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# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH EDITION

GRAPHIC BY MERCEDES HAMILTON

PHOTOS BY GERALDINE CRUZ-HERNANDEZ AND ALEX FISCHER

# Safe spaces for women in STEM

## Women-focused clubs combat gender inequality

By Darina Ayazbayeva  
FOR THE COLLEGIAN



Matt Cropp/Collegian

The College of Information Sciences and Technology sign inside the Westgate Building on Thursday, April 17, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

**“It’s important not only to point out where inequality exists, but also provide opportunities that help create more equality.”**

Aria Smith

share similar academic goals can help students feel more comfortable asking questions, seeking advice and discussing challenges.

Another organization working toward similar goals is the Society of Woman Engineers (SWE), which focuses on connecting women and studying engineering disciplines across campus.

Adelaide Orsetti, SWE’s direc-

tor of equity recruitment, said the organization plays a crucial role in helping women feel supported in fields where they may sometimes sense they’re overlooked.

“Growing up, my brother was always seen as the ‘math person,’” Orsetti, a third-year studying industrial engineering, said. “Teachers would encourage him to take more technical classes, while I was often encouraged to take English or writing classes, even though I was good at math too.”

Experiences like these, she said, are one more reason organizations supporting women in STEM remain important. She said the clubs allow women to worry about the problem at hand rather than if they belong.

“In group projects sometimes you have to speak up a little more so your ideas are heard,” Orsetti

said. “I feel like it’s important to spread awareness that these kinds of clubs exist and women know that there is a safe space for them.”

Today, SWE unites more than a thousand women in STEM fields on Penn State’s campus, according to Orsetti.

While some organizations focus broadly on supporting women in STEM fields, others aim to provide resources for students interested in specific disciplines, particularly within technology and computer science — like Girls Who Code College Loop, a student organization founded in June 2025 to support women and non-binary students interested in technology careers.

The Association of Women in Computing (AWC), focused on professional development, mentorship and community building for women studying computer

science and related disciplines is another student group helping to bridge the gap.

Marilyn Jin, AWC’s president, said she’s personally experienced situations where being a woman in technology affected how her ideas were received.

“I have faced situations where I felt inferior and my voice wasn’t accounted for in group projects,” Jin, a third-year studying computer science, said. “This really affected my self-confidence and made me question whether I was made out to be in the technology field, but I pushed through and am glad I stuck with it despite these setbacks.”

Through weekly meetings and events, AWC provides both social support and professional development opportunities for its 60 active members. Despite gradual progress in representation, Jin said gender inequality remains noticeable in many STEM classrooms and workplaces.

“There are so many times still that when I walk into a STEM class, there are at most three or four other women,” Jin said.

She also said highlighting gender inequality on campus is important because it helps raise awareness about the challenges women still face in technical fields.

“Unfortunately, we still face many scenarios in school and in professional life that make us feel inferior and unheard,” Jin said. “Having a safe space outside of those places can act as a reminder of what we are truly capable of.”

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# Activists continue fight for women’s rights



Chloe Trieff/Collegian

Protesters take to the State College streets to protest the overturning of Roe v. Wade in June 2022.

By Jade D’Agostino  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

As Women’s History Month marks decades of progress, Penn State students say the fight for women’s rights remains urgent in this new digital age.

A number of Penn State women’s groups are pushing for more activism and discussion within Generation Z (Gen Z) around issues women are facing in the world. Olivia Podskoch said activism has always been a large part of her college experience.

“There’s been a huge push to silence young women, and it’s unfortunate,” Podskoch, a fourth-year studying criminology and women’s, gender and sexuality studies, said. “We need to start listening to young women, because it’s the future.”

Podskoch serves as the president of Triota, the women’s, gender, and sexualities studies honor society, and said having a smaller, like-minded group at Penn State makes it easier to mobilize and advocate.

Emma Russell said every issue women face is urgent, and the state of women’s rights should anger everyone.

“If it affects one of us, it affects all of us,” Russell, a fourth-year studying biology and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies, said. “Feminism is for everybody.”

Russell, a longtime member of Triota, said even if you aren’t directly affected by women’s rights issues, you should speak up on behalf of those who are.

Since the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022, which ended the federal right to abortion and returned the decision to the states,

some students say reproductive rights are fundamental for women.

Russell said she remembers where she was upon learning of the Supreme Court decision.

“I had just graduated high school because it was June of that year ... I was honestly sitting at home scrolling and it came up on my feed, and I’m like, ‘There’s no way,’ like, I knew this was in the news, but they actually did it,” she said. “Nobody stopped them.”

Brooke Benevento is the director of education for the Penn State Reproductive Justice Project, a student organization founded in 2023 that aims to advance reproductive justice efforts at Penn State. Benevento, a fourth-year studying rehabilitation and human services, said the U.S. has gone backward in the past few years when it comes to reproductive health.

“I want to say I’m optimistic about how it will be addressed in the future, because we have so many young activists ... but I also want to be a realist in the fact that there’s a lot of people in positions of power right now who don’t want that to happen,” she said. “They say we hear you and we respect you, but they haven’t acted on that.”

Amaris Fultz, a member of Triota, said the current administration is not listening to young women’s concerns about their reproductive health.

“I would love if they would listen to young women more, I’d love if they’d listen to anyone more,” Fultz, a first-year studying film production, said.

Fultz said social media has changed modern-day feminism by shaping views of women. She added that while social media has introduced a range of perspectives, it also comes with drawbacks.

“It’s so easy to fall into a rabbit hole on social media because of algorithms and just stay there,” Fultz said, pointing to the dangerous cycle of platforms constantly reaffirming users’ beliefs.

Though the negative effects of social media are often unavoidable, Podskoch said Gen Z’s online space can also be positive, as it offers the opportunity to learn about other perspectives and a different knowledge of the world.

“It just opens the space for us to really communicate with others in a way that other generations haven’t been able to do,” Podskoch said.

While social media platforms

may offer some benefits to modern-day activism for women’s rights, Eloise Emel said she still doesn’t think it’s as productive as traditional methods. Emel, the director of advocacy at the Penn State Reproductive Justice Project, said reposting advocacy posts on social media can create a false sense of impact.

“I definitely believe that protesting in person is far more effective than anything like social media activism,” Emel, a second-year studying psychology and women, gender and sexuality studies, said. “A lot of coalition building and resistance building in general is mainly done in person ... I feel like people almost fall into that repetitive trap of feeling like social media is enough when it’s not.”

She said the dynamic is complicated, noting that while social media makes it easier to spread awareness and stay informed, she thinks some people post assuming it makes them a ‘good person.’ However, students engaged in activism beyond social media still face scrutiny.

“I feel like there is kind of a negative stigma surrounding the work that people in women’s studies do,” she said.

Despite that stigma, Russell said while there may be concerns about protesting on campus, it shouldn’t stop people from speaking out. She said no matter what a person advocates for, there’s always going to be someone in disagreement.

She said she doesn’t think that making one group out to be the sole reason for an issue is a great way for coalition building. Progress requires openness and establishing a common ground, Russell added.

“If you’re not willing to learn, there’s no fixing it,” Russell said.

Drawing on her experience with the Reproductive Justice Project, Benevento said conversations about reproductive health and justice should focus on education rather than persuasion.

“The goal shouldn’t be to change someone’s thinking,” Benevento said. “It should just be to give them the education and the resources for them to be able to evaluate and do that on their own.”

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# Groups open conversations on reproductive health

By Paloma Munoz  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Reproductive health services and education have been at the forefront of national discourse, following the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022. As conversations ramp up about what constitutes sexual health care and whether it belongs in school curricula, campus organizations are aiming to provide resources and education at Penn State.

The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (CSGD), Relationship Violence Outreach, Intervention and Community Education (R-VOICE) and Days for Girls all provide reproductive health educational resources and supplies, such as free menstrual products.

Hailey Dermota, the vice president of Penn State’s Days for Girls chapter, said menstrual and reproductive health are “dramatically intertwined.” Days for Girls is a national organization that “works to eliminate the stigma and limitations associated with menstruation,” according to its website.

Penn State’s chapter is behind a number of period product initiatives on campus, including the inclusion of free period product dispensers in every newly renovated building on campus, which launched in 2023.

Currently, the organization is working on implementing the initiative in residence halls. A pilot program was launched in February to include these products in three West Halls dormitories — Watts, Thompson and Hamilton.

“Period poverty is here on campus as well,” Dermota said. “We’ve done a couple surveys, and we’ve seen some shocking numbers of how poverty affects individuals trying to get menstrual products.”

The club also helps campus offices get menstrual products to give out to students for free, including the Pride Pantry located at LL011 in the HUB-Robeson Center, CSGD and R-VOICE.

“Period products are too expensive in the market, so if that’s the only place you can get it with a meal plan, it’s too much,” Dermota said. “You don’t always want to talk about how you’re struggling financially, so it just gives a way for those students to

access that with dignity, without having that shame and stigma that’s always surrounded it.”

Dermota also emphasized how talking about reproductive health issues openly with peers, family and friends is critical as it helps people feel more confident in their health.

“You deserve to be helped and eased of your suffering and pain and whatever’s going on that you know is not normal,” Dermota said. “Talk about menstruation openly. Talk about reproductive issues openly, because a lot of the time people are sharing similar experiences.”

Kate Rawson, assistant director of CSGD, said there are a lot of misconceptions about who can receive assistance for reproductive healthcare.

“A lot of students within the queer and trans community do struggle with financial insecurity, food insecurity and housing insecurity, so as much as we can provide access to these things for free is wonderful,” Rawson said.

CSGD, which is in Room LL011 of the HUB-Robeson Center, and open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., hosts workshops centering queer-inclusive sexual education and consent education, and helps students forge and find inclusive environments.

“Our spaces are for you,” Rawson said. “I think a lot of people think that you have to be a fully out queer-trans person to visit our center, or you have to look a certain way, or be a certain way. But our space is for everyone — allies as well. We are open to anyone, regardless of any identity, visiting our space.”

Similar to CSGD, the R-VOICE Center also gives out free products such as contraceptives and provides care for anyone who may have been affected by sexual violence.

“Our focus is all on doing outreach, education, prevention advocacy and then being able to support survivors,” Yvette Wilson, the director of R-VOICE, said. “The focus really is on meeting them where they’re at and helping them as they try to move forward, whatever that looks like.”

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# 6 books to read this Women's History Month

By Ava Krysko  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

**Content Warning:** One of the recommended texts, "Women Talking" by Miriam Toews contains mention of sexual assault.

Women's History Month takes place in March, and serves as a time to recognize women's contributions to society. If you're looking for a way to celebrate women's achievements and educate yourself better about the significance of this month, you may want to consider picking up a book.

If learning through reading sounds like it's right up your alley, here are six book suggestions for Women's History Month, all recommended by Penn State professors.

## "We Do Not Part" by Han Kang

Published in 2021, "We Do Not Part" is a fictional novel that tells the story of Kyungha, a female writer who is living in Seoul. One day, she gets a text from her friend, Inseon, from the hospital and is then asked to go to her house on Jeju Island to look after her pet bird.

Kyungha takes on the journey and must travel through a snowstorm in the barren landscape of Jeju Island, but when Kyungha gets to her friend's house, she's seemingly whisked away into a ghost-like world.

Gabeba Baderoon, who recommended the novel, said it uses poetic fiction to honor the tens of thousands of people who were killed on Jeju Island by U.S. supported government forces in the 1940s.

"The story suggests that despite the silence, such suffering does not actually disappear and instead erupts in the lives of the generations that follow," Baderoon, an associate professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies said. "Only overcoming this silence and acknowledging the past can truly open up the possibilities of the future."

## "Women Talking" by Miriam Toews

Also recommended by Baderoon, "Women Talking" explores the aftermath and decisions of

Mennonite women after several sexual assaults take place in their community.

The book is based on events in a Bolivian Mennonite colony, and has also been turned into a movie of the same name.

Baderoon recommends "Women Talking" because of its depiction of how a group of women worked together to overcome sexual violence that was regarded as ordinary and unremarkable by the men in their community.

"The novel shows us how the women gather strength and resoluteness from one another and end the injustice they suffer," Baderoon said.

## "Surfacing: On Being Black and Feminist in South Africa" edited by Gabeba Baderoon and Desiree Lewis

This book is a collection of 20 essays that describe a viewpoint of what it's like to be a feminist in South Africa.

Baderoon co-edited this book and suggested it because of its "evocative deliberations on art, icons, orgasms and how to live tenderly on the earth."

## "Burn It Down!: Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution" by Breanne Fahs

Maggie-Rose Condit-Summers is a doctoral candidate in art education and women's, gender and sexuality studies who recommended this book because of its ability to tackle a wide array of perspectives including abolitionists, anarchists, transgender and queer organizers, sex workers, witches and more.

This compilation of manifestos reaches from the 19th century to present and explores feminist movements throughout those time periods.

"In our current moment marked by escalating injustice in our communities, this collection of manifestos reminds us that feminist rage has long been a generative force for naming violence and oppression, refusing respectability politics and imagining more just worlds," Condit-Summers said.

## "Reproductive Justice: An Introduction" by Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger

"Reproductive Justice: An Introduction" is a wide-ranging depiction of the reality of reproductive rights and justice in our society.

Condit-Summers described the book as an essential primer for those who want to educate themselves on the histories and practices that shape reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy today, specifically centering the experiences of women of color.

"As luminaries in the fight for reproductive autonomy, Ross and Solinger articulate how reproductive justice moves far beyond the narrow pro- versus anti-choice debates that have long dominated conversations about reproductive rights while providing a powerful framework for organizing in our post-Dobbs landscape," Condit-Summers said.

## "Interpreter of Maladies" by Jhumpa Lahiri

Written by Jhumpa Lahiri, "Interpreter of Maladies" is a collection of short stories that follows Indian immigrants and Indian Americans through their struggles with identity and culture, and it won both a Pulitzer Prize and the Hemingway Foundation/PEN award.

Laura Spielvogel recommended this book due to its focus on women's interior lives "to illuminate how gender intersects with culture, migration, family and belonging." Spielvogel, teaching professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies, assigns one of Lahiri's stories in her WMNST 105N Living in a Diverse World course.

According to Spielvogel, each of the stories comes from a different perspective ranging from male to female and young to old and offers a compassionate window into the intimate moments that make us human.

"This beautifully written book transports the reader into the inner lives of others to foster empathy for their rich emotional, cultural and relational experiences," Spielvogel said.

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# Crossword

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  - 47 Destroy
  - 48 South American range
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  - 39 Endorse
  - 41 Damp
  - 42 Those who court
  - 44 Fashions
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  - 47 Good news on Wall Street
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  - 52 Audition tape
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## WORD SEARCH

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### At the Rodeo

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 Judge Lariat Livestock Nationals Prizes Rodeo Roping  
 Score Skills Speed Sponsor Timer Winner

# 7 women owned businesses downtown



Matthew Kemper/Collegian

A sign hangs outside Growing Tree Toys on Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2025 in State College, Pa.

By Ava Krysko  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

A bookstore, a clothing boutique and a toy store — what do these three seemingly unrelated stores have in common? They're all women-owned businesses located in downtown State College.

As the old saying goes, "girls rule," and in State College, that certainly seems to ring true.

If you're interested in celebrating Women's History Month one way or another, you might want to consider checking out these stores and supporting the women who run them.

After all, what's better than a little retail therapy to end off the month? To get you started and familiarized with some of these businesses, here's seven women-owned stores that are worth stopping by this week.

## The Makery

Not only is The Makery women-owned and founded by Amy Frank, a mixed media

instructor, but the entire staff consists of women.

The Makery is an artistic space that hosts classes, open studios, parties and summer camps, featuring mediums ranging from knitting and painting to creative writing, making it the perfect scene for beginners (or advanced students) to get creative.

The Makery is located at 123 S. Fraser St. on MLK Plaza.

## Growing Tree Toys

If you're looking for a place to buy a Jellycat or NeeDoh stress ball, Growing Tree Toys is the place for you.

Owned by Lindsay Jones, Growing Tree Toys features a wide array of toys and games to spark your inner-child with colorful stuffed animals lining the walls and shelves.

The store is located at 202 S. Allen St.

## Webster's Bookstore Cafe

For the bookworm in your life, Webster's Bookstore Cafe is certainly a great choice.

With rows of books stretching out across the store, there's no limit to what you might find. While you're poring over those, you may get thirsty and choose to get a drink from their cafe.

Elaine Meder-Wilgus owns the used bookstore located at 133 E. Beaver Ave. and the space hosts more than books and food, as the space also hosts live events like poetry readings for the general public.

## Connections

Although Connections has been around since 1996, it officially became women-owned in 2019 and carries everything for your clothing needs.

Located at 130 S. Allen St., the store features brands such as Free People and Boys Lie on its clothing racks, sure to help you find your next pieces for a stunning outfit.

From dresses to accessories, there's something for everyone at Connections.

## Drip Studio

Is it time to finally get that tattoo you've been wanting or are you looking for another piercing to complete your earring stack? If so, Drip Studio may be the place for you.

Established in 2022, Drip Studio features various tattoo artists and piercers with different specialties, each with their own unique perspectives on the art form.

Jen Eisenhauer, owner of the tattoo studio, wants to "modernize the tattooing scene," according to Drip Studio's website.

Drip Studio is located at 248 E. Calder Way.

## Lock Boutique

Another clothing store, Lock has everything you need to look stylish this Women's History Month.

Whether you're looking for something casual or classy, Lock's array of clothing is sure to rise up to the challenge.

With a heart-shaped, pink flower wreath hanging above its door, Lock creates a welcoming atmosphere for customers, and usually features unique Penn State inspired pieces for gamedays and other school related events.

Owned by Lydia Shafer, who originally opened the business in Bellefonte, Lock Boutique is now located at 216 E. College Ave.

## Evolve Studio

Maybe you want to pamper yourself to commemorate the final days of Women's History Month. The first step to take when deciding to spoil yourself is going to a salon to get your hair cut or colored.

For these, you may want to visit Evolve Studio, a hair salon owned by Ashley Brady.

Whether you're looking for a blowout or a keratin treatment, Evolve located at 326 W. Beaver Ave. can definitely provide.

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## 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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## Women need more representation behind the camera

In case you missed it, the 98th annual Academy Awards were on March 15. Normally, it's categories like acting, directing and best picture that get a lot of buzz, but a more subtle category arose in prominence that night.

As Demi Moore announced Autumn Durald Arkapaw was the winner of best cinematography, for her work on the film "Sinners" — making her the woman ever to win the award — something in the room shifted.

During her acceptance speech, she asked all the women in the room to stand up. "I feel like I don't get here without you guys," she said as the women stood cheering.

Although it was a historic win met with celebration, it also brought a sobering revelation. It took 98 years for the Academy of Motion Pictures to award a woman the award for achievement in cinematography, not to mention she was just the

fourth woman overall to be nominated in that category and also the first woman of color to be nominated.

While it seems like progress has been made, the reality is that the progress has been minuscule, as women continue to be underrepresented in roles behind the camera.

In 2025, women accounted for 26% of producers, 21% of executive producers, 20% of editors, 20% of writers, 10% of directors, 7% of cinematographers and 8% of composers in the top 100 films of the year according to San Diego State University's Center for the Study of Women in Television & Film's annual Celluloid Ceiling Report.

Of that figure, for directing, only 5.4% were women of color, while over a 19-year period, women of color represent 1.9% of top-grossing movie directors according to Variety.

It's clear women are still not getting the opportunities to be in male-dominated roles. The director's chair is a higher-profile position and the attention creates pressure to allow women to be at the helm.

Important roles such as editing and cinematography tend to fly under the radar, preventing awareness about the low number of women in those positions, ultimately allowing things to remain unchanged.

It's important to note that in films with at least one female director, women were employed substantially in key roles behind the scenes. Women made up 71% of writers, 28% editors and 22% of cinematographers. Whereas films with male directors, women accounted for 11% of writers, 19% editors, and 5% of cinematographers, respectively, according to the same Celluloid Ceiling Report.

Providing a space where women can be represented in behind-the-scenes roles creates an expanded perspective because it's a less homogenized point of view. We have all lived different experiences and have different stories to tell, which contribute to the authenticity of film. It helps to create female characters with depth and nuance that go beyond the role of a one-dimensional girlfriend type.

Though film is an escape, it should still depict female

characters who feel real and are able to have their own agency. They shouldn't be reduced to some trite stereotype to be viewed through a male lens.

One of the great things about film is that it can provide us with a different perspective, but how is that possible if there isn't a diversity of perspectives creating the film? Gender shouldn't be a barrier in anything, yet it continues to be, even in the film industry. It's clear that it's more of a hiring issue, as women are represented well in film schools. Ignoring this issue only fuels gender bias by normalizing the inequality that continues today.

"I heard a phrase that said you need to see you," Arkapaw told the Associated Press last year. By having women in these roles behind the camera, it helps set an example for younger generations. It shows young ladies they're just as capable of being in these roles as anyone else.

In a time where Hollywood seems to be gravitating more towards sequels and remakes, perhaps it's time to turn to female creatives to tell the stories they've been wanting to tell. While the current political

administration may frown upon diverse stories, those opinions should be ignored. The whole point of creating art is to express oneself and connect with others and it should be done so with full artistic freedom.

In a similar vein to Arkapaw's speech this year, Frances McDormand, during her speech for her Best Actress win in 2018, asked all the female nominees in every category to stand up.

"Look around ladies and gentlemen, because we all have stories to tell and projects we need financed," McDormand said. Eight years after that speech, it's a sentiment that continues to be true and won't go away unless real change is made. I'll end this column with the words Frances McDormand ended her speech with: inclusion rider.

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Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | Andrew Deal

## Penn State needs to add women's wrestling

When I walked into the Bryce Jordan Center, the home to at least one Penn State dual for 30 years, the jumbotron stated: "This is Penn State. Wrestling lives here."

It's partially true, the Nittany Lions have won 14 national championships, five Hodge Trophy winners and 65 individual champions. However, the lack of a women's program has long been a stain on the wrestling program's 117-year legacy.

In January 2025, the NCAA officially added women's wrestling as the 91st NCAA championship sport, 33 years after the University of Minnesota-Morris was recognized as the first varsity collegiate women's wrestling program.

In March 2026, the NCAA hosted the first NCAA Women's Wrestling Championships in Coralville, Iowa. The competition crowned its first individual and team champions in women's wrestling, with McKendree earning the team title with 171 points.

Shortly before the final matches at the men's championships in Cleveland, Ohio, the women's individual champions were recognized. Among those were stars like

Iowa's Kennedy Blades, Lehigh's Audrey Jimenez and McKendree's Yu Sakamoto. Each of the champions donned their team's respective colors. Penn State's iconic blue and white was noticeably missing.

For Pennsylvania wrestlers, Penn State is a dream — one they must forfeit because of a lack of program. In order to compete at the collegiate level, 2024 Pennsylvania State Champion Avry Ryhal, a Mercer, Pennsylvania, native had to look elsewhere.

"My main goal as a kid was Penn State," Ryhal said. "I unfortunately didn't get that opportunity but I hope girls in the future do get that chance."

Among the 54 teams represented at the 2026 NCAA Women's Wrestling Championships, only four of those teams — Iowa, Lehigh, Sacred Heart and Lock Haven — were featured in the men's championships as well.

"I never thought that I would be a college wrestler," Ryhal said. "I was able to participate in nationals last year, but it wasn't official, but it becoming official just means so much more to me, like all my hard work actually means something now."

Penn State is in a unique position to grow the sport due to its dominance, and the program is a main reason the 2028 NCAA Championships are being held in U.S. Bank Stadium, the

Minnesota Vikings' football stadium. The wrestling team brings in over \$1 million in ticket revenue, rivaling the revenue of the Penn State men's basketball and hockey teams which are historically more popular.

The program has too much influence to not display any support or commitment for a women's team in the first years of the sport being in the NCAA.

"Imagine if we had Penn State, or we had Ohio State, or we had like Michigan in that mix," Ryhal said. "That would just create so much more diversity in the sport."

Penn State has a major influence on young wrestlers. There are kids in the sport who dream about wrestling in the BJC in a blue and white singlet. As of today, that isn't possible for women's wrestlers and for that Penn State should be overly ashamed.

"Sometimes I was like, 'Do I want to continue?' like 'is it even going to grow?'" Ryhal said, referring to how discouraging it was growing up and seeing no women wrestlers at the NCAA level.

The gradual growth of women's wrestling on the national level indicates that the addition of a women's team is not far away. As conversations ramp up at several power programs, we should expect Penn State to begin talks soon. And if they don't, the university should be

ashamed of its role in destroying the dreams and opportunities of many high school wrestlers.

"I see it even growing bigger than men's wrestling, like women's wrestling has saved the sport of men's wrestling," Ryhal said. "The addition of the girls in the NCAA program, or even just high school programs saved the sport of wrestling."

To carve the road to implementing a women's wrestling program, Penn State should first add a female prominent regional training center, like the men's affiliated Penn State's Nittany Lion Wrestling Club. From there, the program can add more women wrestlers and make the jump to the NCAA level, further growing the sport.

If there's not any Penn State representation, or any women's singlets with "NLWC" on it at the 2028 or 2032 USA Olympic Team Trails, then it's a complete lie for Penn State to say wrestling lives here.

"I think in the next five to 10 years, I hope that some of these bigger programs step on it and make these programs, because there's going to be so much more girls wrestling," Ryhal said.

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# 'This is growing so fast'

## Women's flag football thriving at Penn State campuses

By Elliot Insko  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following a spike in popularity across the United States, flag football was added to the NCAA's Emerging Sports for Women program in January 2026, positioning it to potentially achieve full NCAA championship status in the future. But even before this recognition, the sport has been thriving on Penn State campuses.

At Commonwealth campuses such as Penn State Harrisburg and Schuylkill, flag football is a varsity sport and the teams compete at the Division III level. At University Park the sport is undergoing changes as the team, initially founded as a recreational program, was approved to become a club sport earlier this year.

Club president Lauren McGoev formed the team in November 2024 and its been growing steadily ever since.

"It's been super fun and rewarding," McGoev, a third-year studying economics major, said. "It's been an amazing outlet for everybody involved."

McGoev had limited experience with the sport before forming the team and so did the majority of its players. However, she said the lack of experience hasn't been an issue.

"They're versatile, so their transition into the sport has been good," McGoev said, "Everyone's very supportive."

Giada Viola, the club's vice president, said one of the sport's biggest draws is how easy it is to start.

"Basketball, for example, has been established for so long that most of the girls playing,



Maddie Marcin/Courtesy of Penn State flag football

Members of Penn State women's club flag football stand during a play at the intramural outdoor fields.

especially at the college level, have been playing their whole life," Viola, third-year studying architecture, said. "Whereas you see girls here at the college level that had started only a few years ago. This is the perfect sport to pick up now, learn from those who do have experience, and grow."

This year, there are over 30 players on the roster and the club has grown significantly since its inception. Interest in the team is increasing heavily as it develops into a more established program.

"When we first held tryouts in the spring, we had over 100 girls show up," Viola said. "It was insane to see how much it blew up. The sport has been growing exponentially."

In addition to being an athletic outlet for women on campus, the club has a strong social aspect, which treasurer Megan Evans believes is important at such a large university.

"I just love being in a practice environment where you get to meet up with people every week,"

Evans, a second-year studying architectural engineering, said. "Especially going to a big school it's hard to find a close group of people ... it makes the campus feel smaller."

Football is central to Penn State student culture, and the club allows for individuals to get involved outside of cheering in Beaver Stadium on gamedays.

"We're such a big football school," Viola said. "We started with nothing, minimal experience, just being a small club last year, and already we've had a bunch of outgoing support, and I

think that comes with just being Penn State and having that name. It really does help."

Following his own football career, Ben Dupree, a former starting collegiate quarterback at The Citadel, a military institution in South Carolina, is now Harrisburg's flag football team's inaugural head coach.

"I've been fortunate that I got blessed with some talent," Dupree said. "There was a lot of talent already in the school."

Penn State Harrisburg is 3-0 on the season and has outscored its opponents 161-6. Dupree intends to keep that success rolling throughout the season, and into the playoffs, but also to cultivate an environment that will lead to a successful future for the program.

"For me, obviously the goal this year is to win the conference championship," Dupree said, "But other than that, just to make sure all our returning players come back

next year. I want to make sure everybody has a good experience and that they want to return."

Dupree said he believes University Park along with other institutions will soon begin to advance flag football to a varsity sport.

"I think soon, all the schools are going to offer scholarships to play flag," Dupree said. "I already see girls crossing over from other sports to play flag. It's gonna hurt some other sports, especially the ones in the spring, but I do think that eventually it's going to be one of the top female sports across the country."

High school programs across the nation are also growing, with many receiving support from local NFL franchises. Teams like the Washington Commanders, New York Jets and Pittsburgh Steelers, in addition to others have all committed to developing the sport.

Alongside the expansion of high school and college programs, flag football will make its Olympic debut at the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, signalling the growth of the sport not only in the United States but internationally.

Penn State's club team is new, but the foundation is there for it to be a mainstay in the wider flag football scene for years to come.

"This is an up-and-coming sport," McGoev said. "This is growing so fast, and even the community outside of just this club program, how we've been able to make NFL connections and get that type of attention is absolutely insane."

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# 30 years of Penn State women's hockey

By Mercedes Hamilton  
and Myles Hannak  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

What began three decades ago as a student-founded club program culminated last weekend in the most accomplished season for Penn State women's hockey. The Lady Lions made history with its first appearance at the Frozen Four, just weeks after four players represented their countries at the 2026 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympic Games. Take a look back at the program's evolution through the Collegian archives.

**1996-97: Humble beginnings**

Eighteen young women hit the rink on Oct. 30, 1996, for the then-Lady Icers' first practice. The team was started by Ellen Bradley and Kathy Beckford and coached by Vinnie Scalamogna.

Scalamogna told the Collegian that the team would function within the intramural ice hockey program and later petition the student government for club team status. As they worked to get the team off the ground — a process he acknowledged wouldn't be short or easy — he said the athletics department and then-men's club hockey coach Joe Battista were supportive.

According to Collegian reporting, the Rockettes tied the game at 2-2, 3-3 and 4-4 before center Ellen Zajko scored a game-winning goal with 2:21 left in the game. She was later named MVP of the game and went home with the puck.

Though the Collegian doesn't appear to have any record of when the student government officially approved the team's club status, the archives do document a March 1997 game against Rutgers in which the Lady Icers are identified as a club team.

While the Collegian also doesn't have a record of that game's score, it reported in December 1997 that the team played Rutgers again at the start of its second season and lost 3-1. Later that same weekend, the Lady Icers faced Chatham College and fell 6-4.

**1998-99: The Lady Icers compete in first collegiate tournament**

In February 1998, 13 players made their way to Potsdam, New York, to play in its first collegiate tournament. Hosted by Clarkson University, the All-East Regional Club Championship Tournament gave the team the opportunity to go head-to-head with other club teams in the region. The Lady Icers fell 8-2 to Massachusetts, who was the tournament's runner up, and 8-0 to Trinity College. Still, then-coach Jessica Ferrer was optimistic and learned from the game, including the need to be more aggressive. The following year, the team played its best season in its three-year history with a record of 9-4-1.

**2000-01: The Lady Icers become MAWCHA champions**

With just one minute and 21 seconds on the clock, the Lady Icers called a timeout, knowing the University of Pittsburgh needed just two goals to tie the game. Penn State entered the Mid-Atlantic Women's Collegiate Hockey Association (MAWCHA) tournament as the No. 1 seed, desperate to remain undefeated. The team claimed a 2-0 win over the No. 2 seed Ice Panthers after a heated season rivalry. The Lady Icers beat Pitt in 3-1 and 7-1 in regular season games. "I'm just assuming that we will be coming home with the first-place trophy. I love banners. I love trophies. I'm very materialistic like that. I can't wait to bring one home this weekend," Pittsburgh's Jess Preite told the Pittsburgh Tribune Review before the tournament, according to Collegian archives. The Lady Icers read the story before the game, saying it motivated them more.

**2001-02: Invited to compete in first national competition**

The team was one of eight schools to play in the inaugural American Collegiate Hockey Association's (ACHA) national

competition in April 2001. The Lady Icers faced schools out west for the first time, falling 3-1 in its first game against Arizona State University. The team later fell to Pitt and the University of Wisconsin.

Despite the loss, the team still gained a valuable learning experience, strong sportsmanship and even a piece of memorabilia placed in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto alongside items from the other competitors.

The following season, the team finished third, and Lady Icers forward Andrea Lavelle was named ACHA Women's Division I Player of the Year.

**2012-13: Moving to the big stage**

The Lady Icers played their last game in the ACHA, a league formed in 1991 and originally built to aid the transition to DI hockey. When that goal didn't come to fruition, both the women's and men's teams left for the next level.

For the women's team, it would now participate in the College Hockey America conference, which was eventually renamed to the current league the squad participates in today, the Atlantic Hockey America conference.

Former Penn State men's club team member Josh Brandwene joined to coach the squad in its inaugural DI season, in which it finished 7-26-2. As for the ACHA, the league is still in operation, with Penn State hockey clubs participating.

**2014-15: First home playoff series**

For the first time in program history, Penn State hosted a playoff series in Happy Valley at Pegula Ice Arena, which was only in its second full year of operation after opening in 2013. The game would be a sign of what was to come, both on and off the ice.

In the first postseason series at the venue, the blue and white defeated Lindenwood with a combined score of 4-1 over a pair of wins to advance to the team's first playoff semifinal. In the next round Penn State was sent home by Syracuse, but the program tasted its first bit of success.

In 2016, the Collegian launched

an investigation of coach Brandwene for alleged emotional abuse. The findings led to an athletic evaluation of the coach, who retired from coaching a year later.

**2017-18: Jeff Kampersal joins Penn State, first pro contract**

In 2017, the blue and white snagged coach Jeff Kampersal from Princeton University, following prior success with Guy Gadowsky, another former Princeton coach hired to lead the men's hockey team in 2011.

Kampersal recorded the most wins in program history and has been in charge for all of Penn State's most successful seasons. In 2026, Kampersal was named the top head coach in all of DI women's hockey.

Also in 2017, Cassie Dunne became the first Penn State women's hockey player to ink a professional contract.

"I always thought ice hockey ended after college," Dunne said. "I never thought about playing after school, but after I played for Team USA, it solidified that hockey had more for me and I wasn't ready to give up that sport that I have been playing my whole life."

**2020-21: AHA Accolades**

Penn State continued to make history and venture into uncharted territory. Former Nittany Lions' goalie Jenna Brenneman became the first Penn State alum to hear her name called at the National Women's Hockey League draft.

Brenneman was drafted No. 24 overall in the fourth round of the 2021 NWHL Draft and was the first goalie off the board. In that same year, the 2020-21 Penn State unit finished with the CHA regular season title for the first time, but failed to make an NCAA Tournament appearance after a postseason loss in the CHA semifinals.

The season remained historic and crucial to program history, however, as Kiara Zanon earned the program's first AHA Player of the Year Award.

**2025-26: Frozen Four**

The year started with buzz, as the Frozen Four returned for the

first time since 2022.

Throughout the course of the season, the Nittany Lions broke their attendance record for a women's Penn State hockey game twice. The first of which came after the first-ever hockey game inside of Beaver Stadium, but that figure was over doubled in the blue and white's final game of 2026.

In the season finale, 5,176 fans packed into Pegula Ice Arena for Penn State's Frozen Four clash against Wisconsin, where the Nittany Lions fell short on an attempt to make their first National Championship. Penn State had logged its highest USCHO ranking in history, No. 3, before the postseason clash.

It wasn't just a Penn State record, however, but a new Women's Frozen Four record, and the Nittany Lions' captain, Tessa Janecke, put an exclamation point on the night with her 200th career point after already setting the program career point record earlier in the season.

A plethora of player personnel also logged new career records in the season's journey. Defenseman Kendall Butze reached the top spot with career points by a defenseman, goalie Katie DeSa snagged the top spot in career shutouts, and forward Katelyn Roberts became the sixth skater to reach 100 career points, marking the first African American to do so in Penn State women's hockey history.

All those new additions to the record book, but one moment shines at the pinnacle. An all-time high four Penn State women's hockey athletes participated in the 2026 Milano-Cortina Olympic Games, with Janecke bringing home the gold, an achievement never reached prior.

Janecke, the only player to earn AHA Player of the Year twice for Penn State, had her miraculous season earn the program's first Patty Kazmaier top-three nomination. But despite not earning the award and her last collegiate game ending in defeat, Janecke stands as a program icon.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Forward Katelyn Roberts (22)** skates with the puck during the Penn State women's hockey game against St. Lawrence in the Pegula Ice Arena on Thursday, Sept. 25, 2025 in University Park, Pa. The Nittany Lions beat the Saints 3-0. Roberts scored the first goal of the season during this game.



Lucas Vendreliwsk/Collegian

**The Beaver Stadium scoreboard** appears through the snow on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026, in University Park, Pa. Penn State announced the Beaver Stadium hockey games on Dec. 11, 2025.



Sawyer Hadlum/Collegian

**Forward Abby Stonehouse (11)** skates through defenders to get to the puck during the Penn State women's hockey game. The Nittany Lions beat the Orange 11-2. Penn State's win against Syracuse was part of its season-high 16 game win streak.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Forward Abby Stonehouse (11)** celebrates a goal during the Women's Frozen Four semifinal between Penn State and Wisconsin in the Pegula Ice Arena on Friday, March 20, 2026 in University Park, Pa. The Badgers beat the Nittany Lions 4-3. The Nittany Lions kept the game close both opening scoring and taking the game to overtime.

# The Path to the Frozen Four



Jonathan Chiu/Collegian

**Forward Nicole Hall (21)** moves the puck during the Penn State women's hockey game against Delaware in the Pegula Ice Arena in University Park, Pa. The Nittany Lions beat the Blue Hens 7-0. This was Penn State's first conference win of the season.



Celia Lewis/Collegian

**Penn State women's hockey team** celebrates a goal on the ice against Robert Morris University in Beaver Stadium on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026 in University Park, Pa. The Nittany Lions beat the Colonials 3-0. They won the first Division I hockey game held in a football stadium.



Noah Abernethy/Collegian

**The team** raises the trophy in the air after the 2026 AHA Women's Championship Game between Penn State women's hockey and Mercyhurst in Pegula on Saturday, March 7, 2026 in University Park, Pa. The Nittany Lions beat the Lakers 3-2. With this win, the team clinched its fourth straight AHA championship.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Forward Tessa Janecke (15)** skates off the ice after the Women's Frozen Four semifinal between Penn State and Wisconsin in Pegula Ice Arena on Friday, March 20, 2026 in University Park, Pa. The Badgers beat the Nittany Lions 4-3.