

North's new clubs look to spread passion for Asian art

Michael Bamford
Copy Editor

The Club Committee has recently admitted three new clubs: the Art Club, the Manga Club, and the Japanese Animation and Music Club. The new clubs will cater to the needs of a fresh swath of North's student body. Although the clubs might sound similar, they are unique in their own respects.

The Art Club, for instance, is very focused on creating a friendly environment for students to work on and develop their skills as artists. The officers hold biweekly meetings "to teach art techniques, explore various mediums of art, work on art pieces, and brainstorm designs for murals," sophomore Co-President Jackie Zhang said.

Although the club highlights new techniques, every member does not have to be a seasoned pro to join the club. Part of the positive atmosphere that is created comes from the idea that not every member will already be a master

at these techniques. "You do not have to be an amazing artist to join the club so long as you are enthusiastic and will to try new things," sophomore member Mahima Kakani said, before adding that she can barely draw a flower.

On the other hand, the Manga Club, according to senior President Frewin Hu, aims toward many long-term goals throughout the year: to prepare for the Silent Manga Audition (an international contest for a manga without any words), to compile the club members' works, and to attend Comic-Con at the end of the year. Hu hopes

to eventually set up a joint fair with the Manga Club from High



Manga Club

This work in progress from the Manga club is being created as a digital painting. The Manga club also produces other art forms such as paintings, story boards, and paper sketches to enhance their skills and pursue their passion for the club.

could be fueled only by the passion of students who live for manga. "I do not want to be standing in a society where nothing but studies and grades matter; I just want to be passionate about what I love," sophomore member Rebecca Yang said.

Hu believed North needed a club where the numerous fans could express their appreciation for manga in an effort to pursue long-term goals. "There are so many Manga fanatics that I was surprised this club has not been done already," he said.

Lastly, the Japanese Animation and Music club hopes to explore Japanese subcultures through music and animations. "We have activities planned out where

students will watch and discuss animation that is important to the Japanese animation industry," Senior Co-President Ryan Lin said. The club focuses on teaching members about a subculture that is not very well known to the local population.

This club is unique, in that it allows each member to concentrate on a specific part of that subculture. "A member would gain skills in arranging music, analyzing films or music, or creating animation or music, depending on what each member wants to focus on," Lin said. The club's officers each specialize in a separate category, which allows members to talk with someone in the club who is already knowledgeable in a specific subject concerning Japanese animation and music.

These new clubs provide the students of North with opportunities to enhance and highlight their creativity through different expressions of art. They will likely make a visible change in our community.

Club Committee regulations frustrate student leaders

Ally Santa Maria
Arts & Review Editor

When students walked into the main gym during lunch on September 24, they were no longer entering a basketball court but rather the annual club fair. Tables lined the edges of the gym as representatives of North's 50-plus clubs ran around handing out flyers. Some of these clubs were established, like Model Congress, while others were just beginning, like the Manga club. But all of these clubs have one thing in common: they have all interacted with the Student Council Club Committee.

The Club Committee started last year after Vice Principal Melissa Levine approached Student Council to request a new system for organizing clubs. Student Council had always helped manage the clubs, but its regulatory powers had never been clearly outlined. "There was no enforcement of the rules, there was no conveying of the rules, and basically no one knew what was going on," said junior Dillon Sumanthiran, the chairman of the committee.

The committee is composed of an elected official from each grade (senior Shiva Gongolla, junior Alan Xu, sophomore Amar Desai, and

freshman Aarman James) and a chairman. The committee runs the club approval process and keeps tabs on existing clubs to ensure that they are productive.

One of the committee's responsibilities is to evaluate club applications before Levine makes her final decision. The committee reads the club applications and decides whether they are legitimate, taking into consideration the level of interest from the student body, whether a similar club already exists, and whether the club has been proposed purely to enhance a student's college resume. After this process, the committee forwards the applications to Levine, who reviews further and either accepts or rejects them. If Levine approves an application, the potential club president pitches his or her plans to the entire Student Council. StuCo members ask questions and then vote on whether to approve each club.

One of the ways Club Committee manages existing clubs is through attendance records. Club presidents submit attendance through Google, so that the committee can check the activity of each club. If a club does not meet regularly, the committee has the right to disband it. However, the committee gives clubs time to accumulate members or organize

meetings properly; clubs aren't dissolved at the first sign of diminishing attendance. "We've never had to shut a club down," Sumanthiran said. "In any case, hopefully we're helping clubs."

But many club officials consider the committee a bureaucratic nightmare—not a helpful regulator. Senior Shannon Sheu, who helps run the Envirothon club, contacted the committee via email with questions about the club fair—and didn't get a reply for four days. "There could be more than one person doing the emails. They could plan in advance," Sheu said. "That was not the first time that happened."

The committee's attendance policy has also been source of frustration. The Club Constitution states that at least 15 members must attend meetings at least twice a month. The rule is meant to ensure that clubs are actually operating. But for clubs with dozens of members, like the Thespian Society, the attendance rule can seem like a hassle. "I'll be darned if I have to write down 40 people's names. It's unnecessary," said senior Kiera Beatty, president of the Thespian Society.

Other club presidents have taken to lying about attendance. The Kids for Kids club tutors students twice a month—yet the club is still required to hold additional

meetings in order to comply with committee regulations. "Just because we didn't meet the attendance policy didn't mean that we're not a productive club," said senior Haley Ghesani, president of Kids for Kids, who said her club has lied about attendance multiple times.

But the clubs' failure to report accurate attendance doesn't bother Levine, who said she believes all the clubs are active. "Does every person tell the truth all the time? I think we would be fooling ourselves if we expect that to happen. We kind of know what's going on," she said.

Still, not all students think the committee is unnecessary and burdensome. Michelle Xu, an officer in the Manga Club, said she struggled to have her voice heard during the club approval process, until she communicated directly with the committee. "Upon first glance, some people, particularly Mrs. Levine, called for the Manga Club and the Anime Club to merge together, because both clubs dealt with subjects that pertained to Japanese art and culture," Xu said. "However, with the Manga Club working to *create* manga comics, stories, and drawings, and with the Anime Club working to *review* anime shows and Japanese music, it was fundamentally impossible

for the two clubs to merge." Sumanthiran spoke individually with each club to better understand the separate projects and then brought the clubs' concerns to Mrs. Levine. Both clubs were approved.

Such situations are close to what former members of Student Council envisioned for the Club Committee. Benjamin Zhang, the 2013 E-Board President, said that, during his tenure, there was no formal body established to deal with clubs. "I think the idea of having a club committee manage the progress of existing clubs is a positive step towards establishing a formal and transparent process for club oversight," Zhang said. "That being said, however, concentrating in the hands of five people the power to deny club applications without a hearing and to terminate existing clubs is potentially risky."

Student Council advisor Donna Ritz understands the students' concerns and would be happy to relinquish control of the clubs. "Over this past year, there have been thoughts that we have gone overboard, and if someone has a better idea and wants to take it over we would be happy to give it to them," she said during an October Student Council meeting. "We would be more than happy to not have this responsibility."

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