live out. Nonetheless, they shape us all the more enduringly.

ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY KATZ

