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CAMPUS PRIDE



‘They are loved just as they are’

Local churches provide inclusive community for queer students

By Saxtyn Lutz
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Many students at Penn State have likely come across the preachers who commonly stand outside the HUB-Robeson Center or at the Allen Street Gates, condemning those in the LGBTQ+ community to hell. However, they’ve also likely passed by the large Pride flag over the entrance of Faith United Church of Christ (UCC) on the corner of College Avenue and Locust Lane.

Debates over whether queerness and faith can coexist are commonplace in modern dialogue. Local churches such as Faith UCC and the Wesley Foundation are aiming to provide safe spaces for queer Christians, in an effort to dispel the notion Christianity condemns those belonging to the LGBTQ+ community.

Faith UCC is currently led by its first openly queer minister, the Rev. Jes Kast. She became the settled pastor in 2019, which she said was a bold step for the church. This Sunday, Kast and her wife will be baptizing their baby at Faith UCC.

“It’s one thing to fly the flag and say, ‘Oh, we’re allies,’ but it’s another thing to say, ‘No, our pastor is queer herself,’” Kast said.

Kast said society leads many students to believe that they cannot be both queer and Christian, which is something she often sees within newcomers at Faith UCC. She said it’s incredible to help students find peace with their identity and for them to no longer feel the need to defend themselves.

“They see a message of Jesus in the gospel that welcomes and loves all people,” Kast said. “‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ and that is the work that we’re called to do.”

Cam Mallet stumbled across



Brayden Burns/Collegian

The Faith United Church of Christ sits on E College Ave. on Monday, Apr. 13, 2026 in State College, Pa.

Faith UCC during his search for a LGBTQ-friendly congregation.

“The number of people I know in our congregation who came to this church just because there was a Pride flag out front is very large, and we can never take it down because it’s our best recruiting tool,” Mallett, a sixth-year graduate student studying kinesiology, said.

He said his first time attending the church’s Sunday service was also his first time leaving a church feeling good. So, he kept going back.

“There was a very long period of my life where I couldn’t imagine myself ever standing in front of a group of people and saying that I was gay, much less a faith community, and that everybody would still be willing to love and care for me after that,” Mallett said.

Emma Steinebronn, a member of Faith UCC, was also attracted to the church by the Pride flag.

Steinebronn, a fifth-year graduate student studying physics, said there’s recently been

a movement of biblical scholarship to focus on love. She said it’s understood within the church that love should come first in any way, shape or form and people should be allowed to love who they love.

“Many of us come from backgrounds where queerness and religion are incompatible,” Steinebronn said. “Many of us have found a home in Faith Church, because that is a place where not only queerness and faith are compatible, they’re honored. Because God made you who you are and part of that is your queerness.”

Mallett said by definition, queerness is being set apart from the normative standard. However, at Faith UCC, there are many young and old members of the congregation who identify with the LGBTQ+ community.

“Rather than feeling you’re weird or this minority for being queer in our church, you’re not in the minority,” Steinebronn said. “There’s a lot of queer people and so it’s just a very welcoming

environment to be in.”

While the large Pride flag outside of Faith UCC is a downtown staple, they aren’t the only church along College Avenue that’s openly accepting of LGBTQ+ students. Adjacent to Faith UCC, St. Paul’s United Methodist Church also welcomes and affirms those of every gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

The Rev. Sarah Voigt of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church serves as director of the Wesley Foundation, a student organization connected with the church based in Abba Java Coffeehouse.

Years ago, it painted the Pride flag on a large table in the middle of Abba Java. This was done as a pushback against anti-LGBTQ+ people who were spending a lot of time in that space. Despite initial backlash, according to Voigt, the Wesley community ensured the table remained.

“Our space tries to tell the story of who we are,” Voigt said.

Voigt said it’s important to show LGBTQ+ students they



Matt Cropp/Collegian

Pride flags sit on a table during the Multicultural Unity Fair in the State College Municipal Building on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025 in State College, Pa.

Gender-affirming care on campus

By Vasco Chen
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Amid shifting national discourse surrounding gender-affirming care across the United States, Penn State continues to offer services such as gender-affirming surgery, hormone replacement therapy, voice care training to all students and employees through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and University Health Services (UHS).

UHS has a gender diverse care team that specializes in providing gender-affirming care to students. The team consists of gender diverse coordinators from the Center of Sexual and Gender Diversity (CSGD), physicians from UHS, counselors from CAPS and nurses and student health insurance navigators from community health partners.

Tanja Hernandez said even if a student is already consulting with different medical providers, they’re free to talk through best practices with the team and transfer services if necessary.

“We do our best to make sure that students who go through any kind of gender-affirming care, whether that’s medical or mental health, are given an opportunity to speak with someone who’s specialized in this kind of care,” Hernandez, the gender diverse community and belonging coordinator at CSGD, said.

Hernandez said students with any questions about their insurances’ coverage of gender-affirming care should reach out to a health insurance navigator, who will help them review their

benefits available through their insurance. Even if they’re not on the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP), they should still begin with the gender diverse care team.

“Because we operate under the Pennsylvania healthcare structure, even Medicaid and state insurance cover all of the cost for gender-affirming care,” Hernandez said. “For those who don’t have that co-pay provided, I work with students on filling out applications for grants and microgrants out of Eastern PA Trans Alliance and Point of Pride.”

Penn State is connected with other clinics across the nation who provide gender-affirming care through the Collegiate Gender Affirming Care Coalition, a network of healthcare providers dedicated to improving access to care for gender diverse students.

“We invite them to our campus every year, and we foster a connection with them so that we have a better understanding of their workload,” Hernandez said. “So, if a student is seeking a specific surgery and we know that a local provider is on a backlog of more than eight months, they might consider referring out to somewhere in Philadelphia or Harrisburg, somewhere that’s not quite as local but still within our network.”

Carla Prieto, the coordinator of sexual and gender diverse care at CAPS, said those partnerships are essential to ensuring the gender-affirming care services they offer are helpful to students. “Having gender-affirming care resources on campus is fundamentally about student

well-being, safety, and the ability to fully participate in university life, including reaching the fullest academic potential,” Prieto said.

“Having gender-affirming care resources on campus is fundamentally about student well-being, safety, and the ability to fully

participate in university life, including reaching the fullest academic potential,” Prieto said.

Although UHS only accepts student patients, the university health insurance for faculty and staff also includes gender-affirming care. Penn State also provides free voice training for students who are interested in changing the register, tone or pitch of their voice to align with how they wish to express themselves.

“When students feel seen, respected and supported in their identities, it directly impacts their mental health, academic success and sense of belonging,” Prieto said. “People tend to learn best when they don’t have to spend energy questioning whether they belong here.”

Gwynne Morris currently serves as a mentor for Queer Peers, which is a welcoming program that supports LGBTQ+ students as they navigate campus life and search for community.

“When I was a mentee last year, I would talk to (my mentor) about some emotional things, and they were obviously super cool and supportive,” Morris, a second-year studying political science, said. “And now, as a mentor, I’m also like that with the people who I’ve mentored.”

She said having these programs is really important because it protects diversity and makes Penn State more inclusive..

“The biggest thing that it has helped me with is referring me to the Student Legal Services,” Morris said. “I didn’t pay anything to get my name changed in any way. They covered all of those costs completely, which was really, really amazing.”

In April 2025, Penn State Health stopped offering gender-affirming care for individuals under the age of 19 in compliance with federal law. Though services at Penn State continue, Prieto said it’s hard to say if that will always be the case under the current administration.

“Supporting the resources above as an institution fosters a campus climate that is more inclusive, more connected, and more responsive to student needs,” Prieto said. “Supporting gender diverse students means supporting the whole student, and in doing so, strengthening the entire campus community.”

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Students assess Penn State’s LGBTQ+ resources

By Vasco Chen
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State is consistently ranked among the top LGBTQ+ friendly universities in the country, due to its offering of resources such as gender-inclusive housing, gender-affirming clothing and gender diverse care. However, some queer students say there’s room for improvement.

Despite Penn State’s strong reputation, students’ experiences suggest that institutional support doesn’t always translate into an inclusive environment. Resources that seem supportive and welcoming on paper might not be the case in classrooms, housings and on campus.

Samrat Sharma said the university should improve resource availability for queer students who don’t fall in the 18-22 age range.

“A lot of grad students, they’re not the typical age,” Sharma, a fourth-year doctoral candidate in education and women, gender and sexuality studies, said. “There are students like me who are queer, who are international, and we are above the age of 30. And we have no resources and it feels isolated sometimes.”

Sharma said introducing group sessions for older queer students would be helpful, as it’s important to facilitate spaces where people can relate with one another. He said these sessions are especially necessary because what queer people in their thirties experienced growing up differs from what those belonging to younger generations experienced.

“Imagine if a 30-year-old gay person just goes up to a 19-year-old gay person and starts talking about ‘What does it mean to be queer?’” Sharma said. “And what happens if one of them becomes my student in the classroom? That is a very personal level of sharing, which I would rather not share with my students.”

Due to Penn State’s status as a predominantly white institution, Sharma said a lot of times the issues of queer people of color aren’t addressed and microaggressions often seep into conversations.

“I’ve had experiences with professors who are white, but they’re extremely aware of how to talk to people of color and how to take into consideration the different experiences people have and how whiteness

have an inclusive space because of the amount of harmful messaging that surrounds them.

“You walk down the street, and there’s people who claim to be Christians who are yelling hate at people, making judgments, offering words of destruction and devastation,” Voigt said. “I want our student community to know that the messages they have often heard and continue to hear from so many different Christians is not the only story and they are loved just as they are.”

Ella Strickland said it’s hurtful to those in the queer community who are involved in Christianity because it drives them away from the religion. She said she feels as if she’s being judged based on who she associates herself with.

“Just because I’m gay doesn’t mean I can’t be a Christian,” Strickland, a third-year studying agricultural and extension education, said. “I think it’s very alienating to assume that we can’t coexist. Like, those two identities or those two parts of me can’t be in conversation with each other.”

Strickland is Wesley Foundation’s event planner. She said the organization provides her with a sense of community that she hasn’t found anywhere else.

Every Wednesday at 6 p.m., the Wesley community gathers for a free meal in the Abba Java Coffeehouse. Strickland said she enjoys coming to these because she feels open to talk about herself without shielding her personality or sexuality.

“I can be who I am outside of the church, but when I come into this community, y’all say y’all don’t care, but I feel like you’re asking me to leave a part of myself at the door just to make everyone else feel more comfortable,” Strickland said. “That doesn’t happen at Wesley.”

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can play a role in shaping the perception of one’s experiences,” Sharma said. “But I’ve also had professors who have been completely ignorant, and through that ignorance, they’re dismissive about experiences.”

He said the university should encourage its faculty, staff and students to think about the world through an intersectional framework.

“University kind of puts you in touch with people from all over United States as well as the world,” Sharma said. “If students are just slightly pushed, or slightly stretched in terms of their understanding of queer and racial differences, they can do wonders.”

In 24 Ritenour Building and HUB-Robeson Center Room LL011 queer students have access to Clothing Transits, which offers queer students a place to get free clothing that aligns with their gender expression Joshua Colvin said it’s due for an upgrade.

“Finding the clothing that feels right on you is like feeling complete, feeling like you belong in your own body,” Colvin, a third-year studying economics, said. “It certainly has a lot, but it doesn’t have a lot of each kind. A larger capacity of clothing would be better. Maybe give more selection options.”

Similarly, J Carvalho said Clothing Transit should be moved to a better location.

“There’s been no shortage of stuff that I’ve gotten from there and that people I know have gotten from there,” Carvalho, a fourth-year studying political science and sociology, said. “It’s just unfortunate that it’s in the basement of one of the oldest buildings on campus. It’s a little rank in there.”

Carvalho is the vice president of Lion PRIDE Caucus, an umbrella organization serving gender diverse students on campus by amplifying their voices and promoting inclusivity.

“It’s a hard time to be queer, and these resources existing give some form of stability, some form of comfort and some form of safety,” Carvalho said. “I know former presidents of this organization used these resources because of the stress of running an organization and have gotten better because of it.”

Julian Mintz said they think there should be a larger university effort to raise transgender awareness on campus.

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Paperbacks for Pride

By Avery Pelletier
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For so many of us, books have taught us about the world from the first day we learned to read. In many cases, they’re the closest any of us get to experiencing the perspective of another person.

While many college students have a list of required reading for their classes, there’s still immense value in extracurricular reading to continue to learn about the experiences of others.

In honor of Campus Pride Month, celebrated at Penn State in April, here’s a list of five books from different LGBTQ+ perspectives. Recommended by professors here at Penn State, these books cover a variety of times and genres that could make a reader go from crying to laughing.

“Collective Amnesia” by Koleka Putuma

In her collection of heartbreaking, yet unapologetic poems known as “Collective Amnesia,” South African author Koleka Putuma highlights her own life experiences as a queer woman in a predominantly Christian country.

Split into three parts, “Inherited Memory,” “Buried Memory” and “Post Memory,” are collections of poems that may be an emotionally difficult read, but are necessary to remind us all of the experiences many LGBTQ+ people continue to go through.

This recommendation comes from Dr. Gabeba Baderoon, an associate professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies, African studies and comparative literature. She described the book as a “startlingly brilliant and engrossing collection” that portrays the experience some may go through around the world.

Baderoon said this is a collection frequently incorporated into university curricula around the world, including here at Penn State.

“Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from Red States” by Samantha Allen

Published in 2019, the non-fiction story “Real Queer America: LGBT Stories From Red States,” written by American author Samantha Allen, is a unique take on the storytelling of the experiences of many Americans.

Based on her six-week-long road trip through the United



A display of LGBTQ+ books is featured at Barnes & Noble on Benner Pike on April 14, 2026, in State College, Pa.

States, Allen not only highlights the experiences of different queer Americans growing up in areas that don’t traditionally support them, but also shares her own experience as a transgender woman from a Mormon family.

Jenifer Wagner-Lawlor, professor and acting head of the Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, recommended this book and said she’s personally taught it before.

“Woman on the Edge of Time” by Marge Piercy

In this sci-fi novel, American author Marge Piercy focuses on the experience of the main character, Connie Ramos, a Mexican-American woman experiencing homelessness, as she sees the two different possible realities of the future.

While this book is not nonfiction or specifically focused on the reality of modern-day queer people, the storyline navigates challenges around gender and sexuality in a future dystopia. It not only engages readers, but requires them to reflect on today’s reality.

Dr. Susanne M. Klausen, professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies and African studies, recommended this book and personally deems it a “classic” for the genre.

“Raving” by McKenzie Wark

As the title says, this book may attract readers with its themes about partying. However, the experiences shared in this short,

yet engaging nonfiction piece by Australian writer McKenzie Wark will be what keep readers engaged.

Focusing on the underground transgender and queer rave scene in New York, Wark goes beyond just sharing the stories that she experienced as a transgender woman in these communities. At the heart of this book is a story about connection and fluid identity.

This book was also recommended by Wagner-Lawlor, and it’s one she has also taught before.

“Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration” by David Wojnarowicz

In this collection of short essays, American writer and activist David Wojnarowicz shared more than just the stories of his personal life, but also captured the overall despair and anger many Americans, especially those in the LGBTQ+ community, felt during the AIDS epidemic.

While incredibly vulnerable and heartbreaking, this memoir is a must-read for modern readers to understand the pain that many, including Wojnarowicz, faced during this time.

This story was recommended by Kevin Bell, an associate professor of English, and he described it as a “scabrously poetic, ferociously beautiful collection of essays.”

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LGBTQ+ films to watch this Campus Pride Month

By Alli Satterfield
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

April is Penn State’s Campus Pride Month and for many, with public celebration comes private reflection. This month, whether you need time to laugh, cry or think critically, there are endless LGBTQ+ centered movies to enjoy while you do so.

Here are some recommendations:

1. “Call Me By Your Name”

Based on the novel by Andre Aciman, this movie stars Timothée Chalamet and Armie Hammer. With 7.8/10 stars on IMDb, the film focuses on the love story of two young men as they discover their emotions and desire over the course of a summer together.

Reviewers said the film portrays their love innocently, without the concepts of guilt and shame typically woven into a queer love story, and they claim Chalamet’s performance is emotional and raw. While it doesn’t have a happy ending, the film is beautiful, emotional and ultimately human. “Call Me By Your Name” illustrates a truly real love story, and can be a compelling watch for anyone.

2. “Cabaret”

The classic musical “Cabaret” has multiple film adaptations, but my favorite is the 1993 TV movie featuring Alan Cumming. In this version, Cumming takes on the role of the Emcee, who creepily and beautifully hosts the audience of the Kit Kat Club, a place where everyone is welcome and celebrated in Berlin, despite the incoming Nazi regime.

The theme of resistance feels especially timely now, as communities are coming together in the face of widespread rollbacks of DEI initiatives and other challenges to inclusivity. The musical is also a reminder to not turn a blind eye to the suffering of others, even if their challenges don’t impact your own life. Life isn’t always a cabaret.

3. “Boy Erased”

Continuing with the rather melancholy theme, this film is about a young man sent to conversion therapy. The protagonist is outed to his parents and his father, a Baptist pastor, forces him to either attend a conversion camp or be ousted from his family. The film, which is based on a true story, shows a realistic tale of human connection and emotion.

Critics of the movie warn that some scenes can be brutal and violent, while also not portraying the protagonist’s pain deeply enough. Others argue this was done intentionally to show an authentic story instead of just forcing audiences to cry. Some critics also claim that the script makes viewers too sympathetic to parents wanting to change their child.

But, despite the varied opinions, the film was given an 80% by Rotten Tomatoes, so it’s probably worth the watch. You can decide for yourself.

4. “Bohemian Rhapsody”

I think this film is great. I understand the argument that we’ve seen enough biopics, but I would argue this one is worth watching. It chronicles the career of Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, who is considered by some in LGBTQ+ community as a queer icon. He openly dated men and women and pushed the

boundaries of gender expression, given the time period he lived in. Some people attribute his ability to do so to his status as a rock star, and the film explores this, as well as his medical struggles toward the end of his life.

“Bohemian Rhapsody,” which takes its name from the notorious Queen song, ends with the Live Aid concert, and blends the movie’s fictional footage with firsthand videos of Queen at the event. I cried the first time I watched the film because it seemed to immortalize Freddie Mercury’s influence and show that, even though he has become an icon, his influence was and is so much larger than his sexuality.

5. “But I’m a Cheerleader”

And, now, for a happier film. “But I’m a Cheerleader” is, at this point, a cult classic — fans of the movie seem to absolutely love it. I could not count on my hands the number of times I was told to watch this movie before I finally did. It’s been recommended to me dozens of times, but I finally watched it last week.

It was so worth it. I found the film to be complex, campy and funny, and I especially enjoyed the ending. If you want a lighter movie, this is the one for you.

Happy watching and, more importantly, Happy Pride.

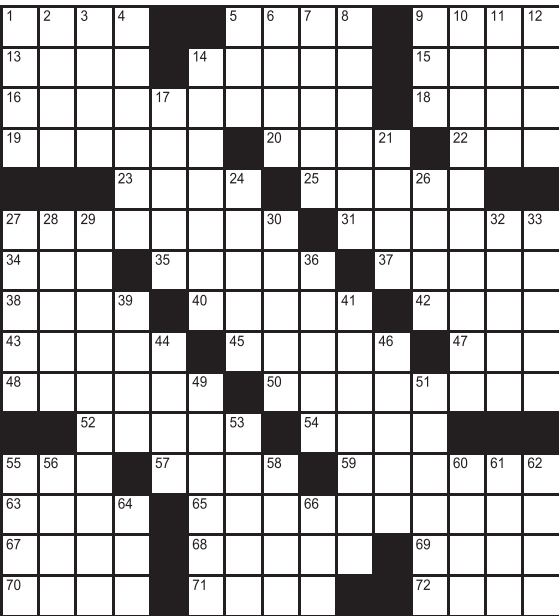


UEC College 9, which offers discounted movies on Tuesdays, on Tuesday, April 1, 2025 in State College, Pa.

Crossword

Across

- 1 Ionian gulf
- 5 Rancher’s concern
- 9 Wight, for one
- 13 Like some losers
- 14 Ditto alternative
- 15 Ship part
- 16 Leaving one’s country
- 18 Fencing sword
- 19 Come into view
- 20 Butts
- 22 ___ de Triomphe
- 23 Hammett hound
- 25 Subsequently
- 27 Being the ghost
- 31 Beethoven’s “Moonlight ___”
- 34 Dog holder
- 35 Dye-yielding shrubs
- 37 Supreme Teutonic god
- 38 Methane’s lack
- 40 Esau’s father
- 42 Codfish
- 43 Rice wine used in Japanese cooking
- 45 Prevent legally
- 47 ___ Jeanne d’Arc
- 48 Type of feeder
- 50 Academic term
- 52 Early Judean king
- 54 Sketched
- 55 Asian language
- 57 Starch from cuckoo-pint root
- 59 Fit for farming
- 63 Reo maker
- 65 Detective’s clue
- 67 Resting on
- 68 Magazine release



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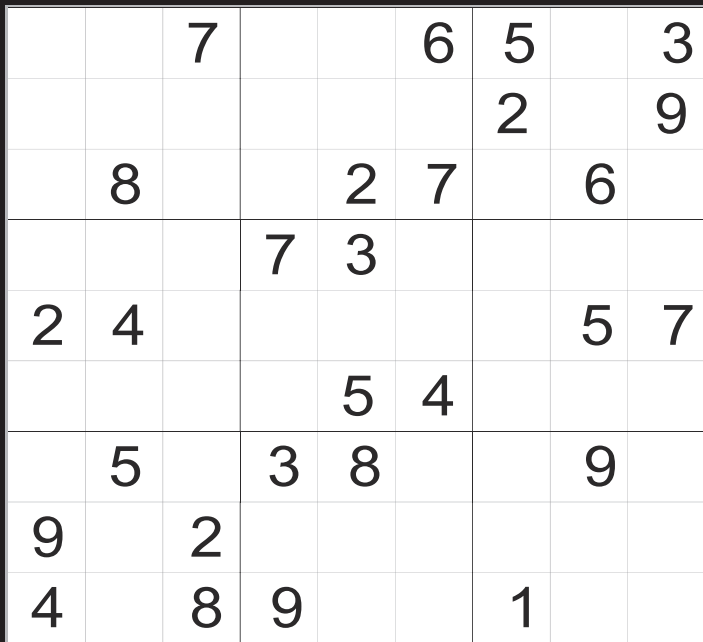
- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 69 Female deer | 10 Secession advocate | 36 Stuffed |
| 70 Cunning | 11 Salacious look | 39 Bar mitzvah, e.g. |
| 71 He loved Lucy | 12 Monthly utility bill (Abbr.) | 41 Friend |
| 72 The “E” of B.P.O.E. | 14 James Bond’s cocktail | 44 “A Doll’s House” wife |
| | 17 Haile Selassie disciple | 46 Nobility |
| | 21 Put on board | 49 Ghoulish |
| | 24 Biscotto flavoring | 51 Bandage |
| | 26 Form of ether | 53 Red seaweed |
| | 27 Atomic weapon | 55 Baker’s unit |
| | 28 Sound | 56 Choir voice |
| | 29 Unconventional | 58 Trunk growth |
| | 30 Tumbler | 60 Get-out-of-jail money |
| | 32 Oncle’s wife | 61 Coupling |
| | 33 Wrath | 62 Expires |
| | | 64 Operative |
| | | 66 “Certainment!” |

Down

- 1 Like some salts
- 2 Cavort
- 3 Misstep
- 4 Lemnos locale
- 5 Billboard listing
- 6 Kuwaiti ruler
- 7 Kidney-related
- 8 Tenets
- 9 One of the Clantons

su | do | ku

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WORD SEARCH

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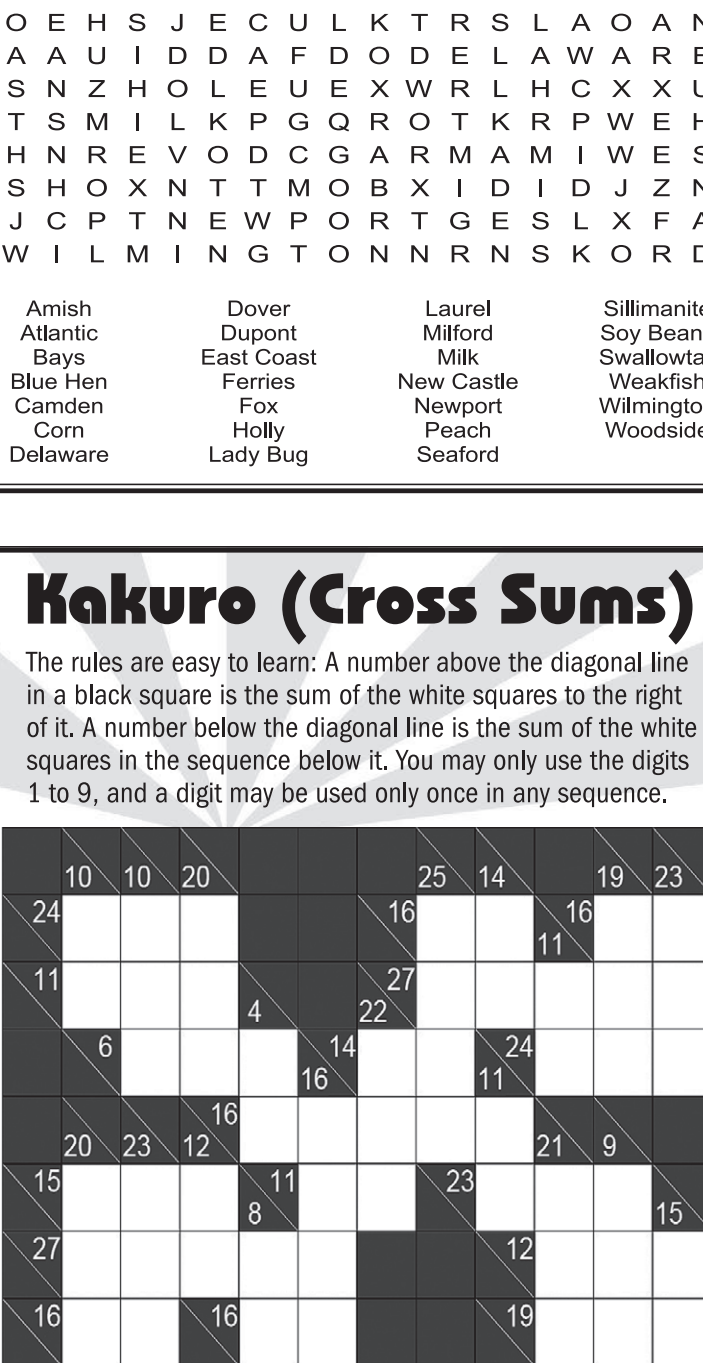
Delaware

N	D	K	U	W	E	A	K	F	I	S	H	Q	U	Q	A	L	M
F	E	R	M	C	X	M	M	W	R	E	D	I	S	D	O	O	W
E	U	D	O	B	S	I	L	L	I	M	A	N	I	T	E	H	O
M	H	A	M	F	Y	S	C	V	N	B	L	Z	Q	M	Z	M	R
N	A	I	D	A	L	H	G	I	G	U	B	Y	D	A	L	N	K
E	E	X	R	N	C	I	E	R	T	Y	S	L	B	E	C	H	U
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S	O	Q	F	F	W	K	P	X	E	L	A	C	L	E	P	E	H
T	Y	X	A	Z	Y	A	F	M	E	L	Y	L	L	O	H	W	G
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S	H	O	X	N	T	T	M	O	B	X	I	D	I	D	J	Z	N
J	C	P	T	N	E	W	P	O	R	T	G	E	S	L	X	F	A
W	I	L	M	I	N	G	T	O	N	N	R	N	S	K	O	R	D

Amish	Dover	Laurel	Sillimanite
Atlantic	Dupont	Milford	Soy Beans
Bays	East Coast	Milk	Swallowtail
Blue Hen	Ferries	New Castle	Weakfish
Camden	Fox	Newport	Wilmington
Corn	Holly	Peach	Woodside
Delaware	Lady Bug	Seaford	

Kakuro (Cross Sums)

The rules are easy to learn: A number above the diagonal line in a black square is the sum of the white squares to the right of it. A number below the diagonal line is the sum of the white squares in the sequence below it. You may only use the digits 1 to 9, and a digit may be used only once in any sequence.



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RAINBOW RUNNING



Ally House remains safe space

By Aly Cromar
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Ally House, Penn State’s LGBTQ+ living-learning community (LLC) in West Halls, has provided a pivotal safe space for queer students over the years, providing them with a sense of belonging.

Ally House is meant to be a zone of safety and identity for many of its residents in a shifting political climate. Amid ongoing conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion, students say its role feels as important as ever, though not without challenges.

CJ Bean said Ally House is an essential aspect of their college experience.

“It provided a space where I can just feel comfortable knowing that most of the people in my building are safe to be myself around,” Bean, a second-year studying computer science, said. “It provided one of the first spaces where I felt comfortable being out.”

With safety being a big concern within the LLC, the inclusive facilities in Ally House were especially important to former E-board Member Ashley Wozniak. Wozniak, second-year student of nuclear engineering, said the presence of gender neutral bathrooms made her feel comfortable.

“Ally House has provided me a safe space to live,” Wozniak said.

Wozniak said the positive environment in Ally House does not come without its challenges. While she said she personally didn’t face challenges in the



Jacob DeLuca/Collegian

Watts Hall stands in West Halls on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, in University Park, Pa.

entire bunch, she noted internal social dynamics can sometimes feel exclusionary for those not part of established groups.

Wozniak said she experienced this firsthand during her time on the executive board.

“The rest of the members of the executive board seemed to be in their own clique, and it felt isolating at times,” Wozniak said. “I felt afraid to bring up concerns or issues I had with how Ally House was being run, as they all seemed to be in agreement already.”

She added that the concentration of like-minded individuals in the space can also lead to tension around differing viewpoints. While Ally House fosters community among stu-

dents with shared experiences, Wozniak said it can sometimes feel less open to political perspectives outside the majority.

“There was an incident last year where they were bothering someone on the first floor for having a Trump 2024 flag up,” Wozniak said. “Which, of course, I didn’t support the flag, but it didn’t warrant harassment in my eyes.”

The current political climate has caused fear for some residents amid the rollback of DEI initiatives across the nation. While no direct changes to Ally House funding or operations have been reported, if it were reduced or eliminated, residents say the impact would be felt.

“I think it would be very likely that if queer spaces were

“The absence of safe spaces will not get rid of queer folk. But it will make our lives more difficult, more stressful and more exhausting.”

Ashley Wozniak

eliminated on campus, many of the spaces for other marginalized groups would also be threatened,” Bean said.

AJ Charnetski said they wouldn’t feel safe on campus without these resources, as

STEM colleges hold Pride mixer



Kippi Hall/Collegian

Andrea Tapia, dean of the College of Information Science and Technology, gestures to an audience at Pride in Every Field: A STEM Mixer.

By Vasco Chen
THE DAILY COLLGIAN

Penn State’s first “Pride in Every Field: A STEM Mixer with Rainbow Networks and Allies” took place this Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. at the Noontime Lounge in the HUB-Robeson Center.

The mixer is a collaboration between the STEM colleges to foster inclusivity, build networks and grow a community among LGBTQ+ community members, Rainbow Networks and allies. Organizer Dr. Aaron Mattingly is the director of graduate equity programs in the Eberly College of Science.

He also organizes “LGBTQ+ in STEM Leading the Way: Perspectives on Identity,” which is an interactive panel discussion on STEM identity and queerness.

“A lot of that event is dedicated towards listening to others, but not really, truly having a whole lot of time and space to engage with each other,” Mattingly said. “So we were like ... (let’s) have everybody together in a nice safe space to interact, get to actually know these networks face to face, rather than just being kind of names on a list where you might feel awkward with kind of just cold emailing somebody out of the blue, being like, ‘I’m of this community, I need help in some sort of way.’”

He said there are over seventy registrants so far, and about half of them are staff and faculty

“So sometimes it is important to reach out across the larger spaces while still staying within potentially your general field.”

Dr. Aaron Mattingly

members.

“It kind of shows that there’s a need just beyond the students and finding community,” Mattingly said.

John Neisser, an associate teaching professor in Eberly, said Penn State has some work to do to ensure everyone is represented.

“There’s a lot of programming that’s directed to the students, which is great, but ... the faculty perhaps can use more programming,” Neisser said. “There’s certainly a large population of LGBT and queer people who are the undergrad, the student age, but it’s a little bit tougher ... as a professor or a staff member. Sometimes being ... LGBT can be a little bit isolating.”

Dr. Andrea Tapia, dean of the College of Information Sciences and Technology, gave an opening speech before the mixer officially began.

“If you are here today as a scholar, a scientist, a student, a

researcher, as your full and authentic self, you are already doing something extraordinary,” Tapia in the speech said. “We are navigating a moment when science itself is questioned, when evidence is treated like opinion, when entire fields of inquiry are dismissed with a shrug or a budget cut. At the same time, LGBTQ+ people, our identities, our histories, our contributions are being sidelined.”

Tapia also said science is the art of illuminating blind spots. Because queer people “live at the margins,” they learn to see the system and its gaps.

Courtney Taylor, a graduate assistant at the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, offers academic and holistic life support to students. She came to the mixer to gain more knowledge and on the resources available to students.

“Representation goes a long way, whether you’re in the community or not,” Taylor, a second-year graduate student studying recreation, park and tourism management, said. “Just even knowing that there’s people who are allies is a benefit to the students who might be interested. We all need to continue to do the work and also show other people that if you see yourself in this type of position or this role, you can still be yourself and take on this type of role.”

Marisa Ferger, an assistant teaching professor in the Department of Meteorology and Atmospheric Science, said it’s important to have the visibility of people who have been trained to show that they are an ally.

“Being able to put the sticker on your office door to say you’re a member of a rainbow network or you’ve taken the Safer People Safer Places classes are really important,” Ferger, a member of her department’s Committee on Belonging, said. “So that when new students or even current students and new employees show up at the university, they know that they are welcome and that they have an ally there for them.”

Mattingly said sometimes it’s unconscious bias that rears its head and contributes to queer students feeling like spaces aren’t for them.

“What can often happen too is that when you’re of a more marginalized or minoritized group, the further you dig down into certain spaces,” Mattingly said. “So sometimes it is important to reach out across the larger spaces while still staying within potentially your general field.”

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LGBTQ+ in STEM panel highlights identity

By Darina Ayazbayeva
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

About 30 Penn State students, faculty and staff gathered Wednesday evening for a two-hour event focused on identity, inclusion and representation in science fields, part of “LGBTQ+ in STEM Leading the Way: Perspective on Identity.”

The event is a part of an ongoing collaborative Pride Month series with several Penn State colleges, including the Eberly College of Science, the College of Information Sciences and Technology, the College of Engineering, the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, and the College of Health and Human Development

Dan Henderson, associate director for belonging and inclusion in the College of Engineering, said the goal was to bring together the STEM community and LGBTQ+ voices.

“Every spring, for a couple of years already, we try to hold an inter-STEM event for Campus Pride Month,” Henderson said. “If it weren’t important, no one would care; the fact that people show up during a busy time of the semester shows that they want a community representation and a sense of belonging.”

Henderson also noted representation remains important in STEM fields, because of expectations about what people in these fields should look like or how they are supposed to act.

“Events like this give students a chance to see that there is a community for them,” he said.

The second half of the event featured a panel discussion with members of Opulence, Penn State’s Drag Ambassadors organization. The panelists, five drag queens who are also students in STEM-related fields, shared personal experiences navigating both their professional identities and their identities as a part of the LGBTQ+ community.

One of the attendees, Alexandra Jackson, a professor in the College of Engineering, said she came to the event for a better understanding of how faculty and staff can create a more welcoming atmosphere in a STEM field and how they can support the LGBTQ+ student community more.

Jackson said the university is welcoming, but conversations around the identity topic can still feel limited.

Jackson said the topic could always be discussed more, especially as STEM is traditionally a male-dominated field. She said the atmosphere of the event was very welcoming and that she would love to know how she can help promote this topic more as a faculty member.

“If we continue to reduce that

Ally House made it easier for them to find others with shared experiences.

“If queer spaces were eliminated on campus, I feel as though our freedom would be lost,” Charnetski, a second-year studying biological engineering. “I would have to hide on campus in fear of being judged or worse. The queer spaces on campus allow me to feel like myself without fear.”

Queer students’ fears have been enhanced in recent years due to the introduction of anti-DEI bills and legislation.

“I’m worried about how the current president and his administration’s view on trans people may affect us,” Bean said. “Whether they just revoke funding overall or force groups to hide support for trans people.”

Though, Wozniak said she doesn’t think it’s likely for Ally House to disappear due to anti-DEI policies, despite the university not denouncing what the current administration is doing.

Residents of the LLC said the existence of the space itself remains critical. For many, it’s a place that allows them to be themselves and build community in ways they might not be able to elsewhere.

“The absence of safe spaces will not get rid of queer folk,” Wozniak said. “But it will make our lives more difficult, more stressful and more exhausting.”

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stigma, we’ll be in a much better place,” Jackson said.

Gabrielle Zuiker, a staffer in Penn State’s animal research program, also emphasized the importance of representation and discussion in scientific

spaces.

“There are a lot of people who identify as not straight, so it’s important for them to know they’re not alone,” Zuiker said. “Having different identities and perspectives in science really matters.”

While Zuiker said she does not always engage in large campus conversations because of the independent nature of her work, she believes discussions like this should happen more often.

“Some people are still not ready to talk about this,” Zuiker said. “It’s something that can feel stigmatized.”

Panelists also addressed the challenges of balancing authenticity with expectation in STEM spaces, which are often seen as more traditional or conservative. For Aurora Railsback, that sense of belonging comes with both confidence and risk.

“Even showing myself in this way can be kind of scary,” Railsback, a first-year student studying aerospace engineering, said. “Sometimes you need to take different routes just to feel safe.”

Railsback also said it can feel tight being in a STEM field profession.

“I always wear suits during any professional event, just because it seems professional; also, as a woman in a STEM field, I always need to push a little more just to be noticed,” Railsback said.

Railsback said the event created a sense of encouragement. She said she hopes after this attendees promote more inclusivity.

“Be the person that your younger self would want to look up to,” Railsback

Elaine Paulk, vice president of Opulence, said awareness remains a challenge, even as acceptance grows. It’s important to continue attempting to raise awareness.

“There are still a lot of bubbles where people just don’t know about our community and us,” Paulk, a second-year student studying biology, said.

Paulk described the atmosphere of the drag event as energizing and affirming. Pauik also highlights that authenticity is central to both identity and expression.

“There is no greater weapon against oppression than being yourself,” Paulk, a second-year student studying biology, said. “Be yourself, even though a lot of people would try to go against it.”

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LGBTQ+ allyship is an active word, not a passive label

When LGBTQ+ allyship is brought up, it's often described as a passive label. A rainbow sticker on a water bottle, an Instagram post, a smile or cheer during a pride parade. As kind as these actions are, they can often forget the real human lives that the rainbow represents — the people behind the Instagram post and the community members who passed far too soon, unable to celebrate at a pride parade. With anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and rhetoric at an all-time high, it's time to take a critical look at what allyship to a community under fire looks like in a practical sense, not solely an aesthetic one.

In January 2025, the Trump administration took over American politics with a radically conservative approach to governance. Using fear as a methodology, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment was espoused over the loudspeaker. Over the course of one year, almost 600 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced across the country and the president has signed several executive orders

GUEST COLUMN

This letter was written by Sam Brooks. Brooks is a fourth-year studying digital art and media design.

targeting the health and security of LGBTQ+ people.

In April 2025, I started taking testosterone. In June 2025, many trans friends of mine chose not to go to pride or own their identity for fear of violence. In July, I was denied a passport due to my gender marker. In October of 2025, I spoke at a vigil where we mourned over 100 trans community members lost to violence and suicide in the past year alone. These numbers I share with you aren't empty statistics, they are the lives of students, families, friends and peers.

As a transgender man, I hear my existence thrown around as a point of contention or fear every day. I am a Penn State student, no

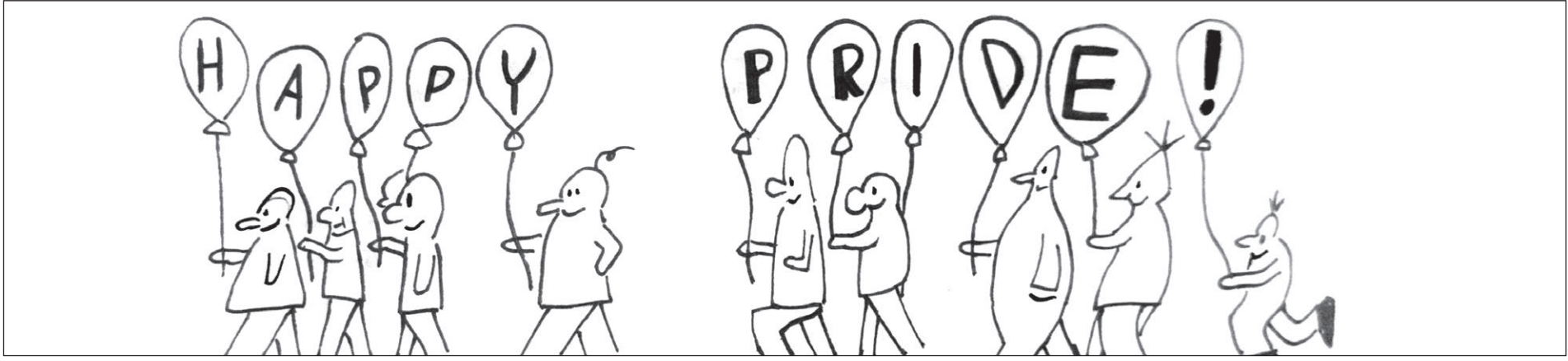
different from you. I have learned here. I have loved here. I have stayed up too late partying and stumbled my way home here. I know that who I am is seen as intrinsically different, but I go to the same bars and grocery stores. I have gone to many classes in the Forum building (and dozed off a few times just like you). Many of my peers here are transgender, they are gay, they are lesbians, they are bisexual. They are also students, they are artists, they are educators, they are friends to many. They aren't so different from you. This year, I ask you to remember the actions behind allyship. It may seem as though the legislation on the table is of no risk to

you, but I beg to differ. When the government is allowed to determine what the "correct" form of love is or what medical care you are entitled to on the basis of sex, that sets a precedent that can escalate in the blink of an eye. Please remember that the elimination of a group from legal status does not mean the group no longer exists, it just means that they are no longer protected.

If you would like to be an ally, please use your voice for those who can't. Engage with the community, ask questions and be present. Learn about the actual impacts of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and who is being targeted. Resources from the

Human Rights Campaign, Williams Institute and GLAAD are excellent places to start. If you are interested in community engagement, look into opportunities to make yourself heard in local spaces like town halls or to local and state politicians. Now more than ever it is vital to be proactive. Even taking steps socially to distance yourself from engaging in harmful rhetoric and language, understanding where the words and stereotypes come from and working to unpack and shift your thinking. Allyship is an active stance against discrimination and oppression and allies are needed now more than ever.

I am writing this as a plea to you. This month, as you go to drag shows, enjoy the free stickers and merch and even attend parties for the season, please remember the humans behind it all. Allyship isn't a label that sticks the way queer-ness is. You can take the stickers off, we can't. Still, please keep the stickers on, be loud about your allyship. Advocate for our health and safety, in addition to celebrating our community.



Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | Rebecca Fein

Column | Becoming Jonah: Finding freedom in the truth

With scarlet lipstick applied sloppily to my lips, fake diamonds drooping from my ears and hanging from my neck and pink and purple tutus stacked upon my waist, I was a girly-girl through and through, a sharp contrast from my then "sister" Jonah.

Not to lead with the cliché troupe "they weren't like other girls," but when it came to Jonah, that simply was the case.

The curly-headed, gaming-loving, baggy clothes-wearing "girl" would fight my mother at the sight of mascara, wince at the thought of a dress and heels and shook their head "no" at lilac and fuchsia.

This behavior within Jonah was always overlooked because you don't need to like dressing up, shopping or manicures to be a "girl," so Jonah was always considered a quirky tomboy, more interested in the Mets pre-season training and electric



Fein

green than the latest trends and fashion.

It wasn't until Jonah's sophomore year of high school that "tomboy" wasn't enough to describe their true identity. In light of this, Jonah pulled aside my mom one evening and came out to her as bisexual, and my parents were in full support.

It was done. My older sibling was finally living a life of truth, or so we thought.

After coming out for the first time, Jonah began exploring their sexuality. They dated women, chopped their hair to their shoulders and even started shopping in the men's section for shorts, as that was the section they were more comfortable in.

When Thanksgiving of Jonah's freshman year of college rolled around, they decided another change was in order.

It was when Jonah came home from college for the very first time that I remember lying in

"It was done. My older sibling was finally living a life of truth, or so we thought."

Rebecca Fein

bed together while they updated me on everything college. While I was sharing whatever was happening to me at the time in the treacherous tenth grade.

It was then that Jonah asked if they could tell me something important.

I replied, "Of course," my eagerness was apparent. "I go by Jonah now. Also, I am non-binary," they expressed.

After about an hour of me asking questions, I'd finally understood. Jonah was never a "girly-girl" as a child because they were never a girl at all. Coming out as bisexual was a temporary transitional phase, while they figured out their real spot in the LGBTQ.

Non-binary is when a person doesn't identify as either a girl or a boy. It's a person who's living in the "in-between." A person who doesn't use "she/her" or "he/him" pronouns but "they/them"

to stay androgynous.

I was the first person Jonah had told. Jonah was Jonah to them and me, but nobody else.

Jonah trusted me, they confided in me and I vowed to stay loyal to them and support them through allyship. At the end of the day, blood makes you related, love makes you family and my love for Jonah goes farther than distance and lasts longer than time.

After coming out to me for the second time, they were ready to share it with the world and soon, everybody was introduced to Jonah.

I've never seen Jonah happier. Through my 19 years of watching them grow and change and their 23 years of self-reflection and development, this stage of Jonah was the brightest one.

After all, your authenticity is your power, not your flaw.

Rebecca Fein is a second-year studying broadcast journalism and English with a minor in HDFS! She is a blogger for the Daily Collegian and is excited to produce content for another semester! Email her at raf5784@psu.edu or follow her on X @hRebeccaFein

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for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their groups. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters. The Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters. Letters chosen run on The Daily Collegian website and may be selected for publication in the print edition. All letters become property of Collegian Inc.

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30 years of LGBTQ+ history in athletics

By Myles Hannak
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State is one of the most historic sporting institutions in the country. Its athletics program has produced gold-medal winning Olympians, star NFL players, six Dan Hodge Trophy winners on the mat and dozens of LGBTQ+ athletes who, while charting impressive athletic careers, doubled as activists for equality at Penn State and across the nation.

Take a look at some of the most pivotal moments for LGBTQ+ athletes in Penn State history.

March 1991

In the late 1990s, Rene Portland, Penn State women's basketball's winningest coach of all time, emerged as a polarizing figure. In the midst of her 11th season, she became the figurehead of one of the campus's first Pride-related debates.

In a Philadelphia Inquirer profile, Portland claimed she didn't allow players who identified as lesbians on her team. At the time, the Collegian spoke with the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Alliance (LGBSA), who said this illustrated "the need for a sexual orientation clause," to protect the rights of queer athletes.

Shortly after the article's pub-

"My definition is not wrapped by, such as my being is not wrapped up, in how I put a ball in a hole. It's also not wrapped in being a gay person. It's just a part of it."

John Amaechi

lication, more than 50 students gathered outside Rec Hall to protest Portland's alleged anti-LGBTQ+ biases.

"It's evident that not only do the students need to be educated on homosexuality but, embarrassingly enough, so does the faculty," said protester Angela Mikula, then-co-director of the USG Department of Women's Concerns.

Penn State's athletic department eventually announced it would conduct a formal investigation of Portland's alleged anti-LGBTQ+ stance. That investigation unearthed a 1986 Chicago Sun-Times article which detailed similar anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments from Portland.

"I think that any of us who have been here recognize that there is a long way to go in the whole realm of tolerance," associate athletic director Ellen Perry said. "In Intercollegiate Athletics, as the rest of us, we are just trying to find ways in which we can effectively educate and deal with these issues."

During the investigations, athletic director Jim Tarman released a comment, leading many to believe that action wouldn't be taken against Portland.

"There is no University or athletic department policy which precludes or otherwise discriminates against the participation of student-athletes on the basis of sexual orientation," Tarman said. "We have complied and will continue to comply with the University's policies of non-discrimination."

The LGBSA continued to protest the administration's inaction and advocated for the addition of a sexual orientation clause to anti-discrimination policies.

"I think we'll just have to keep on doing this until we get what we deserve," LGBSA social/educational co-director Jeff Kemp said. "So that might mean a very busy week or two weeks – whatever it takes."

Amid ongoing protests, Lt. Gov. Mark Single met with students and expressed support for the addition of a sexual orientation clause. Joab Thomas, university president, said he would propose the idea at the next Board of Trustees' meeting.

April 1991

In early April, the Collegian published an article authored by two anonymous student-athletes, detailing the challenges queer athletes face.

"We are two lesbian student-athletes representing separate



The Daily Collegian, Feb. 10, 1992

Penn State Athletic teams. We feel forced to conceal our identity as lesbian athletes due to the possible repercussions which may accompany revealing our sexual orientation. We also feel that there are many other gay men and lesbian athletes who, like us, are closeted in fear of discrimination. In our case, losing the opportunity to continue our education at Penn State."

Collegian archives report LGBSA continued to spearhead the fight to add a LGBTQ+ non-discrimination clause and for the university to fire Portland.

Summer 1991

In June the Board of Trustees voted to add a sexual orientation clause to the university's list of protected categories.

"The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status."

The clause received widespread support from athletes and coaches alike.

"The new policy makes it much easier to look into these complaints. Before there was nothing that gave the affirmative action office the authority for investigating a complaint of discrimination based on sexual orientation," Bonnie Ortiz, director of the office of Affirmative Action, said.

Importantly, Ortiz said the policy is not retroactive, a crucial caveat in the case of Portland.

1992

Despite the clause's addition, there was still no action from the university on Portland's allegations. This boiled over when members of Temple's Gay Student Union decided to protest Portland when the Lady Lions played the Owls.

"We're protesting because she's taking the easy way out. She just bans everyone and we're supposed to accept it," Julie Davids, a Temple alumna, said. "That statement is ridiculous. It's a slap in the face."

Protests continued at away women's basketball games, notably Rutgers students wore purple shirts in support of queer athletes when the Lady Lions faced them.

1996

In 1996 Sue Rankin, one of Penn State's longest-serving allies, departed her post for new ventures. Rankin coached Penn State softball for 16 years, during which she was one of the first openly lesbian DI coaches and led the program to numerous successes.

"I coached for about 16 years," Rankin said. "And during that time I think the program was successful. At the same time I was involved in promoting diversity."

Rankin took a new role in the administration as a senior diversity planning analyst in the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, focused on LGBTQ+ issues at Penn State. Rankin later revealed in an op-ed that her decision to leave stemmed from pressure from the athletic department to cease her activism.

Although Penn State lost Rankin, students and faculty continued to advocate for queer athletes.

In November 1996, the Coalition of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Graduate Students organized again wearing t-shirts at a women's basketball game supporting LGBTQ+ athletes.

1997

T-shirt displays continued at women's basketball games. Portland, however, claimed not to see

the show of support for LGBTQ+ athletes.

"I have enough problems coaching my kids on the court," Portland said. "Anytime I look up, it's to see my mother."

Portland continued to express no formal support from Portland for LGBTQ+ athletes. In March, the Collegian reported Julie Jarosz, a women's basketball center, left the team for personal reasons. Jarosz's father claimed it was due to abusive leadership from Portland, reenergizing the old scandal and foreshadowing more issues to come.

Rankin held a group discussion to help gain awareness, support and propose potential changes at Penn State to help boost support for queer athletes. The discussion focused on readings of anonymous statements from Penn State athletes on LGBTQ+ relations on campus.

"You're at a game and you've got all these other people, you know, not wanting to room with you or eat with you," Rankin read from an anonymous athlete's statement. "I wouldn't say the gay issue was the biggest problem our team had, but I think it lost games for us."

2005

With help from the National Center for Lesbian Rights, former Penn State women's basketball player Jen Harris sent a letter to then-university President Graham Spanier claiming coach Portland discriminates against players she believes to be lesbian.

Harris claimed Portland made routine comments on her sexuality and pressured her to change the way she dressed.

"The climate in Penn State intercollegiate athletics is representative of systematic homophobia and heterosexism experienced by university community members on a daily basis," a statement by the campus queer community said, at the time.

The next day, the administration officially reviewed Harris's



Nick Thomas/Collegian

Penn State linebacker Carl Nassib tries to fight his way through San Diego State University offensive lineman Robert Craighead during their game at Beaver Stadium on Saturday, Sept. 26, 2015.

claims of bias, and the former Lady Lion continued to detail the mistreatment at the hands of Portland.

"(Portland) wanted me to change," Harris said. "She said my appearance came off, I guess, as being a lesbian. She didn't use those words exactly, but she kind of implied it."

In October, legal representatives for Harris and Penn State met, and Portland officially gave its reason for her release of the player. The coach claimed inadequate academic standing and im-

proper conduct and denied anti-discrimination claims.

"It is unfortunate that she has chosen to attack me for her lack of success at Penn State," Portland said. "However, her lack of success had everything to do with her lack of commitment to basketball."

Those comments only further exacerbated matters, as Harris threatened to sue Portland the following day for defamation.

"Our original intent was to work with and cooperate with the university and assist them in their investigation," Karen Doering, Harris' lawyer, said. "However, now that the university has put out statements making false and defamatory remarks about our client, we can no longer sit back and wait to begin the legal process that will enable us to produce evidence to prove that the allegations Jen Harris made are true."

Doering threatened a suit if the comments from Portland were not retracted. The renewed scandal in Portland led to more protests. The NCLR eventually moved forward with its lawsuit, after the administration claimed Harris' side had not submitted sufficient evidence of Portland's biases and that it couldn't investigate the matter without it.

Tension relating to the Portland scandal and support of LGBTQ+ athletes was at an all-time high. Nearly 70 protestors gathered outside Old Main to call for the firing of the coach, with a group of advocates even entering the building to chant their support.

The Office of Affirmative Action officially began an investigation of Portland and offered an update that same day, but no concrete action had yet begun.

2006:

In January, Portland had her first public appearance and refused to comment. Toward the end of the month, Portland and Penn State's legal teams began filing motions to dismiss the suit and the coach again began to see protestors at away games, this time in Minnesota.

Earlier that same season, an estimated 500 protestors gathered at Michigan State against the coach's practices.

By mid February, both sides had filed their claims in court and the case continued. At the end of the month protestors gathered for the last home game of the season and draped rainbow flags over sections of bleachers.

In April, the university completed its internal investigation and found Portland violated the university's non-discrimination policies. She would return to coach the Lady Lions; her punishment would be a \$10,000 fine and a warning that if she were in violation again, she would be fired.

2007

Portland continued to face public pressure, and in February 2007, the Collegian reported she and Harris reached a confidential settlement on the discrimination case.

"This has been a really important case, and this has had an impact on coaches and universities across the country," said Doering. "This case has generated an unprecedented public dialogue."

In the same year former Penn State basketball player John Amaechi detailed his coming-out in his 2007 book "Man in the Middle." The center spent two seasons with the blue and white before five seasons in the NBA, and with his announcement, he was the first openly gay professional basketball player.

"Having the courage to say 'I am gay,' you can't get somebody better to stand in front of the camera and talk about it," ESPN books editor Chris Raymond said. "Now people have to have an enlightened discussion about [homosexuality in athletics]."

In an interview with the Collegian, Amaechi opened up on how his identity shouldn't be defined by those two mere aspects.

"My definition is not wrapped by, such as my being is not wrapped up, in how I put a ball in a hole," Amaechi said. "It's also not wrapped in being a gay person. It's just a part of it."

In March 2007, the Collegian reported Portland officially resigned as head coach of the women's basketball team two years before her contract expired with no exact explanation.

Her 27-year tenure at the helm ended with the most wins in program history.

Under the resignation article, the Collegian ran a piece on activist responses on the move; despite no legal ramifications for the alleged discrimination, it would be forever tied to her legacy.

"For nearly three decades, Coach Portland has had a docu-

"I didn't start coming out to friends or even talk about being gay until the final semester of my senior year at Penn State, so I was pretty blind to the resources and groups that were on-campus."

Lee Cary

mented history of discrimination and prejudice toward [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered] athletes. Her resignation is just one of many steps that needs to occur at Penn State to improve campus climate issues both within and outside the athletic department," a statement released by SpeakOut read.

2019

In 2019, the Collegian profiled Penn State alum Lee Cary. Cary got the distinct honor of leading the 76ers delegation in Philadelphia's 31st Pride parade.

"I didn't start coming out to friends or even talk about being gay until the final semester of my senior year at Penn State, so I was pretty blind to the resources and groups that were on-campus," Cary said. "I spent a lot of time trying to be someone who I wasn't. I internalized quite a lot of pain before I came out, hoping one day I would be different."

2021

Carl Nassib, a former Penn State football defensive end who played from 2013 to 2015 in Happy Valley and delivered one of the program's best defensive lineman seasons — including setting the single-season sack record with 15.5 in his final year — became the first active professional football player to publicly disclose that he is part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Nassib had just closed out his sixth season at the time of his announcement, and additionally, donated \$100,000 to the Trevor Project, an advocacy group.

"Just wanted to take a quick moment to say that I'm gay," Nassib said in a video on his Instagram account. "I've been meaning to do this for a while now, but I finally feel comfortable enough to get it off my chest."

Since his announcement, the West Chester, Pennsylvania, native has continued to fight for better awareness and support for LGBTQ+ athletes. Nassib's main venture now is his app Rayze, founded in 2020 for activists.

"A mobile first platform powering individual activism, nonprofit fundraising & corporate giving," the app's site reads. "We're connecting donors, individuals, businesses and nonprofits, creating one platform for fundraising, corporate giving, campaign management, and volunteer recruitment."

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