



TOP STORY

West Virginia University Statler College of Engineering hosts annual pumpkin drop

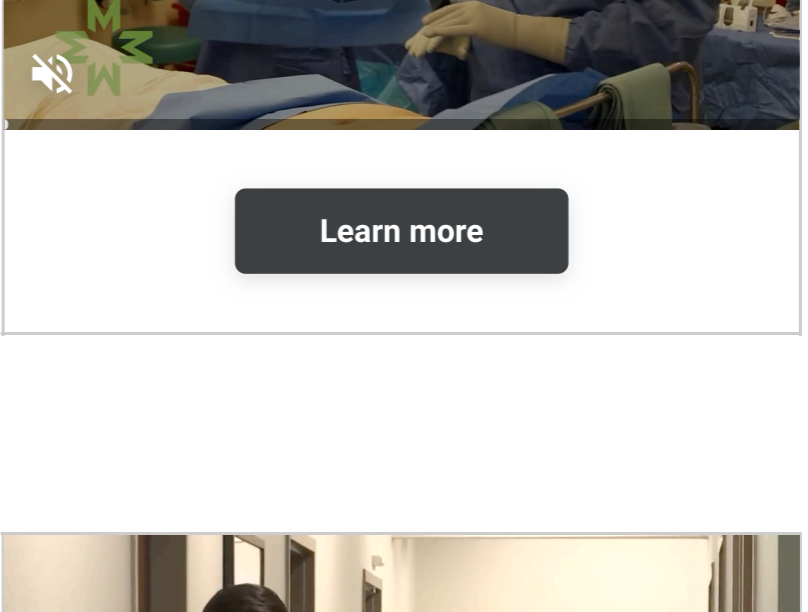
by Damian Phillips STAFF WRITER Oct 25, 2024 2 min to read

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Students, family, friends and chaperons gathered to watch the 2024 WVU pumpkin drop. Staff photo by Damian Phillips



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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (WV News) — West Virginia University's 35th pumpkin drop went off without a hitch — but had more than a few splats.

On Friday, students from around the state and beyond gathered at the Benjamin M. Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources Engineering Sciences Building to put their engineering skills to the test.

"There was so much excitement since 8:30 in the morning. There were about 250 pumpkins dropped today," said Statler College Dean Pedro Mago.

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"Thirty five years ago ... a group of (American Society of Mechanical Engineering) students here at WVU had an idea of doing this event ... just for WVU students," said Scott Wayne, WVU associate professor in the Department of Mechanical Materials and Aerospace Engineering and faculty adviser of WVU's ASME section.

After a few years, the event spread to area K-12 schools, which began to add it to their curriculum as a math and science project, and it has continued to grow. For a few years, a second pumpkin drop was hosted in Charleston to engage students in the southern part of the state.

The annual event on WVU's campus is enjoyed not only by West Virginia K-12 students, but also by students from Pennsylvania and Ohio, Wayne said, although no teams from Ohio were present this year.

To sign up for the event, each team pays a \$10 entry fee, which is donated to the Ronald McDonald House to support families of children receiving care at WVU Medicine Children's Hospital.

The 2024 pumpkin drop raised \$2,560 for the house.

But "it's more about the fun than the actual money," Mago said.

For participants, the pumpkin drop serves as a math and science project, with students engaged in learning about principles of physics like acceleration due to gravity, terminal velocity and impulse of momentum.

For the university, the pumpkin drop serves as a recruitment tool.

There were more than 1,000 students involved in the pumpkin drop Friday, with friends, family and educators in tow, bringing heavy traffic to the downtown campus area.

"It was a pretty good-sized crowd," Wayne said. "It gets students here on our campus. They see some of our projects that are around — our race car designs, our hybrid vehicle designs are out on display — just as an initial visit here to get them excited about West Virginia University and to get them excited about science and math.

"The more time we can get in front of them and talk to them, the more likely we can get students to come to the university when they reach college age."

Mago agreed there are benefits to "having all these kids from middle school and high school seeing what we have at the College of Engineering — not just this event — but we also give them the opportunity to see our student projects like robotics, Formula SAE car."

There were also representatives from the university's student groups on hand with autonomous unmanned aerial vehicles and hybrid vehicles.

While there are other campus events throughout the year that encourage K-12 students to compete in them, none are as big or well attended as the pumpkin drop, said Jason Gross, chair of mechanical materials and aerospace engineering.

"It's always a fun event," he said.

"What makes me most excited is that we've been in this so long that last year when I was running around as the department chair and I was talking to one of our engineering seniors, he said, 'Hey, I went here in middle school, and our team won,'" Gross said.

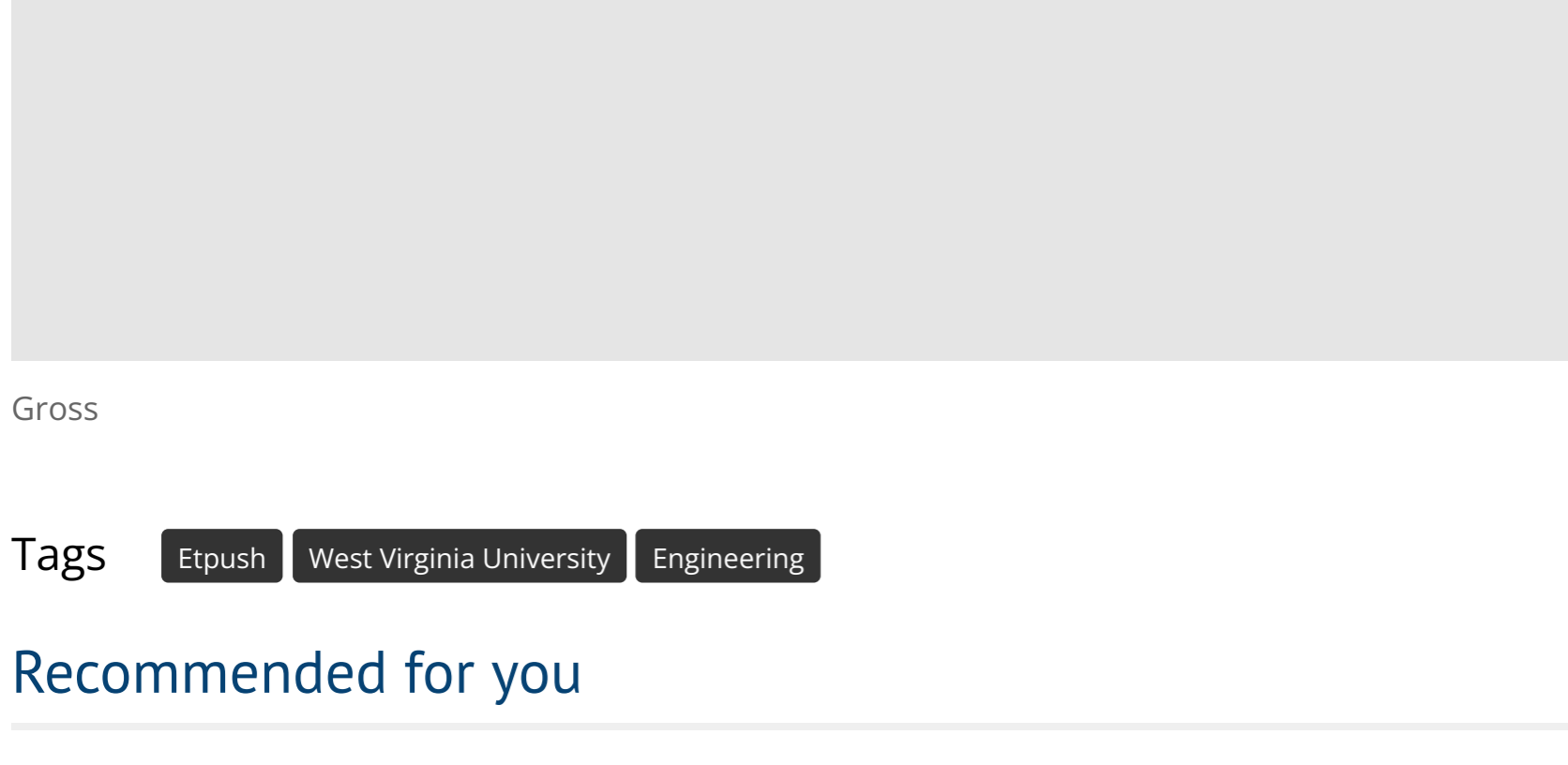
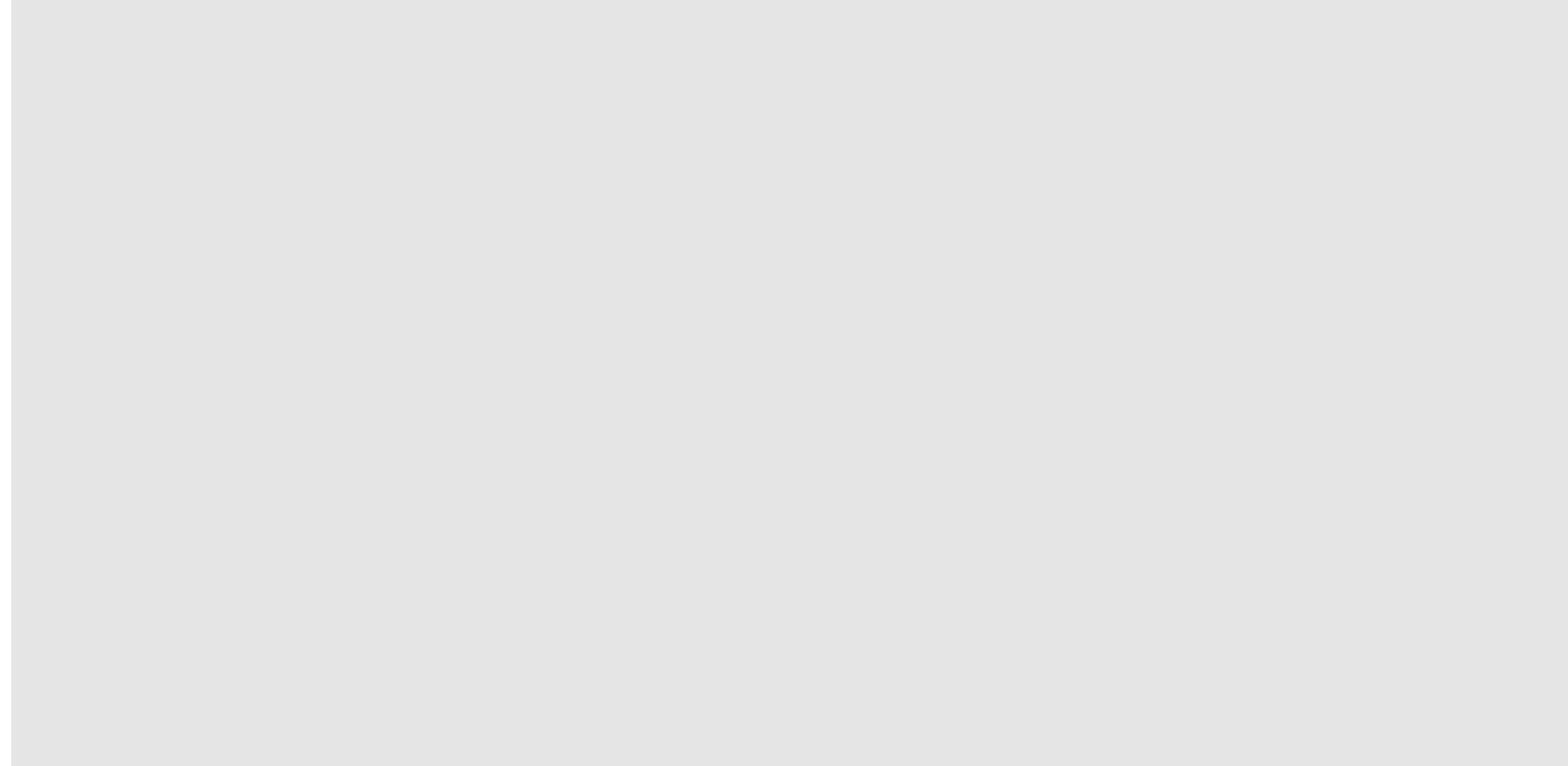
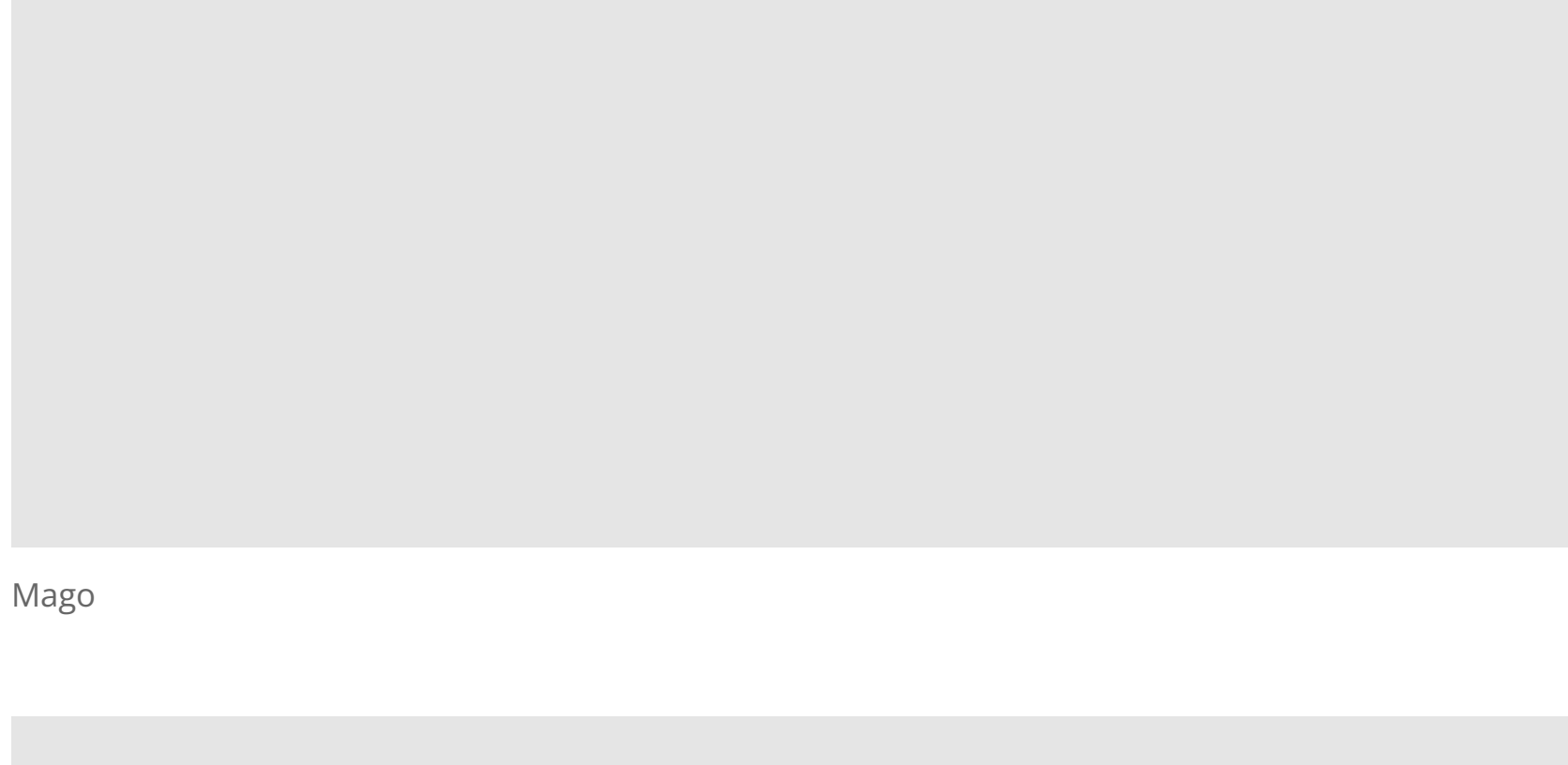
"There's been such a longevity of this event that we see in action that there are students that learned about opportunities in engineering and started coming to campus every year while they were in high school, and now they're here in our programs," Gross said.

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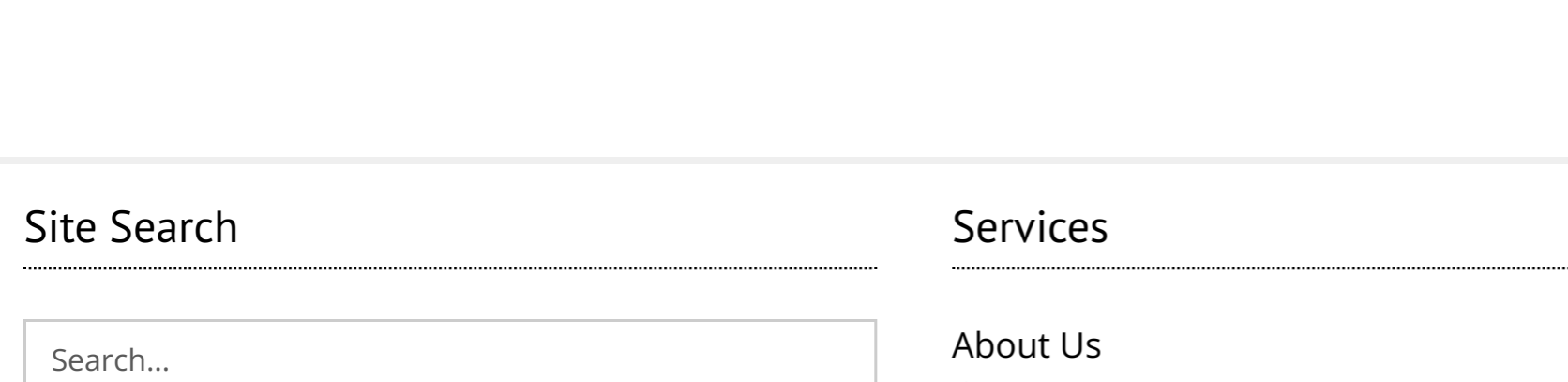
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