

The Daily Collegian

For the students. For the glory. Since 1887.

Vol. 126, No. 22

Friday, Feb. 27, 2026

psu.collegian.com

THON raises record-breaking total

TOP COMMITTEES

1. FAMILY RELATIONS
2. PUBLIC RELATIONS
3. ENTERTAINMENT
4. SUPPLY LOGISTICS
5. RULES AND REGULATIONS

TOP INDEPENDENT DANCER COUPLES

1. ANDREW PERILLO AND JORGE CUZA - \$73,423.24
2. DYLAN SMITH AND ALEX STEWART - \$64,811.61
3. JACK CONWAY AND NICK HENRY - \$55,888.10
4. MARINA LIDDIC AND EMMA DOWD \$48,345.09
5. ADAM TANABE AND BRENDAN GILBERT - \$45,583.01

TOP COMMONWEALTH CAMPUSES

1. BEHREND - \$76,680.64
2. ALTOONA - \$75,639.59
3. LEHIGH VALLEY \$46,773.19
4. HARRISBURG - \$38,003.10
5. BERKS - \$37,313.13



Matt Cropp/Collegian

The total for THON 2026 is revealed during the final four hours at the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday Feb. 22, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

By Mercedes Hamilton
and Kahlie Wray
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

THON Weekend 2026 concluded with a record-breaking fundraising total of \$18,841,726.53.

This is the fifth consecutive year the organization has broken its single-year fundraising record.

The 2026 total is \$1,104,685.60 more than last year's total of \$17,737,040.93.

With the theme "Love Leads Forward," THON said more than

708 dancers took part in this year's marthon. 16,500 student volunteers made it possible.

They began standing in the Bryce Jordan Center at 6 p.m. Friday night and sat down at 4 p.m. Sunday, moments before the final reveal by the 2026 executive committee.

THON is the world's largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer.

This year's total is worth 50

weeks of funding for research and 75 months of research equipment maintenance, among other expenses. THON has raised more than \$254 million since its inception 54 years ago.

In addition to funding cancer research at Penn State's College of Medicine, the Four Diamonds fund covers 100% of medical expenses for children with cancer at the Penn State Health Golisano Children's Hospital, according to a press release.

To email reporters: mjh7337@psu.edu and kaw6568@psu.edu

TOP GENERAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. PHI GAMMA NU - \$355,117.95
2. PHI CHI THETA - \$287,553.46
3. ALPHA KAPPA PSI - \$240,157.58
4. CLUB CROSS COUNTRY - \$144,901.88
5. PHI BETA LAMBDA - \$128,084.51

TOP GREEK ORGANIZATIONS

1. ZETA TAU ALPHA AND ALPHA TAU OMEGA - \$551,071.22
2. DELTA GAMMA AND DELTA UPSILON - \$418,870.21
3. DELTA ZETA AND PI KAPPA PHI - \$370,205.06
4. KAPPA ALPHA THETA AND GAMMA PHI BETA - \$364,234.35
5. ALPHA OMICRON PI AND PHI KAPPA PSI - \$335,581.10

TOP SPECIAL INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS

1. ATLAS - \$300,317.03
2. HERSHEY KISSES - \$141,860.02
3. FOTO - \$106,526.12
4. ECLIPSE - \$89,845.86
5. PILLAR - \$77,182.10



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

Organizers and demonstrators pose for a photo in front of the Lion Shrine following a demonstration by the Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE) on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

'We're not going away'

Coalition of Graduate Employees protest PLRB appeal before trustee meeting

By Jonathon Chiu
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE) held a demonstration on Friday to protest an appeal filed by Penn State to the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board (PLRB).

The CGE voted to formally unionize on Nov. 13, 2025. Penn State's appeal was filed a month later, challenging the inclusion of research assistants (RAs) into the union. The CGE currently has an online petition calling for Penn State to drop the appeal and The Board of Trustees (BoT) received at least 25 public comments calling for it to be formally recognized.

Sangjun Ko, an organizer for CGE and a member of its bargaining committee, said Penn State's appeal is arguing that RAs are not official workers — and thus unable to unionize — despite a 2018 decision from the PLRB stating otherwise.

"They're trying to carve out the union," Ko, a graduate student studying mathematics, said. "This rally is intended to demand out of to the Board of Trustees that they respect the vote, they respect our democratic voice and they respect this decision handed down by the labor relations board."

The demonstrators began to move from a staging area by the Moore Building toward the Nittany Lion Inn at 1 p.m. Protesters held signs that read "Drop the appeal," "Respect the vote" and "Research is labor."

Upon reaching their destination, demonstrators were led through chants such as "Stop the delay, give us our pay," "Respect our vote, drop the appeal" and "What's disgusting? Union busting."

Kiana Mitchell said it's important to inform people about the union process, as the appeal by Penn State delays the CGE's ability to formally unionize.

"We already voted," Mitchell, a graduate student studying genetics and reproduction in the department of animal sciences, said. "We could already have the union as it is, as it stands, but

"This rally is intended to demand out of the Board of Trustees that they respect the vote, they respect our democratic voice and they respect this decision handed down by the labor relations board."

Sangjun Ko
Organizer for CGE

Penn State is trying to delay our process with bargaining."

Mitchell said she hopes Penn State will realize the CGE is not

trying to have an adversarial relationship with them. Their combined efforts would allow for improvements to be made for graduate students at the www.university, she added.

The organizers of the demonstration proceeded toward the Kern Building, once the larger group dispersed, to encourage other graduate students to sign their petition to Penn State.

Eloisa Sanchez said he believed Penn State's refusal to recognize RAs as workers invalidates their contributions to the university and hopes that the current demonstration will cause Penn State to begin to see the CGE "as a union."

"We put in a lot of time and effort and a lot of dedication to doing our work and, by not respecting research assistance as workers, Penn State is also not respecting our energy, our time, our dedication to our work," Sanchez, a graduate student studying curriculum and instruction, said.

Sanchez said he can see future demonstrations taking place if the BoT does not meet the demands of its graduate students in having a formal and recognized union.

"We're not going away," Sanchez said. "We're just going to get stronger, get more people to keep joining our efforts and we're not gonna give up. If anything, I think we'll continue to be fueled to keep working."

To email reporter: jwc6496@psu.edu
Follow him on X [@JonChiu38880](https://twitter.com/JonChiu38880)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This letter was written by Students for Justice in Palestine, an organization at Penn State dedicated to fighting for the liberation of Palestine and the freedom and self-determination of the Palestinian people.

On Feb. 11, the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) met for what was supposed to be the student government's standard Wednesday night general assembly meeting. What followed was a staggering display of individual and institutional anti-Palestinian racism that derailed the session. The star of the night was a bill to allocate funds for food at the Solidarity Rising Town Hall organized by Penn State Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) in coordination with other member organizations of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center (PRCC) Liaison Board. This town hall was conceived as an open space for marginalized students across campus to talk about their concerns and build across various communities as a first step toward collective action. The programming for the event had gone through the standard approval procedures and was in line with the mission to promote diversity and equity on campus.

During the open comment section preceding the start of the general assembly, several Zionist students used their time to read off pre-written comments that slandered SJP and our members, accusing the town hall of being partisan and a threat to Jewish safety on campus. As Palestinians and those in solidarity with Palestinians, we immediately recognized this as yet another blatant display of anti-Palestinian racism that has time and time again gone unacknowledged on this campus.

In the fall of 2024, one year into the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, SJP organized a memorial on the HUB Lawn to honor the tens of thousands of Palestinian lives lost and to educate students about the reality of Israel's genocidal campaign. At the time, the vast majority of international humanitarian organizations had declared that a genocide was occurring in Gaza, and the International Court of Justice had already released a preliminary injunction against Israel. Despite this international consensus, Zionist students proceeded to desecrate the memorial by removing flags representing murdered Palestinians from

the ground, riding bikes through the lawn, and using a variety of racist, homophobic and fatphobic language against our members. These hateful acts were documented by students within SJP through video recording and garnered widespread national attention. However, Penn State failed to acknowledge or condemn the pervasive anti-Palestinian racism on campus, which had enabled this incident to occur.

What happened at UPUA, therefore, was not new to us, but an expected outcome of a culture and an institution that does not value Palestinian life. At least one of the students who made slanderous remarks against our organization at the general assembly also participated in the desecration of our memorial, drawing a direct link between the two incidents and displaying the inherent connections between Zionism and bigotry. When people claim that the existence and presence of Palestinians and their struggle is inherently antisemitic, it engages in not only the racist caricature of an entire group but also the kind of rhetoric that has manufactured consent for Israel's current genocide in Gaza. Additionally, when members of UPUA accept this framing and deem Palestinian existence as fundamentally partisan, it sets a dangerous precedent that can ultimately be weaponized against any other marginalized group on campus. Continuing to allow blatant, institutionalized anti-Palestinian racism to prevail is a threat not only to Palestinians and their allies but to all marginalized students.

What occurred at UPUA did not go unopposed, as nearly 40 students streamed into the general assembly in solidarity with SJP and the town hall — showing that the vast majority of students on campus are opposed to such rhetoric being weaponized against Palestinians and that UPUA's ultimate decision did not reflect the values and desires of the student body they claim to represent.

Despite the bill not passing, SJP and the endorsing organizations proceeded to host the Solidarity Town Hall and brought together our various communities in meaningful dialogue, resulting in a standing-room-only event inside the PRCC library this past Tuesday. The success of the event is a strong rejection of an institutional culture that benefits from seeing us isolated and provides a foundation for our communities to continue to build relationships that will allow us all to achieve real progress on this campus.

Last THON for students at some closing campuses

By Grace Levy
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For some Commonwealth campus students, THON 2026 marks a bittersweet goodbye.

Penn State’s Board of Trustees voted in May to close the DuBois, Fayette, Mont Alto, New Kensington, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre and York campuses after spring 2027, citing steep enrollment declines, aging infrastructure and financial strain.

Students at Penn State Du-bois hoped to conclude their final THON on a high note. Gabby Horner, one of the active chairs for the weekend and a former THON dancer, said Dubois beat its previous fundraising total and the school’s record.

“I’m pretty sad because I was a dancer last year, so I have a lot of good memories with THON,” Horner, a second-year studying occupational therapy, said.

Horner’s relationship with THON is very personal, having survived cancer herself two years ago.

“It was really meaningful because I kind of maybe understood it more than maybe someone else that didn’t have cancer would, and it was really emotional, but I’m really glad I was a dancer last year,” Horner said. “It was really a great experience.”

Even before the closures, branch campuses had a different experience getting students involved in thon.

“It’s different. It’s a lot harder to get people involved because they are not (as) knowledgeable of it,” Josh Price said. “I know this year it was difficult getting the new students involved, but



Mercedes Hamilton/Collegian

Penn State Fayette alum Roger Myers, Justin Byers, Kerstin Glebis and Kassidy Tajc (left to right) pose for a photo during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 22, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

once you get them involved and you get a story to them, and they know what it’s about, they get really into it, and they really like it.”

After raising \$31,045.50 last year, students at Penn State Du-bois hope to conclude their final THON Weekend on just as high a note. Horner said Dubois has already beat last year’s fundraising total.

“I’m pretty sad because I was a dancer last year, so I have a lot of good memories with THON,” Horner said.

Horner’s relationship with THON is very personal, having survived cancer herself. She’s been in remission for two years.

“It was really meaningful because I kind of maybe understood it more than maybe someone else that didn’t have cancer would, and it was really emotional, but I’m really glad I was a dancer last year,” Horner said. “It was really a great experience.”

Even before the closures, Penn

State Dubois had a difficult experience getting students involved in THON.

“It’s different. It’s a lot harder to get people involved because they are not knowledgeable (about) it,” Price, a second-year studying human development and family studies, said. “I know this year it was difficult getting the new students involved, but once...they know what it’s about, they get really into it.”

Penn State York THON’S organization is full of graduating seniors, and without incoming freshmen, the group will cease to exist.

Ashlyn Smith, three-time THON chair, said the organization has 10-15 members, who she called a “really solid group of people.”

“It’s sad that no one can take over, and that money is not being raised for the kids,” Smith, a fourth-year studying accounting, said. “I’m happy to be here for

our last year. Hopefully we’ll go out good, but it’s sad obviously.”

While Penn State Fayette can pull together a group for the upcoming school year, fundraising has become increasingly difficult.

“Last year, it was pretty good,” Price said. “We fundraised a lot, and I enjoyed it. But this year we tried our best, and it was just really rough.”

Fayette was the largest fundraiser of the Commonwealth campuses in 2025 with \$76,046.43. Since 1998, the organization has raised over \$1 million.

Price said he’ll be one of the four returning members to Fayette’s THON organization next year and hopes to be THON chair. Since there won’t be new students enrolling at his campus, he predicts challenges with recruiting new members.

“Knowing that we’re not getting new students is rough, so it’s more just going to be, ‘Who can we get to join that hasn’t been in

it yet?’” Price said.

Amid the challenges, Price remains hopeful about what Fayette can achieve for THON in the coming year.

“Even if I’m not the chair, I’m going to help out as much as I can,” Price said. “I love THON. I really love what it’s about. I think that it’s a really special place and it’s a special thing in my heart.”

Kerstin Glebis, a former family relations captain and dancer for Fayette, described the relationship with the Faust family as “a special bond” she doesn’t want to give up.

“I’m going to do what I can do to keep it (and) continue my support for the dancers,” Glebis said. “Even though it may not be a Fayette dancer, they’re still a dancer ...whatever I can do to be there for them, I’ll do.”

Glebis described her relationship their Four Diamonds Family, the Fausts, as “a special bond” she doesn’t want to give up.

While everyone’s unsure what will happen once the campus closes, Justin Byers, another alum and former dancer, said they remain dedicated.

Byers said they hope to return to THON each year as a “little organization of Fayette alumni” to continue to support the organization and their family.

“I know Tandy from the family is going to be up here, so we’ll get to see her for a little bit, and we always cherish her son that lost his battle to cancer in 2009,” Byers said. “We just keep moving forward and we support our family that we have and just want to stay in contact with them.”

To email reporter: gkl5261@psu.edu

Mic-man dances in THON

By Mia Debelevich
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For the second year in a row, Brady Berger decided to undertake the 46-hour feat of dancing in THON — a decision he described as a no-brainer.

Berger, a fourth-year studying supply chain and information systems, is dancing on behalf of Penn

State Cheerleading. He also serves as Penn State’s mic-man for athletic events. He described his organization as supportive in his journey to align with THON’s mission: finding a cure.

“I dance so kids can be kids, so they can wake up happy and healthy,” Berger said. “There’s not enough good things to say about THON.”

Berger said he also dances for his mom, who was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“THON is very special to me,” Berger said. “The cause, the tireless hours, how we can be a small part in something so big.”

Sebastian Goldstein, one of Berger’s teammates, described him as a smart leader who maintains high morale on the team.

“I’m very proud of him,” Goldstein, a second-year studying agricultural engineering, said. “He’s a person that puts his heart out there, especially for the kids.”

Goldstein described Berger as a very passionate person, both within cheerleading and in his commitment to THON. He said Berger always pushes the people around him to live up to their full potential.

A big part of Berger’s goal at Penn

State is to be as much a part of THON as he can, Goldstein added.

“Everything he does is FTK,” Goldstein said. “He’s buzzed his head, he’s dancing for the second time. He’s really shown his dedication and love for the organization.”

Penn State Cheerleading is representing four families at THON, including the Juniper Beckinger family, who is in attendance this year. Berger said families like Juniper’s bring light to THON and the cheerleading team’s collective goal.

Another teammate Allie McNesby said Berger’s role in THON and as mic-man shows how much effort he puts into his responsibilities at Penn State.

“He’s a role model for the school, but also for the friendships he has here,” McNesby, a first-year student in the division of undergraduate studies, said. “That has meant so much to us this year.”

McNesby said everyone on the cheerleading team finds Berger’s work this year amazing. She said the team being in the stands is one way to support both Berger as a dancer and THON as a whole.

“We’re just so proud of him,” McNesby said. “We just can’t wait for him to do this for 46 hours, for THON.”

Berger said he thanks Four Diamonds families for letting him and all dancers into their lives and journeys.

“There’s nothing like this at any other university,” Berger said. “We will always dance until there’s a cure.”

To email reporter: mfd5887@psu.edu
Follow her on X @miadebelevich

Britigans praise Four Diamonds programming

By Emma Naysmith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

While Four Diamonds is well known for providing financial support, Paige Britigan and her family say Four Diamonds has given them experiences like no other.

The Britigan’s made their way up to Happy Valley from Quarryville, Pennsylvania, for their second in-person THON this weekend.

17-year old Paige was diagnosed with Burkitt lymphoma in 2022 after seeking medical assistance for what she and her family initially thought was appendicitis.

“It all set in, I had cancer. But I was really panicking about my family and how we were going to pay the hospital bills,” Paige said in an interview her mother allowed her to participate in. “And that’s when our social worker came in and she told us about (Four Diamonds), and it felt like there was a weight lifted off my chest.”

Paige’s mother Dawn said life stopped after the diagnosis. She said she began to live in the hospital, even having packages delivered there.

Dawn called the organization’s support “overwhelming” and even went as far as weekly massages for her and her husband.

“It’s just everything’s cancer and it’s in your face and just that little bit of 15 minutes they take you to a quiet spa room and that’s all provided,” Dawn said. “Without

Four Diamonds, those things would not happen.”

Likewise, Paige’s sister, Mackenzie, said a lot of her experience with Four Diamonds has been about supporting the family as a whole.

Last summer, through Four Diamonds, Paige had the opportunity to travel to Montana to attend Camp Mak-A-Dream alongside other children. The camp provides cost-free programming for cancer survivors and their families.

“We were there for five days,” she said. “We didn’t have any electronics, and we just got to go out in the sun, there was no humidity, and it was so nice.”

This THON Weekend, Paige said she was able to reconnect with some of the campers she had flown out west with.

Paige plans to continue attending in the future because it not only gives her the opportunity to continue healing herself, but she gets to meet others with similar stories.

“What made me like Montana so much is that we went around and shared our stories and what happened to us,” Paige said. “Hearing that other kids my age, kind of went through the same thing ... I feel grounded in a way.”

Dawn recalls first attending the Family Carnival breakfast and being impressed with THON volunteers and the “meaningful” work they do at such a young age.

The Britigan family is paired with Penn State Brandywine Benefitting THON

through the “Adopt-a-Family” program.

Paige said the students supporting her from Brandywine are “really sweet.” She said its ONE PIECE theme this year is inspired by her and her father’s shared love of the show, and that the group even traveled to her high school’s mini-THON last weekend.

Penn State Brandywine Benefitting THON Chair Sara Hallahan said her organization was excited to have been invited and to support Paige.

“It was amazing, seeing her interact with her friends and do something that was close to her, and that she wanted us to be a part of,” Hallahan, a third-year studying human development and family studies, said.

Hallahan said she admires Paige’s confidence and is proud of the Britigans for everything they continue to overcome.

“They give us purpose for everything,” Hallahan said. “Seeing them come to events and seeing them at THON Weekend, we have a meaning for what we do.”

After being called a “favorite” and one of the “easiest” patients by her nurses, Paige rang the bell in symbolism of remission in May 2023.

From watching THON virtually to their journey to attending in-person events, Dawn, on behalf of her family, said, “It’s really helped us to heal.”

To email reporter: eln5123@psu.edu
Follow her on X @emnaysmith

Zach Jarrett inspires fraternity

By Mercedes Hamilton
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Zach Jarrett spent the first of his 46 hours at THON with one of Alpha Kappa Psi’s Four Diamonds families, the Sweitzers.



Jarrett

Chair, quality time at the make-shift playground in the Bryce Jordan Center was just the motivation he needed to kick off a successful weekend.

“It’s exciting that she’s finished her treatment and now she’s able to come to a THON. She was so happy,” Jarrett, a fourth-year studying business analytics and information systems, said of 6-year-old Logan Sweitzer. “She’s

been in the playground with the other kids and seeing all of the people dancing for her and other kids like her...I’m doing this for her and other kids like her.”

In his senior year, Jarrett said the opportunity to take his passion from the stands to the floor was a no brainer. In addition to his commitment to the Sweitzers and the Rodriguezes, THON’s mission remains relevant to his experiences and values.

“I have a lot of people in my life that have been affected by cancer,” he said. “Philanthropy has always been a very cool thing, and my mom is always talking about giving back.”

Jarrett also credits Alpha Kappa Psi alumni for instilling a love for THON in him and his peers since he joined the fraternity. This year, the organization is well represented on the floor, with two dancer representatives, two Independent Dancer Couples (IDCs) affiliated with the organi-

zation and several directors and committee members.

Last year, Alpha Kappa Psi was ranked fourth in fundraising for general organizations at \$129,551.97.

“I’m really grateful that everybody’s driven toward philanthropy, and everybody wants to give back in their own way,” Jarrett said. “We have so many people here on the floor doing their part.”

Alex Greenbaum, one of the brothers, said THON Weekend 2026 is the reflection of Jarrett’s four years of hard work contributing to Alpha Kappa Psi’s fundraisers, supporting their Four Diamonds families, as well as previous dancers representing the fraternity.

“We all think that he deserves this a lot,” Greenbaum, a third-year studying accounting and finance, said. “I’m so happy for him.”

When Greenbaum visited Jarrett on the floor just a few hours

in, he was confident he’d do well this weekend. He said Jarrett had prepared his mind and body in advance and walked in with a solid plan to stretch frequently

“I’m really grateful that everybody’s driven toward philanthropy, and everybody wants to give back in their own way”

Zach Jarrett

and keep moving.

“It’s awesome to see him push through,” Greenbaum said. “I’m so proud of him.”

In the stands, Greenbaum stood alongside Noah Levine waving cardboard cutouts of Jar-

rett’s face and cheering him on.

“We’ve been sending him motivational texts on our phones like, ‘You’re the best,’ ‘You’re doing something bigger than yourself,’” Levine, a second-year studying finance, said.

When it comes to THON, Levine said the fraternity always wants to put their best foot forward and Jarrett is a reflection of this. He said he doesn’t know anyone on campus as committed to THON as Jarrett is.

For Levine, the smile on the Sweitzers’ faces make it clear that Jarrett’s commitment is paying off, making it easy for Alpha Kappa Psi to brave the full 46 whether they’re on the floor or in the stands.

“He’s probably one of the most dedicated people I know,” Levine said. “It’s just so inspiring to everyone in this fraternity.”

To email reporter: mjh7337@psu.edu
Follow her on X @_mercedesjh

FRENCH ALPS 2030

Olympic sports Penn State majors would compete in

By Avery Pelletier
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With champions crowned and names being etched in the history books, the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Games ended this past weekend. After watching curling or bobsledding, many Penn State students reflect on the end of the games with the same question: “Surely I could compete in the next Olympics?”

While there’s no way for me to accurately determine who could land the triple axel, shred the half pipe or score the goal, this is what I believe different students could qualify for in 2030 based on their majors.

Figure Skating - English

As a sport, figure skating is more than just a jump or a spin. What makes this event one of the most watched during the winter is the drama of it all.

Competitive figure skaters know how to draw in an audience through very precise movements. They use every muscle in their body to tell a story that leaves viewers moved and judges wanting more.

English majors follow a similar sentiment. They know their essays are so much more than just a collection of sentences or paragraphs. Their style, organization and storytelling are what make their final product golden.

Both figure skating and English rely on a person’s ability to not just create a compelling component but fit them together to tell a story.

Curling - Communications

In both of their respective fields, curling and communications majors have one significant thing in common: they often aren’t respected.

Curling as a sport is one of the more niche events. With this unfamiliarity, most spectators watch the matches without an understanding of the sport and then assume it’s easy.

However, even though it’s less physically demanding, it takes immense strategy and overall communication for a team to win a match.

Similarly, communication majors don’t usually have the best reputation overall. Many people see this major as “easy” or not a real degree in comparison to STEM degrees, even though it is arguably one of the most universally useful majors.

At the end of the day though, an Olympian is an Olympian and a degree is a degree and for that, both of these deserve respect.

Skeleton - Physics

With speeds faster than a car, skeleton is not for the weak. One wrong move and a slider is barreling head first into ice at speeds upwards of 80 mph.

This Olympic sport is risky and requires an athlete who can remain collected and control their movements with immense forces against them.

As a sport rooted in motion and angles, a physics major would shine in skeleton. Not only is it an extremely challenging field, but physics majors are always forced to account for multiple variables even when they cannot see them.

While worrying about falling off their sled or hitting their head may be a new obstacle to try and maneuver, a physics major would be able to analyze and approach it like a problem set.

Hockey - Economics

This one may come with no surprise as the stereotypes around both of these fields are very similar.

Hockey players are usually seen as hyper-competitive and intense players who rely on strategy, and only care about the number on the score board. They’re not afraid of slamming other players, or getting into fistfights if they think it would help their teammates.

Similarly, economics majors are also seen as hyper-compet-

itive students who rely on their knowledge of game theory to get them through life.

More than just the stereotypes though, economics majors would compete in hockey because, despite how difficult either of these fields are, both are able to do whatever it takes to maintain their success.

Cross-country Skiing - Pre-med

Usually viewed as one of, if not the most physically demanding sports at the Winter Olympics, cross-country skiing is not for the weak. Unlike moguls or downhill, this type of skiing is much less rooted in pure technique but physical and vascular strength.

Pre-med students here at Penn State face a similar uphill challenge, even though theirs may not come with skis. From learning organic chemistry to biology to physics to math, pre-med students need to be mentally and physically strong to get through all of their problem sets and labs.



Firstname Lastname/Organization
United States’ Tessa Janecke (22) and Canada’s Sophie Jaques (2) during a women’s ice hockey gold medal game Thursday, Feb. 19.

Association for Women Geoscientists ‘rocks’



A member listens intently during the Association for Women Geoscientists meeting at the Deike Building on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, in University Park, Pa.

By Ava Krysko
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

As the old saying goes, “diamonds are a girl’s best friend,” but for members of the Association for Women Geoscientists (AWG), expensive, shiny rocks are definitely not the only ones that matter.

AWG is a club open to anyone (no matter the gender) at University Park who takes an interest in the study of geoscience, which includes a variety of subjects from rocks to volcanoes.

The club’s mission is to promote inclusivity and acceptance to underrepresented groups in a field usually dominated by men. Most of all, the club stands as a place for community building through outreach, mentorship and fundraising.

Anastasia Piliouras said the ability to interact with students she might not have met otherwise is one of her favorite things about advising the club.

“AWG really serves that purpose of giving people space to interact with other people who share those values, and then providing some resources for people to just help them participate,” Piliouras, faculty advisor for the club, said. “AWG at Penn State brings a lot of different students together, who you might not expect to see.”

The club usually meets once a month to go over announcements and hold events such as resume workshops, mentor/mentee mixers, graduate student panels and more.

Besides these meetings, AWG hosts special events and fundraisers every now and then. Some events include their yearly pie-making competition in the

fall and the chili cook-off in the spring, which is taking place this year on March 1.

The club also partners with Elementary Explorers, a K-5 science outreach program and local Girl Scout troops to give informative presentations and get future generations excited for careers in geoscience.

These special events allow those outside of AWG, as well as faculty and staff to get involved and see what AWG is all about.

AWG at University Park is a chapter of a larger, international organization under the same name. The international organization helps fund the AWG chapters and their scholarships by matching any donations the local chapter has received.

Ava Spangler, fundraising chair, said this money along with what the club makes during fundraisers, goes towards things like Field Camp scholarships, which is an expensive study program for those in the geoscience field.

“The national organization provides a lot of support,” Spangler, a third-year Ph.D. candidate studying geoscience, said. “We pay dues to become a member, and there’s a lot of benefits in doing so.”

Bailey Hoplight, co-president, said recently the club has been trying to emphasize relations between graduate and undergraduate students to keep undergraduates informed about their future, and help stay up to date on things like application deadlines.

Additionally, AWG presents undergraduates with the option of furthering their education in geoscience.

“I really like that (the) gap is being bridged in AWG,” Hoplight, a second-year Ph.D. candidate

studying organic geochemistry, said. “We’re just trying to make things more accessible.”

Similarly, Denali Kincaid, co-president, loves that even though the club’s area of study is so niche and extensive, it’s still such a welcoming place where everyone can get involved — as long as they’re okay hearing everyone talk about rocks too much.

“Geology is a very interdisciplinary science,” Kincaid, a third-year Ph.D. candidate studying geosciences with a specialty in volcanology, said. “There are some people who actually don’t study rocks whatsoever. We have such a wide variety of students who would love to talk with people from other departments who still might have overlapping interests.”

Spangler is very appreciative of the welcoming attitude of the club, as it can be difficult to get involved in a new field of study when that’s not your background. She was initially nervous about joining the geoscience community, because she wasn’t as familiar with the subject as everyone else.

However, after joining AWG, Spangler said she made a lot of friends and felt included. She’s happy she can make others feel similarly through the club’s activities.

No matter who you are, AWG encourages anyone who is interested to come relax and enjoy some good food and good company.

“Anytime we see a new face, we get really excited,” Kincaid said. “You’ll be embraced from the beginning.”

To email reporter: apk6215@psu.edu
Follow her on X @ [avakrysko](https://twitter.com/avakrysko)

Crossword

Across

1 Goat hair garments

5 Foolhardy

9 Cot

12 Corker

13 Cowboy exhibition

14 Bundle

15 Jack of *Rio Lobo*

16 Healing plants

17 Pac 10 team

18 Weather consideration for travel

20 Put away for a rainy day

22 Golfer Ernie

23 Shade tree

24 Poet Teasdale

26 Something to avoid while on the road

32 1004, Roman

33 Mitch Miller’s instrument

34 Wine valley

35 Tableland

36 Beef on the hoof

37 Garbage barge

38 Toiletry item

39 Minus

40 Secreted

41 Phone destinations

43 Pigeon’s home

44 Wrecker’s job

45 Sidekick

46 Relaxes on a trip

50 Travel accomplishment

54 Poi source

55 Chicago airport

57 Plunge

58 Prayer’s end

59 Toils

60 Soon, to a bard

61 Biddy

62 Brings home

63 Longings

8 Hotel manager

9 Ger. composer

10 Model

11 At peace

13 Vermin

14 Working while off work

19 ___ mode

21 HS math class (Abbr.)

24 Blot

25 Grocery section

26 Carried

27 Weighty

28 Fertile soil

29 Implied

30 Lyric poem

31 Adage

35 Subway inits.

36 Travel cautiously by auto

42 Hoodwink

43 Elevator part

45 Lincoln or Ford, e.g. (Abbr.)

46 Bryce Canyon locale

47 Appellation

48 Small songbird

49 Loafer, e.g.

50 Clumsy boats

51 Kudzu, for one

52 Bard’s river

53 Camera part

56 Paintings

Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

su|do|ku

© Pappocom

	6					1
		8	9	5		
	5	7			8	
	9		3		6	
		4	7		6	1
		5			9	2
			2			5
				3	4	7
2						8

WORD SEARCH

© 2026 PuzzleJunction.com

Lighthouse Lore

G	G	U	H	U	Q	E	G	X	S	Q	T	L	V	Z	Y	T	I
F	F	I	L	C	L	M	O	N	R	C	O	A	S	T	O	V	M
A	J	G	D	A	T	E	F	R	I	L	Q	M	Y	U	B	K	C
T	Y	W	K	H	B	B	N	X	A	I	P	M	R	N	H	Q	C
U	J	J	G	U	B	T	U	S	T	G	U	I	D	E	A	F	N
O	V	I	V	E	X	Z	Z	N	S	J	S	R	D	W	Z	O	K
K	N	H	A	T	T	E	R	A	S	T	Z	R	Y	K	A	B	C
O	A	S	V	M	F	T	B	U	S	L	Q	O	O	N	R	F	E
O	M	E	W	B	R	R	R	T	K	O	Y	R	Q	O	D	K	R
L	H	D	K	K	J	E	K	I	R	M	L	S	B	S	A	L	W
O	C	U	V	Q	D	L	Q	C	A	T	W	R	T	L	E	W	P
E	T	V	N	L	L	A	T	A	M	M	A	O	O	Q	Q	T	I
M	A	E	B	A	A	B	Y	L	D	H	R	L	S	C	A	B	H
M	W	J	C	U	E	M	G	R	N	M	N	F	F	M	K	M	S
W	C	G	Q	A	D	C	P	E	A	U	I	T	J	R	Q	S	G
N	N	A	C	H	W	Z	O	Y	L	A	N	G	I	S	X	N	G
B	M	O	P	L	S	Q	Z	K	P	K	G	Z	W	N	G	T	H
F	N	R	D	E	C	I	R	C	U	L	A	R	S	X	E	Q	H
Alert	Beacon	Beam	Cape	Circular	Cliff	Coast	Fog	Guide	Harbor	Hatteras	Hazard	Lake	Lamp	Landmark	Lens	Lookout	Mirrors
Nautical	Night	Ocean	Rocks	Shipwreck	Signal	Stairs	Storm	Tall	Tourists	Warning	Watchman						

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.

	14	21	22	12			10	16	34								
11						24										14	
24							11										
13							20										
17																	
				16	7	22	3	3								4	
	24											3					
				29													
			8								11						

© 2026 PuzzleJunction.com

State Patty's: Invented tradition

In 2007, when St. Patrick's Day fell during spring break, Penn State students created State Patty's. It's an invented tradition where students celebrate the holiday the weekend between THON and the start of spring break.

What seems like a historical ritual is less than two decades old, yet its impact has been felt by hundreds of thousands of Penn Staters who've come together for one last hurrah before we all go home and then return for finals.

A tradition or a holiday usually stems from some sort of top-down governance and marks a miraculous day.

Think of the celebration of Easter instituted by the early

Church or the remembrance of Passover established by G-d Himself. State Patty's defies the norm in that it was invented off the cuff by a student FaceBook group.

State Patty's is indicative of social cohesion, symbolic unity and an extra moment of fraternization. Seemingly, the whole town dresses in green and gets together for a fun-filled weekend.

Even the local businesses partake. Bars downtown used to sell green beer.

Although food dye in alcohol was recently nixed, the bars take advantage of this special event where I'm sure the monetary reward makes all the craziness worthwhile.

State Patty's has created a local legend unique to Penn State and Penn State alone, which is worthy of mention in and of itself. Can you believe

we just sort of made up a holiday and it's lasted this long?

And to me, State Patty's is representative of certain aspects of American civic culture.

A young nation with young

"State Patty's has created a local legend unique to Penn State and Penn State alone"

Julia Kushner

holidays, often celebrated with at least a cold one or two. State Patty's emulates these Americanisms. Ritual creations are important for communal unity and create healthy self-esteem in who we

are as a unit.

For example, Thanksgiving, though celebrating a centuries-old event, was only formally instituted by Abraham Lincoln, and July 4th wasn't even a federal holiday until 1870. Both of these holidays are part of the fabric of the nation, and our calendars wouldn't be the same without them.

This may be where the similarities end, but celebrating a tangentially Christian holiday. I would encourage every Christian to religiously partake in the actual holiday but drinking on a college campus seems pretty American to me.

And the institutional push-back, including the borough police and the university itself, only makes this tradition stronger.

If you'll indulge me and put on your advertising hat

for a minute, I'll explain: To combat teen smoking, early campaigns told the youth that cigarettes were bad for them.

It'll come as no shock that a young person being told what not to do immediately went out and did said no-no. When advertisers changed their approach with the "truth" campaign, teen smoking rates dropped.

When the administration and the police tell students to lay off the drinking and partying, it only reinforces students' desires to do so.

And I can't fault them for it. State Patty's is now part of the Penn State experience.

Happy drinking, students.

Julia Kushner is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a fourth year studying advertising with a minor in Hebrew. Email her at jbk5956@psu.edu



Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | Miss Behave

Off the record | Ex marks the spot

Dearest reader, Breakups, whether they're with a romantic partner or best friend, can hurt just the same. Breakups can be a lot like misreading a treasure map. You were so sure you found gold.

You followed every clue, trusted every sign and then, all the sudden, you realized what you unearthed wasn't treasure at all — it was heartbreak. Endless tears and hours and hours of mind spiraling thoughts you can't control. And just like a treasure map, every breakup leaves an "X," on the landscape of your love life. It marks the spot where love once was. Where something beautiful once existed.

But before you can move on from that spot, you learn to dig a little deeper and uncover what's beneath the surface. The real treasure lies in what you uncover about yourself in the healing process: your strength, your resilience and the part of you that only emerges when you're faced with stitching up a broken heart. Breakups are a self-healing journey disguised as chaos.

When someone leaves you, the initial instinct is to fill the void with distraction, or worse, longing for what's gone and what you can't get back.

But the magic happens when you take a minute to pause and actually let yourself feel all of the emotions.

The confusion, sadness or anger. Those feelings are there for a reason and you're entitled to them.

Don't ignore them or push them away. That's the first step.

And yes, it hurts. Sometimes for days, weeks, months or years. But in that pain, you're discovering layers of yourself that can only surface when love falls away. Every tear shed is a reminder that you feel deeply and every sleepless night is a testament to your courage to keep moving forward despite the pain.

The second step is to reflect. Take the time to understand what the relationship has taught you. Not just about love, but about

yourself. What you need. What you deserve. What you're no longer willing to accept.

Let yourself process. Understand why the relationship ended and approach that with kindness, honesty and compassion for both of you. We're all human. Sometimes we make mistakes. Sometimes we choose to love without having the capacity in our lives to sustain it.

And honesty, no matter how hard it may be, it's always worth

it. The third step: release and rediscover. This is where you get to choose yourself again. Reclaim your interests and your routines. Revisit old passions, or explore new ones. This step isn't about becoming someone new

overnight. It's about remembering who you've always been, while allowing yourself to evolve.

You're allowed to change. You're allowed to want different things now. Heartbreak has a way of redefining your standards and sharpening your sense of self.

Rediscovery also means learning to enjoy your own company again. Finding comfort in solitude instead of fearing it. And slowly, your confidence will return and you will begin to trust yourself again.

This is the stage where you stop searching the map for what you lost. You start drawing new paths forward.

So the next time a breakup hits, don't rush to "get over it." Instead, honor the journey. Because the greatest treasure of all isn't the love that's left, it's the love you will find once the storm clears and you refuse to chase what already proved it couldn't stay.

Yours truly,
Miss Behave

Editor's Note: Off the record is a weekly column written by a third-year Collegian staffer writing under an alias. It aims to promote a space for honest conversations about love, sex and relationships. Those interested in sharing their experiences or submitting a topic are invited to do so through this anonymous form.



Miss Behave

We want to hear from you

Send us your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community.

Email: editorinchief@psucollegian.com
Online: psucollegian.com
Postal Mail/In Person: 115 Carnegie Building, University Park, Pa. 16802

Letters should be about 400-600 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include graduation year. All writers should provide their email address and phone number

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.

Who we are

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its

Board of Opinion, which is made up of members of its Board of Editors, with the editor-in-chief holding final responsibility for content. The opinions expressed on the editorial page are not necessarily those of Collegian Inc., a separate institution from Penn State.

About the Collegian

The Daily Collegian is published by Collegian Inc., an independent, nonprofit corporation with a board of directors composed of students, faculty and professionals. Penn State students write and edit both papers

and solicit advertising for them.

During the fall and spring semesters, The Daily Collegian publishes on Fridays. Issues are distributed in on-campus newsstands, with PDF copies available on The Daily Collegian's website.

Complaints

News and editorial complaints should be presented to the editor. Business and advertising complaints should be presented to the Business Manager.

Daily Collegian

Collegian Inc., 115 Carnegie Building, University Park, PA. 16802 ©2026 Collegian Inc.

BOARD OF EDITORS

Editor-in-Chief
Mercedes Hamilton
Managing Editor
Editor-in-Chief Elect
Kahlie Wray
Digital Managing Editor
Avery Tortora
News Editors
Mia Debelevich
Rachael Keller
Lifestyle Editors
Katie Herron
Nadya Solometo
Sports Editors
Andrew Deal
Myles Hannak
Wrestling Editor
Lyle Alenstein
Football Editor
Avery Hill
Photo Editors
Matt Cropp
Samantha Oropeza
Visual Editors
Zeyda Frye
Ali Hanna
Social Media Editor
Geraldine Cruz-Hernandez
Investigations Editor
Avery McGurgan
Opinion Editor
Teresa Phelan
Newsletter Editor
Evan Smith
To contact News Division:
News, Opinions, Arts, Sports, Photo, Video, Graphics
814-865-1828

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Business Manager
Amy Schafer
Business Manager Elect
Rhea Khettry
Vice President
Zack O'Brien
Sales Directors
Sri Ginith
Rhea Khettry
Business Insights Directors
Rohan Badami
Jonathan Zavialov
Creative Directors
Kimberly Barthel
Allison Coble
Marketing Directors
Ella Bernheisel
Jake Long
Fundraising Director
Christopher Burnis
DEI Committee Chair
Alex Fischer
Advertising Manager
Scott Witham

To contact Business Division:
Advertising, circulation, accounting and classifieds
Phone: 814-865-2531
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays

Scan to access
PDFs of past
Daily Collegian
issues.



‘Iron sharpens iron’

Penn State track and field’s elite mid distance group

By Noah Aberegg
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Over the past three months, the Penn State middle distance squad has set 13 top-5 marks in school history across six events, finishing one of its greatest regular seasons in school history. “We’ve just been building towards this over the last five years since I came to Penn State,” assistant coach Ryan Foster said. “Growing the group and expanding the horizons of what we’re trying to do.”

The team found its biggest success in 2018, when senior Isaiah Harris capped off his historic collegiate career with the Nittany Lions’ first of two mid-distance national championships in over 50 years. Now, it’s looking to top that with one of its best seasons ever.

This year, that team has continued to grow and has put itself in a position for multiple potential national titles. Between the men’s and women’s 800-meter groups alone, Penn State has five runners tentatively qualified for the national championship, with three in the top-five.

“They’re all going to want to make the NCAA meet, obviously,” Foster said. “There’s some who have been there to the meet, and now they’re going to want to win it, which they should.”

While several individual runners have a chance to bring gold home to Happy Valley, the men’s team as a whole has a chance to earn their best finish at both the NCAA and Big



Katie McKenney/The Daily Collegian

Mid-distance runner Hayley Kitching watches the clock as her teammates cross the finish line during the women’s 1000-meter run at the Nittany Lion Challenge.

Ten championships in program history, with a chance to win both.

Given the season-best performances from all teams this season, the men’s squad is projected to finish third at this year’s NCAA championship — much-improved from their all-time best of eighth place — and runner-up at the Big Ten championship.

Much of the blue and white’s success this year has been due to the large depth in the mid distance group.

At the Nittany Lion Challenge in January, four Nittany Lions took the starting line and swept the race, breaking the school record and earning four of the top marks in NCAA history. Graduate student Allon Clay led the

way with a Japanese national record 2:18.09, followed by Handal Roban, Yukichi Ishii and Nick Sloff who all ran sub-2:20.

“Each one of the guys wants to be the best they can be,” head coach John Gondak said. “They know they have to race each other, and they know they have to push each other in training, so the more talent that’s in the group, the more they’re able to push each other.”

In addition to the men’s success, the women’s mid distance group has seen Hayley Kitching take the school record in three events and freshman Boh Ritchie the No. 2 time in two events.

While the overall group has competed against each other

in the 600-meter, 800m and 1,000-meter this year, they also train against each other and push one another in practice every day.

“As a coach, I always keep culture at the forefront of the group,” Foster said. “We have to find a balance between being teammates and being competitive.”

For the men’s team in particular, that group has become much more than a team, but has pushed to make each and every one of them better.

“Ever since we’ve gotten closer, it’s not even like a squad anymore, it’s more like a brotherhood for us,” Roban said. “So we look at each other as brothers, and we hold each other accountable. I think that’s

made each other better, as iron sharpens iron.”

In addition to the 1000m performance earlier this season, both squads have also excelled in the 600m and the 800m.

At the Penn State National Open, Penn State earned three of the top four spots in the men’s 800m, as Roban set the school record in 1:44.91, and Clay and Ishii set the No. 2 and No. 5 marks in school history. Just two weeks later, Roban broke his own record again at the ASICS Sound Invite, running 1:44.73 for the second-best mark in the NCAA this season.

Roban also set the school record and Big Ten lead in the 600m as the only sub-1:15 runner in the Big Ten. He’s accompanied by Niko Schultz, Kaleb Nastari and Austin Gallant, who each are in the top-10 times in the Big Ten this year.

But despite the repeated success throughout the entire season, the Nittany Lions have taken each opportunity to race as a fun experience, not holding themselves to a hard standard.

“We don’t pressure ourselves because of the expectation,” Roban said. “We know there’s a lot of expectation on us, so we just enjoy the moment.”

With the indoor Big Ten Tournament on the horizon, the Nittany Lions have an opportunity to earn individual and team accolades, with the mid distance groups leading the charge for both the men’s and women’s teams.

To email reporter: nda168@psu.edu.
Follow him on X @[aberegg_noah](https://twitter.com/aberegg_noah)

Ready for a major test

Crowell says team is ready for No. 1 Tennessee



Chris Eutsler/The Daily Collegian

Head coach Clarisa Crowell walks to the sidelines during the Penn State softball game against Michigan State.

By Gianna Dowling
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following an undefeated weekend in Orlando, No. 25 Penn State is set to take a trip to Knoxville, Tennessee, for its final nonconference weekend away before returning to Beard Field.

“Offensively, we had a great weekend, for the most part, the pitchers had a good showing, just happy about what we were able to do,” coach Clarisa Crowell said in Wednesday’s media session. “Looking forward to carrying that positive momentum from this past weekend into this upcoming weekend when we go to Knoxville, because we have a big weekend coming up.”

That weekend consists of the Nittany Lions having to face host and No.1 Tennessee twice.

The blue and white’s offense has shown in the early portions of the season, totaling 121 runs thus far. Last weekend alone, Penn State outscored its opponents 53-11. Additionally, the Nittany Lions have tallied 20 home runs on the young season.

Penn State has built offensive success by consistently going 12 players deep and using every inch of its lineup to produce hits and runs.

“I think the great thing is that we’ve got kids on the bench that we can put in, and we’ve got some depth on the bench where we didn’t, we didn’t have a lot of that

“This isn’t going to be a weekend, at least when we take on the Vols, that you’re hitting balls all over the place, it’s just their pitching is elite. We need to be better at situational hitting”

Clarisa Crowell

last year,” Crowell said. “Whenever you know, you can have run production from one through nine, it’s a really big deal.”

One name that stands out in particular for the Nittany Lions is freshman infielder Allison Oneacre. The Alpharetta, Georgia, native, was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Week for the second straight time, becoming the first Penn Stater ever to be given a Big Ten honor in consecutive weeks.

Oneacre posted a .438 batting-average on the weekend, while scoring three runs and recording 11 RBIs. The rookie now has 27 RBIs to her name this season, putting her sixth nationally.

“(Oneacre) just a very, just a calm and composed kid, and just goes out there, every time she gets a hit, I’m like, man, there she goes again,” Crowell said. “She comes up in big moments, and, yeah, it’s been pretty, pretty awesome to watch.”

However, in at least two of its games this upcoming weekend, Penn State’s approach at the plate might look a little bit different. In their second contests on both Friday and Saturday, the Nittany Lions will face the Lady Volunteers, who own the nation’s lowest ERA at 0.32.

Tennessee has allowed just five runs this season, but hasn’t given up more than one in each game it’s played.

“This isn’t going to be a weekend, at least when we take on the Vols, that you’re hitting balls all over the place, it’s just their pitching is elite,” Crowell said. “We need to be better at situational hitting, so the bunts need to be better, we need to run some squeeze plays, we need to put runners in motion.”

Penn State’s confidence is what has driven its success in the early parts of the season, so while the competition this weekend gets stronger, the blue and white’s mindset always stays the same.

“I feel like our kids are very confident right now in who they are as individuals and who we are as a team,” Crowell said. “They’re going to show up and they’re going to be ready to play.”

While the Lady Volunteers are the toughest opponent the Nittany Lions have faced so far, they’re not the only tall task at hand for Penn State this weekend.

The blue and white also face an 11-2 Appalachian State team in its early Saturday afternoon slate. The Mountaineers post a .300 batting-average, while also owning a 2.61 ERA from the circle.

“There’s also App State, and those guys are legit,” Crowell said. “That is a very, very good team that has been playing well since last fall when they took down Duke.”

Penn State is prepared for the big weekend ahead, with a central focus on its own success.

“We prepare for teams, but the focus has to be on us and how we play,” Crowell said. “I think our kids do a great job of preparing and just playing Penn State softball.”

To email reporter: gmd5738@psu.edu
Follow her on X @[giannamd32](https://twitter.com/giannamd32)

Penn Staters in Olympics



Hassan Ammar/AP Photo

United States’ Tessa Janecke (22) challenges Sweden’s Ebba Svensson Traff (1) during a women’s ice hockey semifinal game.

By Andrew Mercer
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Three active Penn State student-athletes and two alumni competed on behalf of their respective nations in the 2026 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympic Games.

Four of the five Olympians, Tessa Janecke, Nicole Hall, Matilde Fantin and Jessica Adolfsson played in the women’s ice hockey tournament, while Daniel Barefoot raced in a pair of skeleton events.

Janecke, Hall, Fantin and Barefoot each made their Olympic debuts, whereas Adolfsson returned for her second Olympic Games.

Tessa Janecke (USA)

Gold. The Olympic Games’ most coveted prize, awarded to the champions of the world. Now, Penn State’s captain can call herself an Olympic gold-medalist.

Janecke was the first Nittany Lion to etch her name in the history books as the program’s premier gold medalist as the Americans defeated Team Canada in overtime, 2-1, to secure the first-place finish. The Orangeville, Illinois, native tallied five assists in the tournament as the fourth-line center to aid Team USA’s historic sprint to the gold. Additionally, she was a consistent member of the power play unit.

After contributing a pair of helpers in the opening game against Team Czechia, Janecke added three assists in three games, including the quarterfinal game against host-nation Team Italy and the semi-

final game against Team Sweden.

Janecke was also on the ice when captain Hilary Knight scored the game-tying goal in the gold-medal game against the Canadians, playing a key part along the boards to create space for the goal.

The Americans, backed by goal-tenders Aerin Frankel, Gwyneth Phillips and Ava McNaughton, outscored their competition 33-2.

Nicole Hall and Jessica Adolfsson (Sweden)

Hall and Adolfsson teamed up to play for Team Sweden in the Olympics. The Swedes fought all the way to overtime in the bronze-medal game against Team Switzerland and fell, 2-1.

Adolfsson scored her lone goal of the tournament against Italy in the first period of its preliminary-round game. Meanwhile, Hall went pointless throughout the Olympics, as a member of the fourth line.

Team Sweden finished the Games with a 5-2 record, sweeping Group B in round robin play and taking down Czechia, 2-1, in the quarterfinals before falling to Janecke and the Americans, 5-0, in the semifinals.

Matilde Fantin (Italy)

Fantin represented host Team Italy for her Olympic debut and ended up being the Italians’ top scorer with three goals in the tournament.

Italy posted a 2-2 record through preliminary round-robin play in Group B and a 2-3 overall record. Fantin scored her first Olympic goal in Italy’s 4-1 victory over Team France and tallied two in a 3-2 win over Team Japan.

Italy’s losses came at the hands of Hall and the Swedes, 6-1, as well as Team Germany, 2-1.

In the quarterfinals, Fantin’s squad was shut out by Janecke and Team USA, 6-0.

Daniel Barefoot (USA) | skeleton

Barefoot took part in two events for Team USA, men’s singles skeleton as well as the mixed-team skeleton competitions.

The Penn State alum finished 20th out of 24 in men’s skeleton with a time of 3:49.86 at the conclusion of the fourth heat, 6.53 seconds behind leader Matt Weston of Team Great Britain.

In mixed doubles, Barefoot and his partner Kelly Curtis placed 10th out of 15 duos with a time of 2:01.43, 2.07 seconds behind gold-medalists Weston and Tabitha Stoeker.

To email reporter: asm6548@psu.edu.
Follow him on X @[amercc0115](https://twitter.com/amercc0115)



Celia Lewis/Collegian

Dancers hold up diamonds during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday Feb. 21, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



Celia Lewis/Collegian

Dancer relations captains perform the line dance during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park, Pa.

A LOOK BACK AT THON WEEKEND



Jacob Deluca/Collegian

A THON dancer cries during Angel Hour at the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



Mercedes Hamilton/Collegian

Dancers receive massages under a baby powder tunnel during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



Megan Miller/Collegian

Penn State Cheerleaders blow bubbles with a child during the 54th THON Athlete Hour at the Multi Sports Facility in University Park, Pa.



Joe Klein/Collegian

Sophie Beck, a fourth-year studying organizational leadership, reads dancer's mail written by her best friend in the Bryce Jordan Center.



Joe Klein/Collegian

The Penn State men's soccer team celebrates after their performance at the pep rally during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



Samantha Oropeza/Collegian

The dancer relations captions perform the first Line Dance during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

Fitz, lead singer of Fitz and The Tantrums, preforms as the National Act during the 54th THON in the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park, Pa.