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Concerns over course affordability

By Maggie Day
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

At the start of each semester, students experience concerns about navigating new courses and purchasing classroom materials.

A reported 81% of participants in a recent survey of Pennsylvania students worried about meeting course material costs, according to Affordable Learning PA and the Partnership for Academic Library Collection and Innovation.

The survey, conducted over spring and fall 2023, received responses from over 4,000 students across 14 participating institutions, including Penn State.

According to Bay View Analytics, over half of students surveyed reported that course materials cost over \$200 per term.

Nick Lawrence, president of Students United Against Poverty, said he spent around \$250 on course materials just for this semester.

"Certain courses and certain majors are more expensive than others, and it deters people from actually pursuing something they would really like to pursue," Lawrence said.

The data shows "a small number of courses offer materials at no cost to the student," but it's a "small portion of overall course loads."

"I've taken econ courses, and you need the workbook in order to complete the class," Lawrence said. "If I was not able to obtain that workbook prior to the semester, I would've easily failed those courses."

The survey also showed "students reported earning poor grades and reducing the number of courses they took" due to cost of course materials.

For Lawrence, the first step in improving course material affordability is making these costs a part of tuition.

"If people are getting money from let's say a federal loan or a grant or a scholarship, that should be part of it to cover those course materials," Lawrence said. "Then ... I think you could tackle some of the issues that are making these materials so expensive."

Lawrence said SUAP is looking to add writing and course materials to its Basic Needs Hub on the second floor of the Boucke Building, where items like winter coats and umbrellas can be found at no cost.

"There are things and people out there that do want to help," Lawrence said. "Don't be afraid to ask."

The Office of Student Care and Advocacy "works with students who encounter any kind of unexpected challenge," according to Associate Director Leanne Lenz.

See **SURVEY**, page 3.



Graphic by Annika Shastry

Penn State's Divine Nine consists of six Greek organizations. The chapters of historically Black students provide members with a sense of community.

Divine Nine fosters community

By Avery Hill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The Nu Chapter of Omega Psi Phi was chartered at Penn State in 1921 as the first of six National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations currently housed by Penn State.

Penn State's Divine Nine features six Greek organizations: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc. and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc.

These chapters of historically Black organizations have provided students at Penn State with a sense of community, service opportunities and resources to grow personally, professionally and academically for decades.

For Kairee Hunter, secretary of Alpha Phi Alpha's Gamma Nu Chapter, joining a fraternity was a way to become a role model for young men in his community.

"I'm from Baltimore," Hunter, a fourth-year studying animal science, said. "I didn't really grow up with the most positive male influences in my life."

Alpha Phi Alpha's "Go-to-High-School, Go-to-College" program "concentrates on the importance of completing secondary and collegiate education as a road to advancement," according to its site.

Through the program, Hunter went to his former high school to share his experience as a Penn State student with his community.

Similarly, Delta Sigma Theta chapter President Ana Diaby said her sorority has allowed her to further express her love for community service.

"(Delta Sigma Theta) strengthened my want to give back to the community," Diaby,

a fourth-year studying biological science and health professions, said.

Once she became a Delta, Diaby said she was eager to participate in every service opportunity that came her way.

Recently, the Epsilon Gamma Chapter contributed to the Centre County YMCA's Anti-Hunger Initiative in Philipsburg.

In addition to service, Greek organizations provide students with lifelong friendships and a sense of community.

Phi Beta Sigma's Lambda Lambda Chapter programming chair, Jayson Archer, saw the longevity of the brotherhood firsthand growing up.

Archer, a second-year studying aerospace engineering, is a legacy member of the fraternity, with his father being a member at Syracuse University.

"In 2020, my dad almost passed away from (COVID-19)," Archer said. "His brothers from his chapters and other chapters in the surrounding area ... they were at our house in an instant."

Archer's decision to join the Lambda Lambda Chapter was reaffirmed after meeting International President of Phi Beta Sigma Chris V. Rey, as well as International President of Zeta Phi Beta Stacie NC Grant.

Trinity Wilkinson-Osbourne, president of the Delta Gamma Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, is a legacy member as well.

For Wilkinson-Osbourne, a fourth-year studying human development and family studies, her sorority connected her with like-minded women close to her age, which was something she didn't get to experience as an only child. "In having this sisterhood, I've always just felt like I have someone I can lean on," Wilkinson-Osbourne said.

Gamma Nu Chapter Vice President Jared Williams said the brotherhood has been there

to help him in a variety of scenarios.

"I was constantly learning these new things," Williams, a third-year studying nuclear engineering, said. "Whether professional or academic — like how to tie a tie."

Zeta Phi Beta's Mu Eta Chapter Vice President Stella Kibinda said she has seen how each of Penn State's Divine Nine chapters work together and connect.

"I feel like NPHC at Penn State does a good job of making sure that we're all involved with each other," Kibinda, a third-year studying biomedical engineering, said.

Nu Chapter President Hugh Stewart said being under the same council naturally comes with healthy competition, but it's important they stay connected.

"Now, more than ever, is a time where the emphasis of Greek unity needs to be stressed, or it cannot be stressed enough," Stewart, a fourth-year studying business management, said.

Penn State's Divine Nine organizations are smaller in comparison to other chapters across the country but Wilkinson-Osbourne said this "tightknit" community fosters "genuine bonds" and meaningful relationships.

The largest chapter at Penn State, Delta Sigma Theta, contains 12 active members, yet Diaby said she's been able to find a community within her sorority and beyond.

"We support each other. We love each other," Diaby said. "At the end of the day it's Greek unity. I will stand with the people in my council because I know how much our founders struggle to get us here."

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Who carved the Nittany Lion?

By Kathleen McGill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

On the first snow day of the year, Eva Koczur created a massive Nittany Lion sculpture, turning the snow blue and white with Penn State pride.

Tasked by her EDSGN 497: Special Topics "If Picasso was an Engineer" class to create a durable and creative snow sculpture, Koczur, a first-year studying mechanical engineering, took on the challenge.

"I was out sledding that evening, and as we were walking back, we passed this enormous pile of snow in front of Willard," Koczur said. "I felt like I could see the Nittany Lion in it."

Starting at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Koczur carved the snow pile using nothing but a cafeteria tray and a plastic knife from Redifer Commons for the finer details. She compacted the ears together from the "really dry" snow.

"I was really nervous to make a mistake because if I chipped it too far, nothing was gonna fix it," Koczur said.

However, after three hours of sculpting in the dark, the lion was ready to roar.

"I finished it and took off my gloves to call my mom and show her, and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, it's a real feel of like 2 degrees,'" Koczur said.

Though she took art classes in high school, focusing mainly on chalk art and painting, this was Koczur's first sculpture.

"I saw it after she made it, (and) I was really impressed," Julia Wary, a first-year studying mechanical engineering, said. "(Kuzcar) showed her true engineering side, too."

Koczur merged her two passions of engineering and art while "trying to find the balance between something visually appealing and functional." She described art as "important for engineering" when designing and presenting ideas.

"It's kind of a stereotype that engineers have no other skills besides solving math problems and doing science and stuff, and so I really like ... changing the narrative," Koczur said.

Koczur described it as "fulfilling" to see her Nittany Lion come together.

"The sculpture is so detailed and accurate to the real Nittany Lion mascot," Jamie Carlos, a first-year studying biobehavioral health, said. "She was so excited about this project, and I'm not surprised at all how much creativity she put into this."

Although the sculpture will melt, many believe its legacy will stay.

After finding out her sculpture had made it on the Instagram accounts, Penn State Chicks, Penn State Barstool and the official Penn State account, Koczur said it was "the highlight of (her) life."

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Remembering coach Tom Tait's impact

By Evan Smith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

In May 1982, Penn State had just hosted the NCAA tournament final, with the Nittany Lions falling to UCLA in the title match.



Courtesy of Mark Pavlik

Former Penn State volleyball coach Tom Tait (center) poses with current and former volleyball coaches with the national championship trophies.

Rec Hall was cleared out of everyone besides the staff and team members cleaning out the court.

Coach Tom Tait sat on the east bleachers, holding his signature briefcase, and just looked around

the heart of Penn State.

"I knew this place could do it," Tait said, brimming with pride.

Over 30 years later, Tait's pride, legacy and traditions continue to watch over the court he called home.

Tait was dubbed "The Father of Penn State Volleyball" after taking the men's team into varsity spotlight and creating the women's volleyball program.

The first varsity season for the program was in 1977. Just six years later, Tait led the program to the national championship match.

"That's unheard of," said Frank Guadagnino, who played for Tait from 1974-78. "He put everything he had into being the best he could."

However, while revolutionizing the sport in Happy Valley, Tait was still learning the game for himself.

Tait was an assistant track coach before being asked to take over a then-club volleyball team. From that point on, Tait's mission was to become the greatest teacher of the game he could be.

"One of his favorite sayings was 'practice permanent,'" said Ron Shayka, who played for Tait from 1977-81. "I firmly believe that was one of the main tenants that he had with training our teams."

Guadagnino played under Tait prior to the team turning varsity, and he recalled what made his coach into the EIVA Hall of Famer he became.

"When I played for him almost 50 years ago, he was still trying to learn the game for himself," Guadagnino said. "His whole life, he never stopped trying to learn new ways just to make the guys who played for him better."

What Tait lacked in knowledge at the start of his career, he made up for in passion.

In 1974, Tait wanted his club team to reach the next level of greatness on the court, but he didn't think they could with the

team's resources at the time.

According to Guadagnino, Tait paid for the whole team to travel to Reno, Nevada, to compete in the USA Volleyball Association National Tournament, largely out of his own pocket, just so his players could get a glimpse of a higher level of play.

Over the next two years, Tait petitioned the Penn State administration to tack on volleyball as a varsity program by making them see the potential value the sport could bring. The university's investment in the sport revolutionized college volleyball.

At the time, the sport was largely centered on the West Coast. Former Nittany Lion and Olympic gold medalist Javier Gaspar credits Tait for breaking that stigma.

See **TAIT**, page 3.

REMOVE ‘NOISE’ FROM NEWS

Penn State professor launches initiative to help remove ‘noise’ from media

By **Kahlie Wray**
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Growing research suggests more and more people of all generations are avoiding the news.

But Matthew Jordan, associate professor and department head of film production and media studies, is on a mission to change that.

Jordan, the director of a News Literacy Initiative at Penn State, said he’s frustrated with all the noise in “our media ecosystem.”

The initiative is dedicated to teaching students and citizens alike how to extract the news from the noise.

Jordan said the initiative was born during a conversation he had with Marie Hardin, dean of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. The two had become aware of the growing emergence of news avoidance and decided to take action.

“You have to read the news to be a good citizen,” Jordan said.

However, he said that fact alone isn’t “responsive to people’s wellness” when current media is oversaturated with noise that’s disrupting people’s mental health.

Jordan said he hopes this initiative will help arm individuals with useful strategies to find space and garner the tools needed to “retake their own well-being in relation to (news).”

“The world isn’t burning around us,” Jordan said. “There is still good out there but scare headlines — if it bleeds, it leads — are convincing us it is.”

One of the ways the initiative is educating the public is through News Over Noise, a podcast hosted by Jordan and postdoctoral scholar Leah Dajches.

Dajches said she was drawn to the initiative due to her personal interest in finding ways to “empower audiences to engage with media content.”

“I’ve always had a natural interest in media literacy and community outreach,” Dajches said.

Dajches said when she was a child the newspaper was delivered to her home every morning and some days they’d receive copies from multiple news outlets.

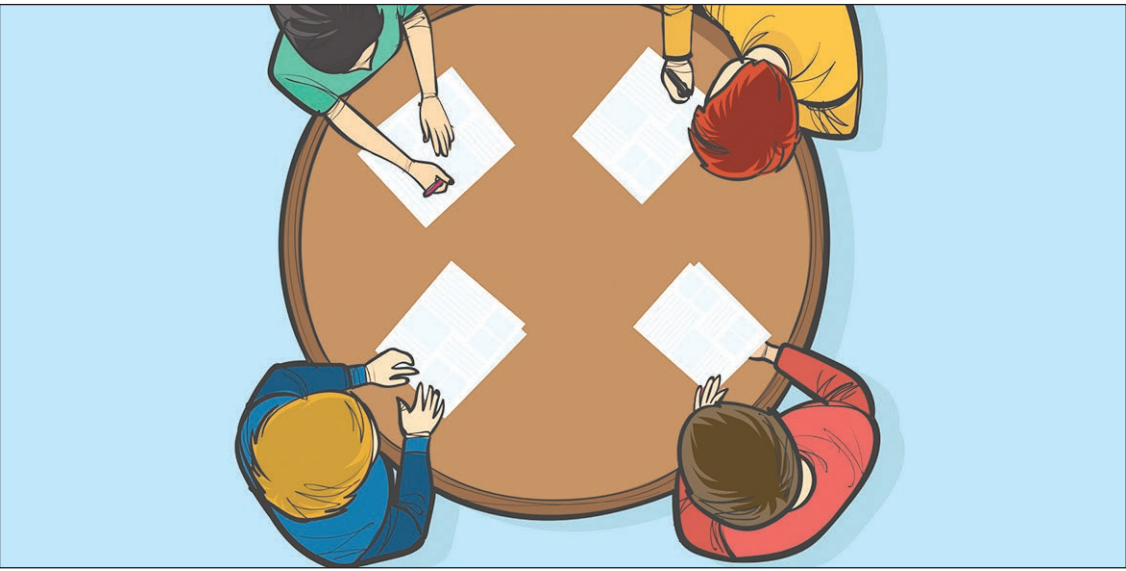
When she considers the issue with current news, she said she thinks “lack of diversity” is a huge one.

“Our voices are being limited because of media mergers,” Dajches said.

Dajches and Jordan said they’re both concerned with the growing presence of news deserts as well as the state of local news. The two said civic engagement is falling because of how nationalized news is becoming.

“Democracy works best when it’s local, because when you know the place you’re invested in the place,” Jordan said. “When news production is only about national issues, a local connection to democracy starts to wither.”

As the initiative grows, Jordan “hopes” they can spread their reach to the commonwealth campuses to help combat this. Student ambassadors are the main



Graphic by Aaron Platt

A News Literacy Initiative at Penn State aims to increase news readership across generations. The initiative teaches students and citizens how to extract news from the noise.

medium through which they hope to accomplish this.

As of now they have around 10 ambassadors, but they are hoping to raise the number.

According to Jordan, the initiative is welcoming of all with the sole requirement being a genuine “care” for the subject. Penn State offers a 10-week course for students interested in becoming an ambassador.

Currently the position is unpaid, but there are talks to remix the model so students are compensated for their work.

Student ambassador Jenna Meleedy “clawed” her way to the initiative.

Meleedy, a third-year

studying media studies, said she’s “fascinated by the political radicalization through media compensation” as well as how “our understanding of reality” is influenced by media consumption.

For her, media literacy isn’t only “a tool for empowerment” but one for connection.

During her time participating in public outreach, she witnessed firsthand how “media literacy can transcend political division.

“No matter where you are on the political spectrum, the one thing almost everyone has in common is that they’re frustrated and exhausted by their own media and news consumption,” Meleedy said. “Once you under-

stand there’s something to connect you with everybody in the country, it’s like a weight off your shoulders.”

Though Meleedy is well-informed when it comes to news fatigue, at times she, too, succumbs to it. Her own personal strategy is to set aside 10 minutes every day to get her fill of news from trusted and vetted sources.

For those interested in becoming a News Literacy Ambassador, contact newsliteracy@psu.edu.

Editor’s note: Jenna Meleedy is a former member of The Daily Collegian.

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Students establish Penn State Poetry Club

By **Rivka Wolin**
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The newly established Penn State Poetry Club hosted its first general meeting on Wednesday.

The Poetry Club seeks “to foster a supportive community to aid in writing, sharing, understanding, and performing poetry,” according to its Org Central page.

President Keegan Fobes said Poetry Club plans to host weekly meetings in 317 Boucke Building from 6-6:45 p.m. Wednesdays.

Fobes, a third-year studying history, said he had the idea to develop the club in the fall to

“get people together and share poetry,” since Penn State didn’t have a club solely for poetry before.

“I found through the poetry classes that I had taken that having that community — having that togetherness with poetry — really just amplified what I was able to do, and get out of the art form in general,” Fobes said.

According to Fobes, poetry can be intimidating, but they “welcome everybody here.”

“I’ll certainly write some terrible poems and bring them to the entire group,” Fobes said. “Everybody writes bad poems ev-

erywhere, but we just want to get that together, and we want people to not feel afraid.”

According to event planner Hailey Lehman, poetry club is here “to create a space for people that are interested in poetry,” and “just let people be their creative selves.”

“Poetry kind of allows us to push boundaries,” Lehman, a third-year studying secondary education in English education, said. “There’s all different kinds of poetry and publishing that’s available. So we kind of blend all of that together, that’s what’s different.”

According to Lehman, the club will be hosting an end of year celebration or open mic. Planning is still underway but all will be welcome to attend.

According to social media chair Daniel Scarpitta, the club will host a weekly poetry sharing during its general meetings, where members can share their poems and the poems they enjoy reading.

“We’re open to anyone who wants to learn,” Scarpitta, a second-year studying electrical and computer engineering technology, said. “Whether they’re super into poetry or they just have a slight interest in it.”

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Tyler Mantz/Collegian

From left to right, **Daniel Scarpitta, Keegan Fobes and Hailey Lehman** pose for a picture during the poetry club meeting at the Business Building.

Student arrested for downloading child sex acts video

By **Leonardo Frepoli**
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

A Penn State student was arrested on two felony charges involving the download and dissemination of child pornography.

Riley D. Davis was charged with photographing/videotaping/depicting child sex acts on a computer and dissemination of photographs/films of child sex acts.

“The university may take student conduct action in

addition to, and separate from, the charges filed by police,” according to a statement from university spokesperson Wyatt DuBois. “This individual is not currently enrolled.”

This is following an online investigation that began in October 2023, according to the criminal complaint, and University Police were notified of the issue in November.

After a search warrant of Davis’ residence in Brill Hall was served

in December, Davis’ computer and cell phones were seized, the criminal complaint said.

“Davis acknowledged being aware downloading the video was wrong ... reported it was a Belgium sexual education video,” the criminal complaint said. “Davis acknowledged being aware the media depicted children.” The incident is currently under investigation, and a preliminary hearing is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. Jan. 31.



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Regan Gross/Collegian

Mount Nittany Medical Center is located on East Park Avenue in State College.

Physician alleges ADA violation at Mount Nittany

By **Abigail Shanley**
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

A physician has alleged that Mount Nittany Medical Center And Mount Nittany Physicians Group violated his disability rights and the terms of his Physician Employment Agreement.

Board-certified otolaryngologist Dr. Yi Kao filed this lawsuit on Jan. 19, over a year after he was allegedly put on an involuntary, unpaid leave of absence from MNPG.

According to court documents, Dr. Kao has had a medical condition for 30-40 years that limits his peripheral vision, but does not impact his central vision.

“Dr. Kao exclusively performs surgeries which require a limited field of vision. Thus, Dr. Kao’s condition has never affected his ability to perform surgeries or any other essential function of his position,” the complaint said.

According to court documents, a staff member told MNPG that Dr. Kao’s hands trembled during procedures and that Dr. Kao stated that his “old eyes can’t see well anymore,” following a subpoena received by MNMC from the state board of medicine last year.

MNPG was not permitted to put Dr. Kao on unpaid leave under any provision of his PEA.

On Jan. 10, 2023, MNPG received the results of a Functional Capacity Exam, which determined that Dr. Kao “demonstrated the ability to return to full duty work.”

After bringing Dr. Kao back modified duty, MNPG requested that Dr. Kao “temporarily” relinquish all of his surgical privileges on Feb. 11, 2023 to which he declined, according to court documents.

He was then fired on June 28, 2023 under the provision that his contract would be terminated if he became permanently disabled.

MNPG’s failure to pay Dr. Kao’s wages during the 60 day notice period constituted a violation of Pennsylvania’s Wage Protection and Collection Law.

Dr. Kao’s lawsuit accuses all defendants of violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, MNPG of breach of contract and MNMC of interference with Dr. Kao’s contractual employment with MNPG.

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Survey

FROM page 1.

“Unfortunately, there aren’t a ton of resources that we can offer specifically for academic materials,” Lenz said. “We have a lot of resources for other things, though.”

According to Lenz, textbooks and class materials aren’t considered a basic need despite being necessary for Penn State students.

Lenz encouraged any students who have financial difficulties to reach out to the office or to the Sokolov-Miller Family Financial and Life Skills Center.

“It’s common that a student who’s struggling to afford their books is also going to be struggling to pay their rent or afford food, and we have plenty of resources to offer for those sorts of things,” Lenz said.

Lenz said students can “purchase their books or online materials through the bookstore if they’re available” and “have it charged to their Penn State bursar bill.”

“It’s not giving them extra money for their books but a lot of times, students are waiting for financial aid to come through,” Lenz said.

With this tip, “they can start using their books at the very beginning of the semester and then get them paid for through their financial aid potentially a few weeks later.”

For context, only 13% of Pennsylvania students surveyed reported financial aid covers over 50% or more of their costs.

Bryan McGeary, Elizabeth Nelson, Christina Riehman-Murphy and John Shank are all librarians at Penn State who work to share

the survey results and advocate for open educational resources.

“All four of us work to encourage faculty to use open educational resources (and) to author educational resources,” Riehman-Murphy said. “If students have access to their course materials from day one — for free — and can keep them, that’s ideal.”

Open Educational Resources (OER) are “materials that are put out and meant to be shared and meant to be used and reused, and copied for free,” Riehman-Murphy said.

The team said many students are interested in getting textbooks and are asking librarians for assistance in accessing them, but often publishers don’t allow widespread, multi-person use due to copyright and licensing policies.

“Penn State, in the past, has been very supportive of the libraries ... and at the moment in the current budget situation at Penn State, we don’t have that funding,” Riehman-Murphy said.

“Students, as always, I think have the biggest advocacy piece — your voices matter so much.”

Similarly, Shank said “the president and provost are dealing with a lot,” and he’s not sure course material affordability “has been as much on their radar” as it has in the past.

“If students make it clear to our president and provost that this is a priority to them,” Shank said.

“I have no doubt our president and provost will make it a priority, too.”

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A banner hangs from the ceiling of the Student Bookstore on College Avenue in 2022.

Special Olympics leaves impact on athletes

By Daniela White
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Through physical activity and playing club sports, student members of the Special Olympics Club can interact with athletes in the community who have intellectual disabilities.

Adviser Diane Baldwin said she started the club in 2019 since “there’s nothing for athletes with intellectual disabilities after high school (to do),” like her daughter who has Down syndrome.

To provide support to Special Olympics, Baldwin said the club provides the chance for Penn State students to bond with the athletes and those with disabilities.

Vice President Derek Troxell said he joined the club to be a part of the community and get to know the athletes.

“I was able to build really strong friendships in the club and get to know more about (the athletes) and what sports they like and things they like to do outside of the club,” Troxell, a third-year studying elementary and early childhood education, said.

Troxell said the club is very welcoming and rewarding, especially when the athletes “come up and give you a big hug and say, ‘How’s your day?’”

Ashlyn McClelland, president

of the club, has been a part of the organization since her first year at Penn State, but her journey in working with Special Olympics started eight years ago.

“Originally, at Penn State I wanted to join because I was very involved with it in high school, but I wanted to be a part of a group that is about advocating,” McClelland, a fourth-year studying premedicine, said.

This year, McClelland said the club is starting to get more involvement with establishing relationships with Centre County

and even nationally.

“I just had a meeting with the national organization this fall, and essentially, we’re talking about what we’re doing, and they wanted to add upon that and build us into their realm,” McClelland said.

With the club serving as a way for people with intellectual disabilities to stay active, McClelland said everyone also has “so much fun.”

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Alina Lebedeva/Collegian

Alex Johanning, left, and Ashton Lagos dance next to Penn State field hockey field in 2022 in University Park.

Tait

FROM page 1.

“He put Penn State on the map and earned respect from the West Coast. I think what he did, for our program in particular, opened the doors for top players around the country to see that they could come to the East Coast and have a successful career,” Gaspar said.

Tait proceeded to build a culture that allowed for sustained success housed in Rec Hall. While his methods of practicing everything “110%” were foundational in player development, his ability to turn the programs into family-like environments was the key to the sustained success that has granted the school nine na-

tional volleyball championships.

“To define him solely as a coach would be a disservice,” current Nittany Lions coach Mark Pavlik said.

Pavlik stepped toward being Tait’s successor after an uninspiring playing career left him questioning his future after his sophomore year. Rather than give up on Pavlik, Tait offered him a switch into management.

Tait’s disinterest in giving up on his players didn’t only include their college years. A sticking point that kept Penn State volleyball alumni so close was that the coach followed up with them after they had moved on.

“You do those things because you truly care about your players, that’s what was great about (Tait),” Gaspar said.

Tait used these continued con-

nections to start a tradition that still holds today: inviting the alumni back for a game against the current squad.

“After the first scrimmage, he invited everyone back to his place for some chili. That all started with his after-match parties at his house,” Guadagnino said.

While his players were at Penn State, the coach did everything in his power to keep their experiences comfortable.

Tait’s “place” was a revered location for former players. Tait treated his team as his family and had an open door policy for anyone who needed support.

“If you ever needed a place to stay,” Pavlik said, “there’s always Coach’s place down in Toftrees.”

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We will not wait for the next school shooting | Op-ed

Editor’s Note: The following is a student-written op-ed, written by Andrew Sun and Alexander Denza from March for Our Lives UNC. The op-ed is signed by over 110 student leaders and meant to be published simultaneously across over 40 student newspapers.

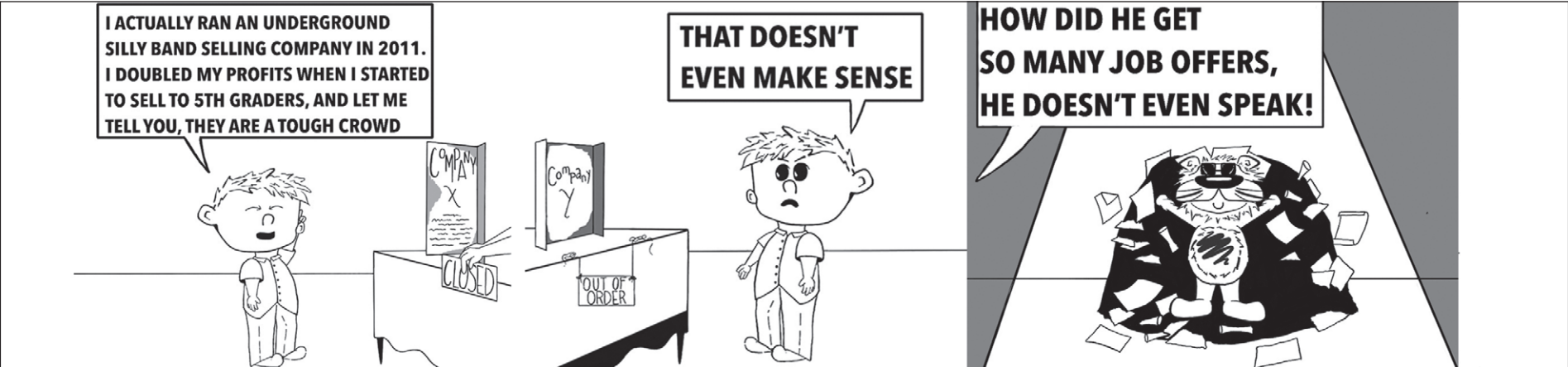
Students are taught to love a country that values guns over our lives. Some of us hear the sound of gunfire when we watch fireworks on the fourth of July, or when we watch a drumline performance at halftime. But all of us have heard the siren of an active shooter drill and fear that one day our campus will be next. By painful necessity, we have grown to become much more than students learning in a classroom — we have shed every last remnant of our childhood innocence. The steady silence of Congress is as deafening as gunfire. We will not wait for individual trauma to affect us all before we respond together — our empathy is not that brittle. Our generation responds to shootings

by bearing witness and sharing solidarity like none other. We text each other our last thoughts and we cry on each others’ shoulders and we mourn with each other at vigils. We convene in classrooms and we congregate in churches and we deliberate in dining halls. We’re staunch and we’re stubborn and we’re steadfast. Our hearts bleed from this uniquely American brand of gun violence. Yet, we still summon the courage to witness firework shows and remind ourselves that we love our country so much that we expect better from it. We believe that our country has the capacity to love us back. There are bullet shaped holes in our hearts, but our spirits are unbreakable. History has taught us that when injustice calls students to act, we shape the moral arc of this country. Students in the Civil Rights Movement shared their stories through protest, creating the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that organized Freedom Rides, sit-ins and marches. In demanding freedom from racial violence, this group’s

activism became woven into American history. Students across America organized teach-ins during the Vietnam War to expose its calculated cruelties — in doing so, rediscovering this country’s empathy. Their work, in demanding freedom from conscription and taxpayer-funded violence, is intertwined with the American story. This fall, UNC Chapel Hill students’ text exchanges during the August 28th shooting reached the hands of the President. The nation read the desperate words of our wounded community, as we organized support, rallied and got thrown out of the North Carolina General Assembly. We demanded freedom from gun violence, just as we have in Parkland and Sandy Hook and MSU and UNLV. For 360,000 of us since Columbine, the toll of bearing witness, of losing our classmates and friends, of succumbing to the cursed emotional vocabulary of survivorship, has become our American story. Yes, it is not fair that we must rise up against problems that we did not create, but the organizers

of past student movements know from lived experience that we decide the future of the country. The country watched student sit-ins at Greensboro, and Congress subsequently passed civil rights legislation. The country witnessed as students exposed its lies on Vietnam, and Congress subsequently withdrew from the war. In recent years, the country watched student survivors march against gun violence, and the White House subsequently created the National Office of Gun Violence Prevention on Sept. 22, 2023. So as students and young people alike, we should know our words don’t end on this page — we will channel them into change. We invite you to join this generation’s community of organizers, all of us united in demanding a future free of gun violence. We understand the gravity of this commitment, because it’s not simply our lives we protect with prose and protest. It is our way of life itself. We will not allow America to be painted in a new layer of

blood. We will not allow politicians to gamble our lives for NRA money. And most of all, politicians will not have the shallow privilege of reading another front-cover op-ed by students on their knees, begging them to do their jobs — we do not need a permission slip to defend our freedoms. They will instead contend with the reality that by uniting with each other and among parents, educators, and communities, our demands become undeniable. We feel intense anger and frustration and sadness, and in its wake we search for reaffirmations of our empathy — the remarkable human capacity to take on a tiny part of someone else’s suffering. We rediscover this fulfillment in our organizing, in our community, in not just moving away from the unbearable pain of our yesterday but in moving toward an unrelenting hope for our tomorrow. Our generation dares politicians to look us in the eye and tell us they’re too afraid to try. Signed by 144 student leaders representing over 90 groups across the nation



Cartoons by Maddie Seelig

MY VIEW | LUKE VARGAS

Why I don’t use AI Master the basics of life before using AI

Editor’s Note: Not a single line of this column was written using any form of generative AI.



Vargas There is no question generative AI is here to stay, and most everyone will be changed forever by its presence. The rise of ChatGPT and other large language models have left educational institutions scrambling to find ways to stop students from cheating while, simultaneously, finding healthy applications to their curricula. AI has changed my field of study and profession, journalism, forever. Media outlets everywhere have begun to experiment with using AI as a bot writer and data-mining tools. Yet, I’ve made the conscious decision to limit the use of AI in my everyday life — as a student, professional and a person — to set myself up for the future. Last year, students around

the country began to play with ChatGPT. It was a harmless pursuit and application. It was like discovering a rubix cube on a table in an empty room — people couldn’t help but toy with it. Soon after, AI was writing entire papers, generating topics and accumulating hours of research for students. It was the perfect tool to cheat for some, but others used it as the perfect instrument to expand their capacity to create, rather than become their capacity for creativity. The same practices are found in the professional realm. AI can generate entire images and graphics for marketers looking for a fresh and sleek theme to base a visual campaign on. AI can write the perfect search engine optimized head-

line for an article or a concise and informative social media caption. Professionals can use AI to translate mountains of data into key and actionable insights. In some cases, it’s a tool to remove the nit-picky, grunt labor aspect of a job or it can do most of the work for you. It has less common but just as many day-to-day applications for normal life. It can be a source of ideas when you’re having a mental block. It can come up with a quick recipe when you don’t know what to cook for dinner. I’ve experimented with AI in a number of these cases, and it’s brought me to the conclusion that, even in its most ethical uses, AI won’t teach me how to work harder. As a student journalist and aspiring professional, I’m here to

master the fundamentals. Pablo Picasso, an unquestionable genius and a master of his art, is attributed with the quote: “Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.” If your aspirations are excellence and innovation in a given profession or facet of life, learn the fundamental skills, boundaries and guidelines to perfection. Only then will a tool like AI elevate you far and beyond your peers, colleagues and competition. Experiment with AI, understand its applications and know its limitations to be prepared for the day you need to use it. But until then, learn the trade, master the fundamentals, push yourself and do it without mental training wheels.

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Nick Kern Jr.'s high motor

By Joe Tuman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State earned its biggest win of the Mike Rhoades era on Tuesday by upsetting No. 11 Wisconsin in a game that saw its standout backcourt rise to the occasion.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

However, the win wouldn't have been possible without the additional hard work of forward Nick Kern Jr.

Making his first start since Nov. 26, the junior scored 15 points and came away with two steals to help the Nittany Lions send the Bryce Jordan Center into a tailspin.

And though Kern fouled out of the game ahead of its final moments, it wasn't before he made six pivotal free throws that played a huge part in his team pulling away for the win.

One game earlier, Kern made the most of a tough situation when he scored a career-high 18 points in Penn State's blowout loss against Purdue, proving his willingness to bring his A-game no matter the circumstance.

"He's not afraid of the moment, he's not afraid to compete," Rhoades said. "This is the most confident he's ever played that I've seen."

Coming from someone who has coached Kern for three seasons now dating back to Rhoades' VCU days, that's high praise.

Though he played a smaller role with the Rams, Kern has always possessed strong defensive instincts and impressive athleticism. Most recently, he showed off those traits against Wisconsin by turning defensive turnovers into emphatic finishes on the other end.

Crucially, Kern has expanded his skillset as of late. His trade-



Katelyn Supancik/Collegian

Guard Nick Kern Jr. dunks the ball during the Penn State men's basketball game versus Morehead State in the Bryce Jordan Center. Penn State defeats Morehead State 74-51.

mark athleticism has aided his slow evolution into a more well-rounded player, as he's recently grown as both a rebounder and a driver.

Penn State needs all the help it can get on the boards, ranking No. 340 in the nation in rebounds per game. Therefore, Kern's willingness to get his hands dirty has been beneficial. Kern, who ranks second on his team with 4.4 rebounds per night, utilizes his vertical ability to crash the glass and snatch the ball away from bigger players. This physicality is important, but recently it's been his toughness on offense which has stood out the most.

Kern's offensive game isn't

necessarily the most complete, as he rarely looks to take many jumpers. He's also a bit of an erratic passer, going from pinpoint accurate on one play to coughing up a lazy turnover on the next.

Yet, across his last five outings, Kern has masked his deficiencies by capitalizing on his strengths. In that span, he's averaging 12.2 points and 4.6 free throw attempts per game while shooting 66.7% from the field.

Proving more decisive around the basket, he's now driving with ferocity and confidence. If he's not trying to put someone on a poster, he's instead drawing contact in stride and taking his chances at the charity stripe.

That approach came to light during the big win over the Badgers. After Wisconsin took its first lead of the night, 70-68, Kern sank four-straight free throws to halt the visitor's momentum and swiftly regain a 72-70 lead. He'd later add two more to ice the contest, finishing 7-for-9 at the line in total.

After the game, sophomore Kanye Clary said Kern's recent performances have made a big difference for Penn State.

"He's a very crucial part, almost like an X-factor," Clary said. "He always does the little things. When he's clicking on offense and being aggressive, that's very vital to the team."

Should Kern continue to turn in stellar performances, the Nittany Lions will have an easier time building upon their victory over Wisconsin.

The hard work he's put in to improve his game is something his coach continues to take note of. Rhoades said Kern's next step is to continue to elevate himself — both on and off the court.

"He's coachable, he works really hard, he wants to win big time," Rhoades said. "We need him to turn into a leader and will his teammates to take the same approach as him."

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Alexandra Antoniono/Collegian

Guards Leilani Kapinus, Jayla Oden and Alli Campbell fight for the ball during the Penn State women's basketball game against Nebraska at the Bryce Jordan Center.

Experiments in the lineup

Kieger implements fourth lineup this season

By Avery Hill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State may be 18 games into its season, but that doesn't mean it has everything figured out.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Despite going 3-0 since guard Ashley Owusu's arrival, the Lady Lions seemed to still be working things out in their 82-73 win over Nebraska on Sunday.

Something new Against the Cornhuskers, coach Carolyn Kieger decided to switch things up and promote Owusu to the starting lineup in place of the team's long-time guard, Makenna Marisa.

The move was unfamiliar for Marisa, who had only come off of the bench twice in her five years — most recently against Indiana on Jan. 10 after returning from an injury. Still, she entered Sunday's game less than two minutes into the contest, taking the place of Tay Valladay.

"You're gonna see a lot of different starting lineups from us for the rest of the year," Kieger said. "Our team doesn't care anyways who starts."

This wasn't Kieger's first big change in recent contests, as forward Chanaya Pinto only

played two first-half minutes against Purdue on Thursday despite averaging 19.6 minutes per game on the season.

Despite her absence of minutes, Pinto made a few key plays in the second half against Purdue and followed it up on Sunday by notching eight points and seven rebounds, with three of her rebounds coming on the offensive glass.

No matter how many minutes Pinto plays, defensive standout Leilani Kapinus recognized the impact that she makes.

"She's a huge spark," Kapinus said. "She's always bringing energy on (defense), always talking, giving to others as much as she can."

Pinto was the Lady Lions' biggest contributor on the offensive glass, as they only pulled down eight offensive boards compared to Nebraska's 17.

The first and the fourth Despite housing a 21-point lead in the early stages of the fourth quarter, the Lady Lions had to find a way to escape as Nebraska brought the deficit to five with 2:26 remaining.

This wasn't the only time the squad had struggled. Starting the contest, the offense was dormant as Nebraska led 7-0 as the midway point of the first quarter neared.

In her postgame press conference, Kieger didn't have the answer for what led to the slow start, but said she was proud of how her team recovered from it.

"I was about to call a timeout," Kieger said. "Just trying to learn what they need in those moments, and we have to stop starting the game with a turnover."

At that point, Marisa drained a 3-pointer from the corner that seemed to wake her team up, but these struggles returned in the aforementioned final quarter.

Empty possessions on the offensive attack were certainly a factor as Penn State didn't make a single shot from deep in the final quarter of play and shot just 4-of-12 from the field.

Even defensively, the Lady Lions allowed Nebraska to have its best quarter by far, as it shot 61.1% from the field as guard Darian White led with 10 points.

Still, Penn State rallied in the final minute to hold off the Cornhuskers and save its record despite being in the midst of figuring things out again.

To that, Kieger had a message to the fans following the contest.

"I think we just wanted to work on late-game situations tonight," Kieger said jokingly. "So, sorry about the blood pressure at the end."

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Back to basics

By Lexie Linderman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

As winter drags on and the temperatures get colder, it seems like Penn State is mirroring that with its play on the ice.

The Nittany Lions have now lost six straight Big Ten matchups, their longest streak since the 2013-14 season, after suffering another pair of losses to Notre Dame last weekend.

Last week, Guy Gadowsky emphasized rebuilding his team's foundation of fast, aggressive hockey. The Penn State coach of 12 years isn't necessarily still constructing that foundation, but is rather searching for his team to produce a full 60 minutes of intense hockey.

In hopes of finding this intensity, Gadowsky switched up his lines in both games against Notre Dame last weekend. This switch-up included putting captain Christian Berger, who has played to the left of Tanner Palocsik virtually all season, with Jarod Crespo on defense.

"It's kind of fun ... finding out what works," Berger said Monday. "I thought we played well. I thought we competed really hard."

Gadowsky shared his captain's thoughts on the change, as he said he noticed that their defensive breakouts were the best he'd seen this season, and to expect Berger and Crespo to be paired up again this weekend.

The defensive lines were not the only ones changed, however. Gadowsky severely altered three out of his four offensive lines as well. Only Ryan Kirwan and Xander Lamppa were kept together on a line both Friday and Saturday out of the three changed lines.

The one line that Gadowsky left and will continue to leave untouched is the line of freshmen Aiden Fink, Matt DiMarsico and Reese Laubach, known as the "Kid Line." The three freshmen have been on a tear this season, with Fink tied for the team lead in goals and the three combining for four points on Saturday.

"You can see the skill and the speed. That's what everyone can see," Gadowsky said. "But I promise that we are very, very impressed with their work ethic to win pucks ... they are our best line at creating turnovers."

Work ethic and intensity are big parts of hockey, and Gad-

owsky emphasizes this every week; it's clear that the Kid Line has figured it out in just their first year. So, how have they been able to do this as freshmen?

"I think it's our system. One of the things we harp on is quick transition," DiMarsico said. "Once we're playing fast, our chemistry as a line and the talent we have on there ... that really takes over and allows us to have the games that we've had."

Gadowsky wants to see every line produce shifts like the Kid Line, which is one big reason why he is tinkering the other lines to this degree.

"We're trying to get another line that's able to produce consistently," Gadowsky said. "We're setting out to try a few different things, and when we start having other lines produce is probably when (the changes) will stop."

Penn State hopes that these tweaks will give it some desperately needed momentum and intensity against Ohio State this weekend, as its NCAA Tournament hopes continue to dwindle.

However, the Nittany Lions know they cannot get down on themselves and simply need to bring more intensity to the ice.

"We have to work really hard," Berger said. "We have to win battles ... it's a tough league to play in, so you're gonna get exposed if you don't, and that's exactly what happened to us. It's a wake-up call."

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Tyler Mantz/Collegian

Penn State men's hockey players huddle before the game against Michigan State. The Spartans shutout the Nittany Lions 5-0.

More halal to ha-love

By Kippi Hall
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After over six years of operating from a cart at the corner of Pugh and Beaver, Sher Halal Gyro & Grill is opening a storefront branch location in another part of downtown.

The newest location, Sher Halal B.B.Q. & Grill, will be located at 145 S. Allen St., right in the “heart of downtown,” Nanat Rahmaa, the owner, said.

Rahmaa, the founder and owner of Sher Halal, is looking forward to the newest business venture in his culinary career.

“Every business comes with risk,” Rahmaa said. “But I’ve gotten the support, and enjoy all of the people of State College, even regular people, not just students.”

He is working towards a speedy grand opening of the storefront location this semester.

“I want to open the restaur-

rant by the middle of February, Inshallah.”

Allen Street, one of the biggest hubs for businesses in downtown State College, was very specifically chosen — and sure to be a hit for those in that area of campus. “Location is everything in a business,” Rahmaa said. “I take pride in my food, my work, I do my best to serve my customers. You hear, ‘serve food with love,’ and that is what I try to do. No cutting short corners.”

The site of the new location was formerly Woodrings Floral Gardens, a florist shop that closed its doors in May 2022.

The owner is no stranger to what running a business catered towards college students is like. Despite the downtown Sher Halal Gyro cart only being open since “late 2017, beginning of 2018,” Rahmaa operated another halal business in Philadelphia during his 28 years in the city.

While this business had “halal

cheesesteaks,” paying homage to the city’s famous food, the Allen Street branch will likely have the same menu that State College has been enjoying since 2017.

Rahmaa, a Pakistani native, wants to blend his culture and cuisine with an “American atmosphere” in his new location.

“I want the restaurant to be for everyone to enjoy.”

For those who love and adore the existing halal cart, don’t worry. Both locations will remain open for all of State College to continue enjoying, whether for lunch after class or a satisfying bite after a night out.

For Rahmaa, the goal of the storefront and the existing cart is simple.

“People supported me here, and I want to help people, to give back to the community,” Rahmaa said.

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Olivia Estright/Collegian

A customer orders food at the Sher Halal Gyro & Grill in downtown State College.



Courtesy of Kerry Bestwick and Janet Egerer

PYP Yoga studio holds a yoga session in Beaver Stadium. The yoga studio unites students as well as creates an outlet for friendship and fitness.

Yoga unites students

By Julia Ratner
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Nestled in a small shopping center on South Atherton, PYP Yoga provides a plethora of different workout classes like hot pilates, barre and cycling that have undergraduate students at Penn State coming in for a workout.

Owner Kerry Bestwick said its mission is to have bodies that don’t break down from overuse.

The classes offer to guide participants not just through physical fitness but also emotional, spiritual and mental fitness.

“A lot of our deep, mental well-being comes from being able to get into those places within ourselves through a challenging workout,” Bestwick said. “You’re doing that with people around you so you’re inspired by a community of people doing it and bringing their best.”

Over the past few years, yoga and pilates have started to become more and more popular within young adults.

The studio has seen this change over time.

Yoga instructor Taylor O’Connor said originally, PYP’s demographic was women and usually a small number of graduate students but mostly parents and community members.

However, in the past year, O’Connor said, at least half of the people taking classes at the studio have become girls who are undergraduate students at Penn State.

“I think the thing is TikTok,” O’Connor said. “People have seen what pilates is on social media, searched where they can do that and found us.”

The influx of a younger crowd has been a big change for the studio that’s helped the community come together.

“It’s been really exciting to see how well the younger girls mix in with the older and preexisting crowd,” O’Connor said. “I think it’s helped a lot of the undergrads to make friends outside of their classes and to make friends with community members.”

As workout classes have increased in popularity in the past year, Penn State’s Group Fitness

workout classes have become another hot commodity for those with access to it.

Hannah Wanner said she’s attended two classes in the short time she’s been a student here.

Wanner, a first-year studying chemical engineering, said the classes are “professional and enjoyable.”

“The environment in the classes is super positive, but I feel like sometimes there’s a lack of community, and I wish there was more feeling of togetherness,” Wanner said.

However, PYP Yoga has successfully created a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone to work out.

“When I first started here I always joked, and I still do, that the women here are like my other moms and grandmas,” O’Connor said. “I think that’s starting to happen with some of the undergrads coming in here, too.”

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It’s On Us receives \$60,000 grant

By Avery McGurgan
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State was awarded \$60,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to address and improve sexual violence awareness, reporting and response on campus.

The grant is part of the statewide “It’s On Us PA” campaign, which encourages everyone to play a role in reframing the conversation around sexual violence and be part of a solution.

“The funding will allow the University to further assess risk factors related to sexual violence, as well as needed resources, within the student community — particularly among underrepresented and minoritized populations,” according to a release.

The grant strives to increase

the reporting of sexual violence via both named and anonymous channels.

Additionally, the grant will support the creation of informational videos, which will talk the user through the steps of submitting an official report and how to access any additional support, the release said.

By addressing reporting barriers, Penn State said it hopes to foster a “safer and more supportive environment for all students.”

Students, faculty and staff can receive more information on upcoming events regarding campus safety and sexual violence prevention and take the “It’s On Us” pledge on the Student Affairs website.

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Penn State to invest millions in staff salaries

By Rivka Wolin
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State is concluding work on its Compensation Modernization initiative with the assignment of new salary grades to all staff positions and an investment to meet new salary grades.

The Compensation Modernization initiative seeks to “modernize Penn State’s compensation and career structures for staff positions” and “create modern, competitive compensation structures and clear, supportive career development resources for staff members to use,” according to the Penn State Human Resources website.

According to a release, Penn State began work on the Compensation Modernization initiative in 2020.

As a part of the process to adjust compensation and career structures, Penn State plans to invest “over \$17.6 million to better align staff salaries with the new salary structure” and another “\$42.6 million for additional adjustments for some staff positions,” according to a release.

Staff members will receive an email from Penn State Human Resources on Wednesday reminding them of their new job profile and level, as well as the corresponding salary grade that aligns with their level.

According to a release, all job profile changes and compensation adjustments will be effective March 1 and visible in Workday in late March.

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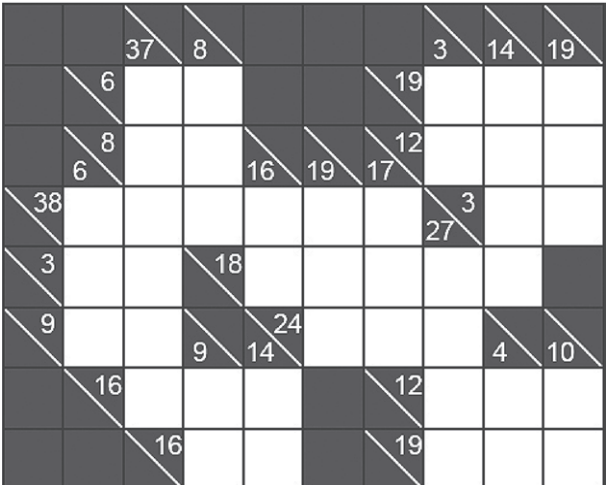
Soups

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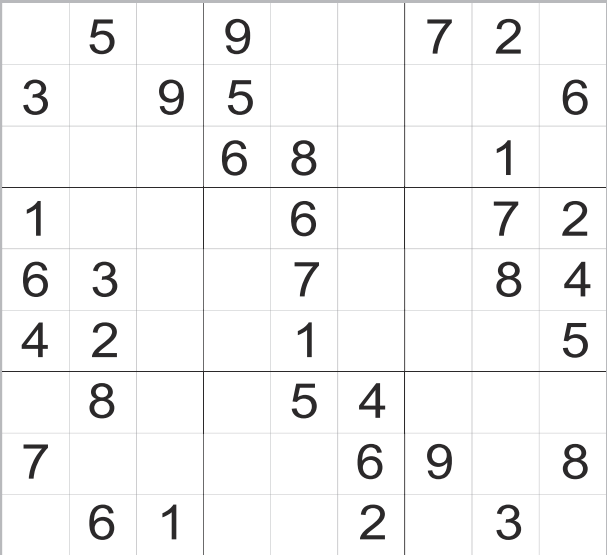
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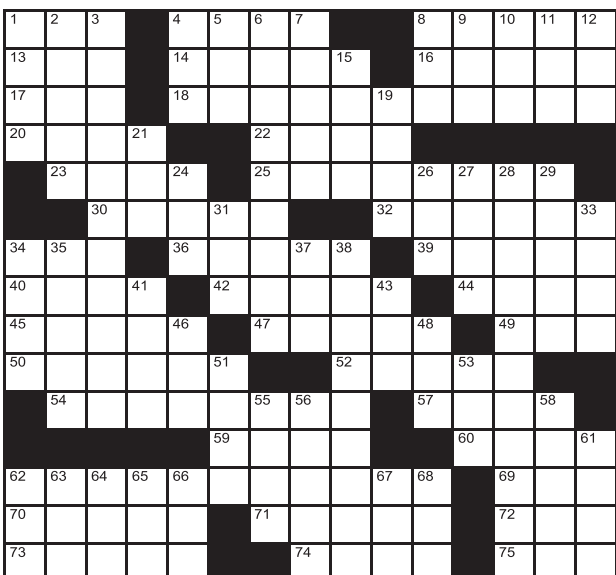
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Sudoku



Crossword



Across
1 Place for sweaters?
4 Grinders
8 Madison Square Garden, e.g.
13 “The Joy Luck Club” author
14 Run ___ of the law
16 Uses a stopwatch
17 Parseghian of Notre Dame
18 Morning after taste?
20 Tears up
22 Wynken, Blynken and Nod, e.g.
23 Lively
25 Rent taker
30 Soup scoop
32 Clandestine
34 Social insect
36 Bubbly drinks
39 Pulitzer Prize category
40 Stationery store buy
42 Las ___, Cuba (Province)
44 Decorative pitcher
45 Passion
47 Check recipient
49 Explosive initials
50 Internet access type, now rare
52 Come down with
54 Fangs

57 Attention-getter
59 Blackthorn fruit
60 Exclamation of grief
62 Canopy covered beds
69 Intense anger
70 Miscue
71 Artist’s stand
72 Goose egg
73 Late TV star and comedian Jack
74 Impose, as a tax
75 Aquatic shocker

Down
1 Flag symbol
2 Romeo’s rival
3 Doctor’s financial downfall?
4 Anatomical pouch
5 ET’s craft
6 Suppressed, as emotions
7 Kama
8 Money dispenser, in brief
9 Carnival site
10 Ostrich cousin
11 After expenses
12 Strong elastic wood
15 Butcher’s cut
19 Silent assents
21 Mme., in Madrid
24 Football stats

26 ___ Zeppelin
27 Ranch unit
28 Set a limit (on)
29 Neighbor of Saudi Arabia
31 Auction offering
33 Bakery product
34 “Moneyball” actor
35 Like late night footsteps in a haunted house
37 Literary collection
38 Photographer’s request
41 Blemish
43 Mermaid’s home
46 Furrow
48 Zeta follower
51 Cancun coin
53 When doubled, a dance
55 Ultimatum word
56 Add up
58 French modeler
61 Auction off
62 Presidents’ Day mo.
63 Bonanza find
64 Samovar
65 Director Howard
66 Jimmy
67 Gun, as an engine
68 Like a fox