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Graphic by Carson Schultz

ONE LAST RIDE

An extra year of eligibility provides a unique scenario for some Penn State athletes

By Will Rosenblatt
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

It was March 2020. Penn State track star Victoria Tachinski had just broken the school record in the 600-meter race.

Then came the email alerting her that the remainder of the season would be canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. She said she broke down crying.

“I was so upset,” Tachinski told The Daily Collegian. “I knew I was on a really great path of having a really great outdoor season, so it was a lot of heartbreak when we found out we really weren’t gonna be able to do it.”

For a senior like Tachinski, the cancelation seemed to indicate the end of her collegiate career without fully utilizing her fourth year of eligibility.

However, the NCAA later announced it would give spring sport athletes the opportunity to use an extra year of eligibility. As the pandemic dragged on, all collegiate athletes were granted an extra year.

Athletes everywhere had a choice to make: move on to the next chapter of their life or come back for one final year.

For some athletes, the choice was easy. For others — like Penn State soccer player Sam Coffey, who said she waited until the “very last possible second” to decide — there was a lot to think about.

Coffey, who played her first two years at Boston College before transferring to Penn State, was selected 12th overall in the NWSL draft. She has a Big Ten championship under her belt, a midfielder of the year in the ACC and Big Ten, and has 114 career points.

She didn’t have anything to prove in a return to Happy Valley. Many in her position may have been content to go pro, and she



Courtesy of Penn State Athletics

After the coronavirus pandemic, track athlete Victoria Tachinski will use her extra year of eligibility. This year, she’s aiming for a national championship appearance. “I know I can do it.”

said the decision weighed heavily on her.

“It was never whether or not I wanted to stay at Penn State — because of course my heart wanted to be here — it was just also the outside factors of professional play that made the decision a little more complicated,” Coffey told the Collegian.

One of the factors Coffey said helped pull her back to Penn State was teammate and fellow captain, Kerry Abello. For Abello, despite also being drafted and having a long list of accomplishments in her own right, the choice was easy because she wanted to complete her degree in the fall.

This also wasn’t the first time Abello played a part in a major decision for Coffey.

When Coffey first entered the transfer portal after her sophomore year, she met Abello in a coffee shop in downtown State College. By the end of the day, Coffey said she knew she didn’t have to look anywhere else.

Now, almost three years later, they’re coming back together.

“The fact that we get to lead this team together and we get to kind of get this bonus semester at a place that we love so much and have given so much to — of course just only solidified my decision to stay,” Coffey said.

While there’s plenty of excitement for the pair to return to the Nittany Lions this fall, Abello and Coffey felt the same pain Tachinski did when their season was canceled in 2020.

“I was absolutely crushed when our season was canceled in the fall just because the team had worked so hard to be prepared for that fall season,” Abello told the Collegian. “But once we learned we’d be able to play somewhat of a season in the spring, and it wouldn’t count toward our eligibility, I was just excited for the opportunity to win two more championships with the team.”

Tachinski said her teammates also played a significant role in her return — especially her best friend Jordan Williams, who will also be back for a fifth year.

“I was basically choosing between starting my career and running, but it really came down to [the fact] that I’m going to work for the rest of my life, but running

— this is something that I can do right now at a program as amazing as ours,” Tachinski said.

Dom Perretta, who is a distance runner on the track team, will be entering his sixth year due to a medical redshirt. Perretta has struggled with injuries almost his entire career, but now that he’s the healthiest he’s been in four years, coming back was a no brainer.

“If I didn’t have injuries throughout my career, and I had to end it like that, then yeah that’s fine,” Perretta told the Collegian. “But I kind of just want to see what I could really do if I would stay healthy.”

The extra year of eligibility provides a unique opportunity for athletes like Peretta, Tachinski, Abello and Coffey. None of these are individuals who have been waiting to see the field, but they all have unfinished business in Happy Valley.

For Tachinski, she said her biggest goal is representing the blue and white in the 800m at nationals.

“I know I can do it,” Tachinski said confidently. “I know this upcoming year, I’m going for it. I’m going full out.”

Tachinski said once she knew she had that fifth year, she was able to use last season as a learning experience, which took some of the pressure off of her performance.

Similarly, Perretta said he wants to be an All-American — a mark he said he just missed in his junior year.

Being a fifth-year athlete can put one in the position of being a leader, whether they were naturally born to be one. The years of work these elder statesmen have put in have helped shape their personalities today.

Visit collegian.psu.edu to read the full story.

Alumnus takes unexpected path to Olympic glory

By Joel Neuschwander
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Tom Hovasse’s journey to an Olympic medal began with an unexpected phone call.

BASKETBALL The former Penn State forward made a brief stint in the

NBA in addition to a long professional playing career overseas with stops in Portugal and Japan — the country where he met his wife and started his family.

After retiring from the game and not receiving any coaching chances, he returned to the United States to pursue a more blue-collar career. However, he said he didn’t want to leave basketball behind entirely.

Then, he got his opportunity — back in Japan.

“Coaching and basketball have always been in my blood,” Hovasse told The Daily Collegian. “I started coaching my son’s AAU teams, and then out of the blue, I got a message from a women’s team.”

When the JX-Eneos Sunflowers of the Women’s Japan Basketball League came calling, Hovasse said the decision was an easy one.

The Sunflowers wanted Hovasse to develop Ramu Tokashiki, a promising power forward with a similar skillset to Hovasse’s.

One thing led to another, and Hovasse quickly climbed the coaching ladder.

“I became an assistant coach for that team, developed her, and then I just started moving up the ranks, and the national team invited me to be an assistant coach,” he said. “It just went from there.”

At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Hovasse was an assistant for a Japanese Women’s National Team that reached the quarterfinal round but lost by 46 points to the United States.

Japan trailed by 10 at halftime, but the game got out of hand in the final 20 minutes. Hovasse said he wanted to see more fight from his team in the last two quarters.

“It was a close game at half-time, and I felt like the players were satisfied with that effort,” Hovasse said. “I was not satisfied at all. I thought we could take it to them a little bit more and get a little bit better.”

Hovasse was hired as Japan’s head coach just months after the 2016 Olympics, becoming the first foreign-born head coach in the country’s women’s basketball history. Upon his hiring, Hovasse declared his team would play for Olympic gold against the United States in the 2020 Games in Tokyo.

On Aug. 8, Hovasse and his

squad did just that, falling to the Americans 90-75 but medaling in the Olympics for the first time in Japan women’s basketball history.

The winning mentality Hovasse instilled in his players paid dividends in the months and years leading up to the 2020 Games. Hovasse said Japan came into the tournament with “a belief that we are better than most teams in the world.”

“We took that into this Olympics, and we never backed down. We really thought we were going to win [gold],” he said. “I think that’s the biggest difference from Rio to now — that mindset and that belief.”

Hovasse said he coaches with the same mentality that former Penn State head coach Bruce Parkhill did but tries to add his own uniqueness.

Parkhill ran the show for all four of Hovasse’s seasons in the blue and white — part of his 12-year tenure in Happy Valley.

“[Coach Parkhill was] kind of the base of my coaching philosophy. He was such a big influence on what I did in college and beyond,” Hovasse said. “I’ve tried to be a little bit more motivational. He was a taskmaster, he was just really on you. I’m just adding my own flavor to what I’ve learned and trying to branch out and be me as a coach.”

Hovasse’s Penn State teammates said they can see the similarities between his approach now and the passion Parkhill showed on the Penn State sideline — and it started over 30 years ago as a freshman in State College.

Hovasse wasn’t afraid of going toe-to-toe with Parkhill, and a particular moment stands out to former Penn State guard Brian Allen.

In December 1985, Penn State had a road contest against a top-10 Oklahoma team.

After Hovasse made a defensive mistake, Parkhill ripped into him. Where previous Nittany Lions may have taken it on the chin, Allen said Hovasse got angry and yelled right back at Parkhill.

“[Tom] was as fiery as Coach Parkhill. He didn’t back down from anybody,” Allen told the Collegian. “At that point I said,

‘This dude is special.’”

Allen and Hovasse were members of Penn State’s 1985 recruiting class, a group that also included center Ed Fogell. Together, a crew Allen called a “bunch of misfits” became determined to leave the Nittany Lions in better shape than when they arrived.

After finishing with a 12-17 record in the 1985-86 season, Penn State’s fortunes gradually improved. The Nittany Lions won 20 games in Hovasse’s senior season and nearly made the NCAA Tournament.

“We took a lot of pride in turning the program around,” Fogell — who also played with and against Hovasse professionally in Japan — told the Collegian.

The bond formed by that group of players is one that stood the test of time, as Hovasse said he and other members of that 1985 Nittany Lion class still keep in touch today — both with each other and with their head coach.

“Every so often, I am treated to some banter among Tom and his teammates,” Parkhill told the Collegian via email. “I’m so glad they have stayed close.”

His days in State College long gone, Hovasse has called Japan home for much of the past 20 years and is fluent in Japanese.

Even with two decades of experience in the country, Hovasse said he still picks up new things about the culture regularly.

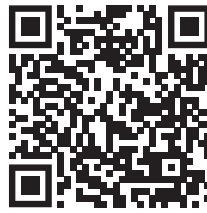
“It takes forever,” he said. “The culture here is amazing. It feels like I’m learning something new every day. It keeps me on my toes.”

Hovasse said the gold medal game loss was tough to swallow, but he was proud of the effort his team put in throughout the tournament.

Having led Japan to its first taste of women’s basketball Olympic glory, Hovasse’s vision outlined more than four years ago was realized.

He made sure to soak in his team’s achievements during the medal ceremony.

“When I saw the players get their medal, I had nothing but pride,” he said. “We didn’t win gold, but we put our basketball on the world stage, and I feel like people enjoyed it.”



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Courtesy of FIBA

Japanese women’s basketball head coach Tom Hovasse looks on during the 2020 Olympic Games.

Students debrief ‘pathetic’ COVID policies

By Olivia Estright
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

During Penn State’s town hall where President Eric Barron discussed the university’s pandemic response for the upcoming fall semester, junior Josh Portney turned off the virtual stream and was left with the same feeling he had after watching a similar town hall as a freshman.

“Last time, it was very underwhelming because [Barron] didn’t provide a lot of information,” Portney (junior-communications and political science) said. “The same thing happened this time around.”

While the university isn’t requiring students to get vaccinated, unvaccinated individuals have to get tested each week, and all people are required to wear masks indoors.

Portney said he’s “upset” the university isn’t mandating the vaccine for all students.

“It’s pathetic, honestly,” Portney said. “There were seven other major Big Ten institutions requiring the vaccine.”

In the Big Ten, institutions currently requiring the vaccine are Michigan State, Northwestern, Rutgers, Maryland, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota. However, some of the aforementioned institutions will allow individuals to remain unvaccinated if they are tested weekly, and not all mandates are currently in effect.

Portney said he thinks the reason Penn State isn’t mandating the vaccine may be due to a larger political scheme at hand. He said he believes the university should be able to look past the possible disappointment felt by opposing parties.

“If you’re afraid, look to our colleagues in Michigan who aren’t afraid,” Portney said. “We can be better than Michigan. We can be better than the rest of the country.”

Alexander Papandrikos said the university initially “incentivized” the vaccine.

“The original policies dissuade people from not being vaccinated by saying vaccinated people didn’t need to wear masks inside, they wouldn’t be tested as vigorously,” Papandrikos (sophomore-division of undergraduate studies) said. “Penn State made it seem like getting vaccinated



Josie Chen/Collegian file photo

Penn State is not mandating the vaccine for students but masks are required indoors. Student Josh Portney said he is upset about the university’s decision to not mandate the vaccine. “It’s pathetic, honestly.”

was the best option.”

After receiving the second email from the university approximately 24 hours after the town hall, Papandrikos said he was “really disappointed” in the university’s mask mandate.

Papandrikos said he was “relieved” there would “finally be a sense of normalcy” before Barron’s email enacting the mask mandate for all students — regardless of vaccination status.

“At first, I hoped that more students would turn to getting vaccinated before coming to campus,” Papandrikos said. “Now, I don’t really know.”

During the town hall, Penn State announced it would not have remote class options for students who were unvaccinated and quarantined. The majority of classes — or approximately 96% — will be held in person this semester.

While Papandrikos said he was concerned this decision will “backfire” because it will hurt more students academically, Jacob Malizio said he was all for it.

“That’s pretty smart on the university’s end because if you are unvaccinated and you have to miss two weeks of school, good luck,” Malizio (sophomore-public relations and theatre studies) said.

As a performing arts student, Malizio said he’s craving being back on stage with some sense of the old “normal” but having masks will prevent that.

“If we have to go through another year like last year, I honestly might stay home,” Malizio said. “I’m just not getting what I paid for. It’s simply not worth it.”

Malizio said it’s “unfortunate” for students who already received the vaccine because they did what they could “to ensure the safety of the community.”

“We took the steps to get out of this mess, and now because of a minority of people who refused to get vaccinated, we are all forced to face the consequences,” Malizio said.

To encourage students to get the vaccine, Malizio said he believes the university was on the

right path with the strategies mentioned in the town hall.

“In order to influence people to get the vaccine, you have to make their lives as difficult as possible,” Malizio said. “Not only could the vaccine prevent you from getting COVID, but even if you do happen to get it, the vaccines can prevent the more serious symptoms, including death. Vaccines work — that’s the bottom line.”

Jeremy Laguerre said he was confused with the university’s two decisions to not mandate the vaccine and to require masks for everyone.

“It was a weird choice,” Laguerre (sophomore-atmospheric science) said. “When the university said [it] was requiring masks to be worn but not requiring students to get the vaccine, it didn’t really make sense to me.”

Laguerre said the immediate mask mandate at the university was “counterintuitive” if the university is still trying to encourage students to get vaccinated.

Although Laguerre said he understands the incentive of not

having remote classes, he said it was “inconsiderate” that Penn State does not have online options for students who cannot physically be in the classroom.

“Penn State has been picking and choosing which parts of the pandemic [it wants] to recognize,” Laguerre said. “There are some students who still can’t come onto campus and international students who are still barred from coming to the United States.”

Laguerre said while he “appreciates” the university’s attempt in trying to make this year more normal, he said he thinks Penn State is being “inconsistent” with responding to the pandemic and student body.

“What does Penn State really stand for?” Laguerre said.

Penn State spokesperson Wyatt DuBois said in a statement that the decisions Barron made at the town hall “represent the right approach for Penn State to help keep the community safe.”

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No remote classes? Professors react

By Phoebe Cykosky
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State announced its coronavirus operation plans for the fall on Aug. 3 during a virtual town hall meeting. Among the plans announced, university officials said Penn State will not offer remote learning options — even for quarantined students.

James Tierney, assistant teaching professor of economics, said via email he is teaching “over 450 students in a single room,” and he will “inevitably need to provide materials for students who will need to quarantine.”

“I will continue to offer remote options for my class, even if the university denies my request to teach this class virtually in the fall,” Tierney said. “It is the only way to ensure a fair and equitable education for all.”

After voicing his opinions against the current policies in place for the fall semester, Tierney announced his resignation from Penn State on Thursday.

In a letter he shared with Twitter, Tierney said he will work through the fall semester and asked for his last day to be Dec. 31. He also said his issues with Penn State’s coronavirus policies are not the sole reason for his decision to leave the university.

“I believe the university’s vision for higher education no longer aligns with my own,” Tierney wrote in the letter.

In April, the university announced approximately 96% of classes will be held in person this semester and has not changed the policy since.

Tierney said it makes him “sad that the university has a blanket policy for all class types.”

“Other universities, such as Ohio State, kept their large lectures remote for this exact reason,” Tierney said. “The more people in the room, the higher risk of transmission, which leads to more work for faculty to manage both live and remote offerings.”

Kirk French, professor of anthropology, said he believes the university’s response is “appalling and sickening.”

“It is abundantly obvious that the Board of Trustees [does] not care at all for the wellbeing of the



Jordan Dawson/Collegian

Many Penn State professors are frustrated with the university’s decision to remove virtual class options for fall 2021, resulting in a faculty rally on Aug. 13.

students, staff, faculty or the State College area community,” French said. “[The trustees] don’t care about anyone but themselves and the money the university generates.”

French said he believes the Board of Trustees has “politicized the health and safety of our families and community.”

In an open letter to the community released Thursday, Penn State President Eric Barron responded to the criticism surrounding the university’s coronavirus mitigation plans for the fall semester.

Barron said the approach of masking, testing and encouraging vaccination aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines to uphold the health and safety of the community, but mandating the vaccine comes with its own difficulties.

“Public universities, in particular, have challenges with the mode of response to the pandemic. Regulations across the country clearly reflect state-level political realities,” Barron said. “State funding of our university requires a two-thirds vote of the Pennsylvania legislature, meaning that our funding relies on strong bipartisan support.”

The Board of Trustees issued a statement Friday to support Barron and the university’s current policies after Penn State’s Facul-

ty Senate met and passed a vote of “no confidence” in the school’s plans for the fall.

“We believe it’s important to acknowledge the complexity and unprecedented nature of the pandemic and the fact that there are no easy solutions,” the statement read.

“An ongoing dialogue, with mutual appreciation for these challenges, is the most productive way to address any concerns with the planned approach.”

Other Big Ten institutions — like Indiana, Rutgers, Northwestern, Maryland, Illinois, Michigan, Michigan State and Minnesota have mandated the coronavirus vaccine. However, some of the aforementioned institutions will allow individual students to remain unvaccinated if they are tested weekly.

Jadrian Wooten, associate teaching professor of economics, said his opinion is “twofold” on the decision.

“The university should have more remote learning options for students who prefer that method,” Wooten said. “There were a lot of students over the past year who enjoyed that option, and it’s been mostly taken away going forward.”

Wooten said he thinks it is “imperative” faculty offer remote options “where available.”

“Classrooms on campus are equipped with Zoom, and it takes

only a couple of minutes to start a recording of that day’s lecture for students who can’t come to class,” Wooten said. “We’ve learned so much over the past year about how to teach remotely that it seems all wasted to return as if nothing happened the past year.”

Paul Kellermann, professor of English, said he is “disappointed” in the decision to not provide remote options because the university is “only offering limited opportunities for work adjustments.”

“I have colleagues with children too young to be vaccinated — who are worried about carrying the virus home,” Kellermann said. “I also have colleagues in high-risk groups due to age or preexisting conditions.”

Kellermann said he is worried about immunocompromised students and wonders “what they are supposed to do.” The State College area has had good “luck” throughout the summer with the spread, Kellermann said, but he said he believes that can change once everyone is back.

“With the delta variant spreading out of control in many parts of the country, who knows what next week will bring?” Kellermann said.

“We’ve been lucky in central Pennsylvania, but who knows how long our luck will hold?”

He said he believes the univer-

sity “should mandate vaccines and allow everyone time to get vaccinated and acquire immunity” by beginning the semester remotely and then transitioning in person.

Faculty from the Coalition for a Just University at Penn State, who agree the vaccine should be mandated, gathered outside of Old Main Friday for a “Rally to Vaccinate Penn State.”

“If students choose to go unvaccinated, they [should] have the freedom to take online classes,” Kellermann said. “If [any] faculty choose to go unvaccinated, they [should be able to] apply to teach online.”

Kellermann said he is “still not sure” how he will conduct his classroom and is waiting for “specific guidance” from Penn State.

“If I had my druthers, I’d make COVID-19 vaccinations a prerequisite for taking my classes,” Kellermann said. “But since I don’t have my druthers, I may just need to wear a hazmat suit to teach, and I hear they’re quite stylish.”

Kellermann said he compared Penn State’s response from the town hall meeting to the response during the fall 2020 semester.

“I was surprised to hear Provost [Nick] Jones say at the town hall that infected students won’t have the option of joining classes from remote locations,” Kellermann said. “Students in isolation and quarantine could still participate in classes last year.”

Kellermann said he is hoping his friends in Penn State Information Technology can suggest some solutions, but if there is an outbreak like last year, “it’s going to be a total clusterf---.”

“Every semester, a few students get sick, and I work with them individually,” Kellermann said. “If the delta ravages the campus, I won’t be able to work individually with scores of students.”

Faculty, staff and other employees who are unvaccinated or did not submit their vaccination status will also be required to follow the university’s coronavirus testing policies, which will be announced “soon.”

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Wilmoth named director of CSGD

By Colton Lucas
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With a new semester comes new beginnings — including the chance for one faculty member to step into a leadership position that promotes inclusion and diversity at University Park.

Sonya Wilmoth has worked with Penn State’s Jeffrey A. Conrad Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity since 2013 when she became assistant director.

Having served under two previous directors, Wilmoth took on the role herself when she was named the center’s third and newest director in July.

“One of the biggest reasons I love this work is because when I was coming out as a young, college-age female — who identified as a lesbian at an all-private Catholic institution — I had really nobody to turn to,” Wilmoth said. “I am invested in the work because I want to be that somebody or something that I didn’t have.”

When the center’s previous director Brian Patchcoski was named the assistant vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion for Penn State Student Affairs in January, Wilmoth stepped in to serve as interim director.

Through the remainder of the spring semester and into the summer, Wilmoth helped lead the center through this temporary role. But, this was not the first time she took on this leadership position.

Following the 2016 retirement of Allison Subasic, the center’s founding director, Wilmoth took on the title of interim director for nearly seven months. At that time, the center operated under its previous name, the LGBTQA Resource Center, and was still located in the Boucke Building, according to Wilmoth.

Wilmoth said the opportunity to work under the center’s two previous directors gave her the knowledge and skill needed to take on her new role.

“One of the privileges I’ve had is working with the founding director, Allison... through her, I’ve learned a lot about the LGBTQ community at Penn State and dug into the mission of why this work is important,” Wilmoth said. “Knowing all of that and getting the chance to work with Brian... I learned a lot through him.”

Soon after making the move from Texas to State College almost a decade ago, Wilmoth said she was made aware of a part-time assistant director position in the LGBTQA Resource Center. When the role transitioned into a full-time position, Wilmoth said she jumped at the chance to apply.

Wilmoth said when she first began working at University Park, she noticed conversations starting to emerge from queer and transgender students who wanted to see Penn State enact more inclusive practices.

Under Subasic, Wilmoth said

these conversations started coming to light and were further addressed under Patchcoski’s leadership.

Now, under her new position, Wilmoth said she wants to continue expanding on the center’s promise to be a welcoming and diverse environment for all students — not just those who are LGBTQ.

Having served as the center’s director through many of its recent changes and developments, including its name change and relocation to the HUB-Robeson Center, Patchcoski said the position tends to require a more “outward” focus than other positions in the center.

“This is not about the person who holds the role, it’s about the communities the center serves,” Patchcoski said. “While we have tremendous resources, Sonya’s job will be continuously finding what the next set of resources is — ‘What else do we need to devise?’”

Patchcoski said he believes Wilmoth has grown tremendously since he first came to Penn State

and her appointment as the center’s director will lead to positive growth for the center.

Currently serving as the center’s programming coordinator, Eric Duran said working with Wilmoth has been a wonderful opportunity filled with positive experiences.

Duran said Wilmoth’s motivation to build a more equitable campus helps guide his own work.

In the upcoming semester, Duran said he hopes to see Wilmoth’s experience shine through in programming efforts and in building up a community that was largely not able to be gathered during last year due to the pandemic.

Continuing the center’s goals of connecting students of all identities and backgrounds, Duran said Wilmoth has an understanding of the needs and wants of students and what it will take to accomplish these goals.

Muggs Leone, a student staff member in the center, began working with Wilmoth this summer. In the period of time he has been able to interact and

work with her, Leone said he believes Wilmoth’s new position will help push the center forward.

Wilmoth knows how to create an inviting environment that focuses on creating a balance of hard work and fun, Leone said.

With students returning to campus in full force for the fall semester, Leone said he believes Wilmoth’s experience working before and during the coronavirus pandemic will be crucial to provide new experiences for students who have not had the chance to visit or experience the center for themselves due to pandemic restraints.

“Having someone who is familiar with what we did before and during [the pandemic]... she’s been around for all these changes, and I think that is really helpful going forward,” Leone said.

In her new position, Wilmoth said she wants the Penn State community to know she is ready to take on this role and help lead the center into a bright future.

“I love Penn State... sometimes it’s really hard for people to love a job and love going to work every day, but I think all of those things have fallen into place for me,” Wilmoth said. “I just love the university — I think we have a lot of things we can do, and I look forward to doing it.”

Sonya Wilmoth
Director of the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity

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CURTAINS UP

Live theatre at Penn State to make ‘triumphant’ return this fall

By Colton Lucas
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It’s time to get the show back on the road at Penn State.

With many performing arts groups halted from performing in person due to coronavirus restrictions, live theatre was largely absent from University Park’s repertoire in the past year.

After adapting to virtual options and limited in-person performances, theatre groups at Penn State are now set to return with full seasons of in-person shows this fall.

Amy Vashaw, the director of audience and program development for the Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State, said she believes audiences will welcome the return of in-person performances.

“I think people are eager to gather together again,” Vashaw said via email. “The arts can reach people in unique ways — building empathy for people with different lived experiences, creating moments of sheer joy and beauty, and allowing people to feel seen and heard. We all crave human connection — something the pandemic time robbed of us.”

While the Center for the Performing Arts has not officially announced its upcoming season

yet, Vashaw said the center is excited to bring forth shows that “focus on engaging the artists on campus and in the community.”

Vashaw said people should expect to see an “eclectic” mix of live and virtual shows that highlight dance, Broadway, theatre, global sounds, jazz and classical music.

Scheduled for Sept. 16, the center will kick off its fall season with a free concert on Eisenhower Auditorium’s patio. Featuring the global artist troupe Mwenso and the Shakes, the concert will usher in the start of the Fierce Urgency Festival’s second year, which is hosted by the center.

“The concert includes an experience of original songs and expressions that journey through the kaleidoscope of Black ancestral diasporic music and traditions,” Vashaw said.

With the direction of the ongoing pandemic remaining in question, Director of the Center for the Performing Arts Sita Frederick said the center will remain vigilant in providing safe and entertaining performances this fall.

“We are being cautious about how many events we program for the fall and spring because there’s so much uncertainty still with the direction of the



Courtesy of Freddie Miller

Members of Penn State’s No Refund Theatre read “Outcasts” on Friday, Oct. 9, 2020. At the time, masking guidelines were in effect, as was social distancing, limiting the performing capacity of the organization.

pandemic,” Frederick said. “But I think people are really craving to be in spaces together — safely.”

The Penn State Thespian Society will welcome back live theatre with plans to perform the musical adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s novel “Little Women.”

Brian Krall, the public relations chair for the society, said while the group has not set an official performance date for the musical, it will hold auditions for the show starting the first week of classes.

“We have a really great production staff behind it and a really excited group that may not have seen every traditional aspect of Thespians, but it’s going to come forth in a newer generation,” Krall (senior-biology) said. “As a senior — seeing how the old and the new are coming together — I think this is a really perfect show for us to start back on.”

Krall said the Thespian Society is ready to embrace the university’s recent indoor masking

mandate and will continue to adhere to whatever policies are put in place in order to bring audiences back into theaters once again.

On top of the fall musical, the group also has plans to hold a children’s show in the Schlow Centre Region Library downtown and its annual MasquerAIDS event, which is a fundraiser for the local nonprofit AIDS Resource.

Kicking off its first round of shows this September, No Refund Theatre will feature a range of performances throughout the fall.

According to NRT, shows featured in the first round will include “Love/Sick,” running Sept. 16-18, “A Stand-up Guy,” running Sept. 23-25, and “The Vagina Monologues,” running Sept. 30 through Oct. 2.

NRT’s second round of shows will begin in October, with a performance of “Barefoot in the Park.”

“All of the shows were chosen

due to the fact that they can be performed successfully while carefully following the COVID guidelines that the university has put in place for everyone’s safety,” NRT said via email.

Penn State Centre Stage will also welcome back live theatre this fall with a production of “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time,” occurring Sept. 28 through Oct. 9 in the Playhouse Theatre.

Centre Stage will additionally feature performances of “Andrew Lippa’s Wild Party” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” later this fall.

“I think in a community that is used to gathering in person and has been away for so long, [live theatre] can provide a special place for joy and release,” Frederick said. “My hope is that these events will be very special for people.”

To email reporter: cpl5368@psu.edu. Follow them on Twitter at: @ColtonPLucas



Chloe Trief/Collegian

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Nittanyville tent city plans fall return

By James Engel
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After a pandemic year with no student section, no camping and a lack of in-person activities, Penn State’s famed Nittanyville tent city is planning a return for this fall’s football season.

Pitched for each home game, Nittanyville is a vast sea of tents put up by students outside of Beaver Stadium’s Gate A. For normal home games, students begin building their impromptu settlements on Wednesdays. But for the White Out — this year’s Week 3 against Auburn — the pitching process is set to begin on Sunday for a near weeklong experience.

“The Penn State experience is nowhere near the same without having football games and having Beaver Stadium rocking with [approximately] 110,000 people,” Nittanyville President Matthew Solomon said.

Solomon (senior-criminology) said Nittanyville offers a multitude of activities throughout the



Courtney Taylor/Collegian file photo

After a yearlong hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, Nittanyville will once again come to life, full of dedicated Penn State football fans camping outside Beaver Stadium for days.

These include quite the same — banner making, visitations by the football team and coaches, and, most importantly, front row seats in Penn State’s student section.

“The energy in the student

section, you can’t find it anywhere else in the stadium or anywhere else in the country... When a big play happens, it feels like an earthquake,” Solomon said.

Though student campers outside Beaver Stadium were not uncommon prior to Nittanyville’s official formation, the tent city began in earnest during the 2005 football season. Originally called “Paternoville,” the settlement started as many camped out in anticipation of a Penn State-Ohio State matchup, which Penn State would ultimately win 17-10. Nittanyville took its current name in 2012.

To participate, students must be in a group of four to 10 people per tent. Throughout the week, one member of the group must be present during night hours for random checks. Then, on game day, groups file through Gate A to fill the first few rows of the student section in the stadium’s south end, according to Solomon.

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