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The Daily Collegian

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Vol. 126, No. 27

Friday, April 10, 2026

psucollegian.com

‘IT’S LIKE YOU’VE HAD A TAIL’ Flock Safety cameras raise privacy, transparency concerns

By Jonathon Chiu
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Garin Roelofs and his friends often talk about mass surveillance, about how license plate readers across the country feed vehicle tracking data to police and private companies. For Roelofs, a first-year student in the Division of Undergraduate Studies, these conversations were abstract, until a few months after he arrived at Penn State — when he learned that he’d been passing this same technology every day on his way to class.

Penn State never announced when and where these cameras were installed. After the university denied his Right-To-Know requests for more information, Roelofs began his own investigation. Now, his push to learn more about the devices has widened into a broader debate over campus surveillance and a lack of transparency from University Police & Public Safety (UPPS).

The cameras belong to Flock Safety, a technology company that develops camera, audio and investigative tools to help communities address public safety incidents, according to its website. The company is best known for its solar-powered license plate readers which use artificial intelligence to scan and catalog vehicles that pass by. At least 4,800 law enforcement agencies across the U.S. have used the readers since 2017, when the company was founded.

Flock’s interconnected network gives its users the ability to access data from cameras across the country — meaning any police department or other entity using Flock could look through Penn State’s own Flock camera footage. Penn State can do the same.

After searching through public records requests made to other law enforcement agencies, Roelofs found that Penn State has accessed 6,319 other Flock networks since Nov. 26, including the Town of Tonawanda Police Department in New York. A review of a New York Freedom of Information Law request for the department’s audit logs showed that Penn State had accessed their systems once during October and twice during November, citing testing purposes.

What we know — and what we don’t

According to DeFlock, an advocacy group monitoring the deployment of the cameras around the world, there are 24 reported Flock camera locations on Penn State’s campus. The Daily Collegian visited all reported locations to verify the presence of Flock cameras.

Penn State isn’t the only college campus where Flock cameras have been installed. At Temple University in Philadelphia, the cameras have helped the campus police department arrest suspects in several criminal cases, according to The Temple News. In August, the student newspaper reported that the university has an online portal detailing where data from campus cameras are being shared,

But Penn State’s agreement with Flock also comes as many law enforcement agencies are ending their contracts over privacy concerns. The deployment of Flock cameras nationwide has been met with controversy due to concerns from both the general public and activist groups, like the American Civil Liberties Union.

Jacqueline Sheader, UPPS’s information officer, said the Flock cameras are part of a “limited, time-bound pilot.” She said the cameras are located in positions

along University Park’s perimeter that are consistent with UPPS Policy 7.12, which was put into effect on Aug. 27, 2025 and is not listed on the department’s website.

“The pilot supports defined law-enforcement purposes, including stolen-vehicle recovery, missing-person cases and investigative leads,” Sheader said. “It is limited in scope and duration, with no contract or cost during the testing period.”

Sheader did not address the Collegian’s questions regarding when the pilot started and how long it will last, as well as specifics about the aforementioned policy and our request to view it. She also didn’t respond to questions about whether the cameras will be removed after the pilot ends or if their usage will be expanded.

She said access to the system is restricted to “trained, authorized UPPS personnel” and system usage also being logged and audited.

However, Penn State’s partial exemption from Pennsylvania’s Right-to-Know Law means that UPPS records, which would include the audit logs and license plate reader data collected from the cameras, are not available for public viewing.

Students, experts raise privacy concerns

Several local governments and law enforcement agencies across the U.S. have terminated their contracts with the company, often in response to concerns about potential data use by federal agencies such as Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as reported by the San Francisco Chronicle and several ABC affiliates.

The company had planned to partner with Amazon’s Ring, which specializes in home security cameras, but ultimately canceled the deal following public backlash about privacy concerns. These concerns had been exacerbated by a Superbowl ad promoting Ring’s new AI-powered feature that could help locate lost dogs by scanning footage from neighborhood cameras.

Flock’s policy concerning the license plate readers allows the company to disclose data to law enforcement, government officials and third parties if they deem necessary. The policy also says the company uses the data to teach its AI model.

Ryan Faddis expressed his concerns about the cameras during a State College Borough Council meeting on Jan. 12, stating the council needs to protect the privacy of residents who drive by the cameras as some of them face public roadways like College Avenue and Atherton Street.

“This affects everybody in the surrounding area that is driving through those intersections, so that’s why I went to (the council) first,” Faddis, a graduate student studying biochemistry, microbiology and molecular biology, said.

Faddis said he believes that the majority of people are ignoring Flock cameras on campus due to familiarity with traditional closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV), which have their feeds restricted from outside access.

“If you walk by a normal CCTV camera, you have the expectation that you are being recorded but that recording is not being transmitted somewhere where somebody on the other side of the country could access it. Whereas now these Flock cameras, because they’re all connected, you almost have a police escort,” Faddis said. “If you’re going on a road trip, they perfectly document your entire road trip path and it’s like you’ve had a tail the entire

time, and so I think it’s important for people to realize that these aren’t just your stereotypical or generic CCTV cameras.”

Faddis said he believes students should be aware of the cameras and is shocked that its use hasn’t been publicly disclosed by Penn State.

Roelofs, who created a website called The Panopticon to analyze campus surveillance, said pushing Penn State to remove the cameras will be a difficult process, but he believes it is possible.

“More than 30 localities dropped Flock after asking one question: Who else can see our data?” Roelofs said, citing an NPR article. “Penn State is harder to move than a city government. The state-related exemption blocks Pennsylvania Right-to-Know requests, so you cannot force disclosure. You have to go through the faculty senate, student government, public forums, media and the Board of Trustees.”

Sarah Hartman-Caverly, one of the co-creators of the Digital Shred Privacy Literacy Toolkit, said she and her colleague, Alexandria Chisholm, were made aware of Flock Safety following concerns its cameras could be used by law enforcement agencies to track the movements of women seeking abortions following the 2022 overturning of Roe v. Wade, according to reports from the Guardian and NBC Chicago. This prompted them both to begin investigating Flock.

She said the presence of Flock cameras contributes to an economy of surveillance capitalism, where an individual’s online activity is gathered by private companies for profit.

“As students, you obviously have some choice in which college and university you might attend ... but once you choose Penn State University Park, all of these other choices downstream from there are made for you,” Hartman-Caverly said. “You have to use Microsoft 365 products. You have to use the Canvas learning management system. During COVID, you are uploading immunization records into a salesforce portal and, if you are going to be physically present on campus, you have to be subjected to Flock surveillance.”

Devices which fall under the term “luxury surveillance,” such as smartphones, wearable devices, dash cams and consumer surveillance devices such as Ring cameras, are also growing increasingly popular.

“These are all things that we’ve adopted into our lives because we perceive that they provide some kind of benefit or some kind of connection to essential goods and services but they come bundled with all of these surveillance capitalism practices and technologies,” Hartman-Caverly said.

While being surveilled in public is a foregone conclusion, DeFlock employee Bob Smetana said this doesn’t give companies such as Flock Safety permission to build a profile on someone based on the data gained from tracking someone’s movements and interactions.

For Smetana, it’s important that the public has the ability to monitor how their information is being accessed and used by law enforcement agencies.

“If the public can tell that their license plate has been searched 400 times by the same officer, that’s not an issue. That’s what accountability looks like,” Smetana said. “If we don’t know that, what good are the audit logs?”

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Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

A pair of Flock cameras stand outside the Westgate Building on North Burrowes Road on Saturday, March 21 in University Park, Pa.



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

A Flock camera sits in view of a group of people by the Lion Shrine on Saturday, March 21 in University Park, Pa.



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

A Flock camera sits on Shortlidge Road on Saturday, March 21 in University Park, Pa.



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

A Flock camera sits on the intersection of Curtin and North Burrowes roads on Saturday, March 21 in University Park, Pa.



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

A car passes by a pair of Flock cameras located on East Park Avenue on Saturday, March 21 in University Park, Pa.

“Sustainability for whom?”

New major invites students to explore environment

By Aly Cromar
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

In February, Penn State launched a new major under the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences: sustainability, society and environmental geography. . The program invites students to connect the dots between science, civilization and the ways individuals interact with the environment.

The new major is marketed towards students with an interest in environmental issues but don't want a strictly technical or mathematical course of study.

Jared Whear, an assistant research professor and director of the new program, said the program emerged from a mix of ongoing environmental crises, growing job opportunities and student interest.

“If you pay attention to any place you go, the news or any class you take, this framework of sustainability comes up,” Whear said.

“As a concept, it’s growing everywhere. There’s a real need to know what sustainability is, how we measure it and how we can push for more of it.”

Within the geography department and the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, faculty members saw room for a program that could prepare students for environmental careers while asking questions, according to Whear.

“A big question from Geog-



Mack Leach/Collegian

Flowers grow outside the HUB-Roberson Center on Monday, March 16, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

raphy 340, one of the keystone courses of the new major, is ‘Sustainability for whom?’” Whear said. “When it comes down to it, we want these students to question sustainability, because the word gets so tossed around.”

Amaya Heffelfinger was drawn in by the curriculum.

Heffelfinger, a second-year studying sustainability, society and environmental geography, said Penn State was the only school she applied to without choosing an environmentally focused major. Before switching her major, she studied geography.

“I enjoy science, I do, but I’m not the best with the technical applications,” Heffelfinger

said. “It kind of aligns more with what suits my interests and my capabilities.”

Heffelfinger said she was aware of the major before Penn State officially released it, as Whear recommended it to her. She moved quickly to declare it. She said the major fills a gap between environmental science and a more humanities-based education. It offers a different path forward for students who care deeply about the environment, but do not see themselves becoming engineers or spending all day in a lab.

“I think the fact that it focuses more on a humanities and social approach is really important,” Heffelfinger said. “Human and

environmental relations are an overlap. They’re two sides of the same coin.”

Similarly, Mellisa Wright said the biggest difference is that the major is centered around “people, power and equity alongside environmental issues.”

“There are no easy fixes,” Wright, professor of geography and women, gender and sexuality studies, said. “We ask students to really dig into the social questions behind sustainability.”

Heffelfinger said the major could also push Penn State to think more deeply about its responsibilities as a land-grant university.

“If we can kind of lean more

into those land-grant roots and become more environmentally involved as a college, I think that would be amazing,” Heffelfinger said.

Because sustainability is such a broad topic, Whear said students will study sustainability across many settings, be it on campus or in the State College Borough. He said field trips to places like water treatment facilities and recycling centers can help make lessons more hands-on.

At the moment, the program’s biggest hurdle is entering the student body’s consciousness, according to Whear. The major remains in its earliest stages and has only just enrolled its second student. Still, he said he’s hopeful the program will continue to grow as more students learn of its existence.

Heffelfinger, Whear and Wright all said the major could fit a wide range of students, especially those who care about the environment but have not found the right academic lane elsewhere.

“If you’re someone who’s concerned about climate change, interested in justice and fairness and curious about how policies actually play out on the ground, this program gives you space to explore those questions seriously,” Wright said.

Heffelfinger offered simpler advice for anyone considering the major: “Do it. Why not? Just declare the major.”

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Lambda Theta Alpha hold Take Back the Night event

By Kyla Jones
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Editor’s Note: One of the names in this story has been changed to protect the identity of the individual involved. The Daily Collegian has verified through fact-checking that this individual exists.

Content warning: This story discusses sexual and domestic violence. Resources and support are available through Penn State’s Counseling and Psychological Services.

As the sun set, Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc.’s Penn State chapter brought the State College community together for its annual “Take Back The Night” event, supporting survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

Since 2023, the event has served as a space for students and community members to stand in solidarity with survivors at Penn State. Nationally, Take Back the Night events have been held since 2010. Organized in collaboration with Relationship Violence Outreach, Intervention and Community Education Center (R-VOICE), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Centre Safe, the event is part of Lambda Theta Alpha’s philanthropy supporting the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Desiree Cotto, event co-chair, said this is her fourth year attending Take Back the Night. She said the event has given her the courage and bravery to speak her mind.

“Giving a safe space to the community is super important so people can be seen, feel seen and be heard,” Cotto, a fourth-year studying psychology, said. “I honestly haven’t seen an event where the community comes out as much as this event to support each other in the quietest way, but loudest way at the same time as possible.”

Cotto said getting the community engaged in sexual and domestic violence awareness is the biggest takeaway of the event.

The march began at Old Main, where State College Mayor Ezra Nanes delivered an opening speech on the importance of amplifying survivors’ voices. He also emphasized the necessity of community and support.

Sophia Mills, associate director of R-VOICE, said the center uses the “ABC method” when supporting survivors — acknowledge, believe and check in. This approach focuses on empowering individuals to have a voice of their own while validating their experiences.

“I truly believe that education, awareness, outreach events like this are going to be the thing that eliminates this type of violence to break down the barriers and stigmas,” Mills said.



Alexis Allen/Collegian

Participants hold a banner during the Take Back the Night event on April 1, 2026, at Penn State University Park in State College, Pa.

As community members continued their walk across campus, they held a large black banner with a moon and white lettering saying “Take Back the Night.” The group stopped at what Mills called “hotspot” locations — Pattee and Paterno Library, East and Pollock halls — to demonstrate where sexual assaults have been reported the most on campus.

At each stop, members of Lambda Theta Alpha opened

“For anyone who comes to the event, I hope they realize they are not alone. There is a support system wherever you go in life.”

Javier Camilo

the floor to students and community members to share their experiences.

Emma, who requested anonymity as it was her first time sharing her story, said she was inspired to share her story as someone who has been sexually assaulted in college. She said she wants people to know that there are safe spaces to tell their stories.

“It means everything,” she said. “I’ve never been to any of one of these events before. I didn’t think I would be able to speak out. I didn’t think I would be able to tell the story and here I am telling the story.”

Emma said she attended the event not only to share her own story, but to support others in sharing theirs. As a woman of color, she said it took her a while to find a safe community at Penn State.

“I feel like spaces like these, I feel safe being a woman,” Emma

said. “I feel safe being a person of color and being able to share my story.

Tears filled listeners’ eyes and speakers were met with quiet nods from the audience. After speakers shared their stories, they were often met with embraces from friends.

Shelly Stevick, a university police officer, said Take Back the Night makes a difference in the community, and she volunteers her time because of this impact.

“No matter what they were wearing, what they were drinking, whatever their prior experience with the other person was, it’s not their fault,” Stevick said. “If they said no, no means no.”

Stevick said throughout the years, she has seen an increase in the amount of people willing to share their stories. More people are realizing they shouldn’t feel any shame, she added.

“It’s never the survivor’s fault,” Stevick said.

The night ended with the group back in front of Old Main. Individuals were handed glow sticks during the closing remarks as a visual representation of those who lost their lives to domestic violence and sexual assault.

Javier Camilo, a member of Lambda Sigma Upsilon Fraternity Inc., said Take Back The Night was one of the first events he attended at Penn State, and that it’s important to him and his fraternity brothers. He said hearing the stories of event speakers moves him to take action to be there for survivors.

“For anyone who comes to the event, I hope they realize they are not alone,” Camilo, a fourth-year majoring in security and risk analysis, said. “There is a support system wherever you go in life.”

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Activists protest animal exploitation

By Jonathon Chiu
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The Allied Scholars for Animal Protection (ASAP) set up a table outside the Westgate Building on Monday to promote veganism and combat animal exploitation.

ASAP is a 17-chapter non-profit that helps college students advocate for human and nonhuman animals through various initiatives, such as promoting plant-friendly diets and educational resources on college campuses.

The table, which was set up around 10 a.m., had animal plushies on plates and signs directing people to Elwood’s Organic Dog Meat, a website comparing public views toward consumption of livestock to those held for dogs. Pamphlets detailing the health and environmental impacts of animal exploitation were also handed out.

Christian Maxey, ASAP’s campus coordinator, said several students had reached out to the organization to potentially start a chapter at Penn State.

He said the table is meant to make people question their beliefs about how animals are treated in the farming industry by presenting them through the same lens as household pets.

“These animals that we exploit are just as capable and just as valuing of their lives as the animals that we love and care about, like dogs and cats,” Maxey said. “We’re just asking people fundamentally if they agree that animals should be treated with respect, or if they think animals do deserve to be exploited.”

Maxey said he wanted the table to encourage more students to voice their beliefs on how they want to see animals be treated, as well as to participate in veganism.

“Most students already have the value of wanting to respect animals and so we’re just asking students to really evaluate if there’s any truly respectable way to exploit someone else,” Maxey said.

Faraz Harsini, ASAP’s founder and CEO, said animal exploitation is often ignored as it’s not prevalent in peoples’ daily lives. Speciesism, the belief that one species is superior to another, is also used to separate pets from other animals, according to Harsini, which should be treated the same as racism and sexism between humans.



Aayan Hamdini/Collegian

Members of Allied Scholars for Animal Protection table outside Westgate Building.

“We don’t see ... all the exploitation that happens,” Harsini said. “What we see is that you go to grocery stores and they put pictures of happy animals on packages. It’s already chopped up to pieces, and so it’s out of sight, out of mind.”

Harsini said it’s morally imperative for people to speak out against animal exploitation and make changes in their lives to help combat this issue.

“I didn’t become vegan because I stopped liking the taste of meat. I started asking questions and making the connection because I always loved animals,” Harsini said. “It’s not just about not eating animals. It’s about being somebody like Gandhi, like MLK, like Rosa Parks, to speak up, to treat this like injustice to animals.”

Angela Salamone stopped at the table after her boyfriend told her about it. Salamone, a third-year studying psychology, said while she had previously been a vegetarian, there should be a compromise where people don’t have to give up eating meat if they don’t want to.

“Other cultures, they celebrate the animal’s life when they use it for their own purposes, so I feel like there’s ways that people carry out slaughtering animals in more humane ways than maybe we do it,” Salamone said.

She said she believed people should be able to make their own choices about their diet while still believing that the food industry needs reform.

“I love a salad as much as the next girl, but I think that having a level diet is something that’s important,” Salamone said. “I also think that the way that people go about killing animals is not good either; I’ve seen documentaries and it’s quite disgusting. I don’t think people should do that at all.”

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6 recommended poems for students

By Avery Pelletier
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

From haikus to limericks to sonnets to found poems, many of us grew up writing poetry throughout our time in elementary and middle school. Our teachers showed us how to create rhyme schemes, play around with words and create stories that traditional writing cannot always convey.

However, aside from the occasional English class, many college students have not only left writing, but also reading poetry to their earlier academic years. Between classes, jobs and internships, many feel as though they don't have time to spend on haikus. Yet, with all these potential stressors, a short poem to make someone smile could be what many students need.

In honor of April being National Poetry Month, here is a list of six poems all college students should read in order to connect with the writing that raised us all.

“Be Drunk” by Charles Baudelaire

While the title may be incredibly forward, this poem by French poet Charles Baudelaire is more than a story about traditional intoxication, but a reflection on how to live life.

In his writing, Baudelaire explains that for us to feel truly alive and make it through the challenges of life, we must immerse ourselves fully into something and allow the feeling of being “drunk” overtake us. However, he explains this can be done through a plethora of things like art, poetry or music depending on the person.

This poem is perfect for a student who may be feeling uncertain about the future and needs a reminder to soak in every moment they experience.

“Having a Coke with You” by Frank O'Hara

In one of his most famous poems, Frank O'Hara writes about celebrating the simple pleasures in life and the company we enjoy it with.

For many college students, it can be incredibly easy to give up personal time with friends because of responsibilities and deadlines. Though, this poem suggests that when we do this, we miss out on what life truly has to offer.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

Books sit on shelves in the Pattee and Paterno Library on Monday, April 6, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

“Having a Coke with You” is a poem for students who need a reminder to appreciate the little things. College is a short period of time in the long run and is one meant to be savored.

“O Captain! My Captain!” by Walt Whitman

Popularized by the cult classic “Dead Poets Society,” this poem by Walt Whitman is more than just the short quote mentioned in the movie. Even though it originally honored former President Abraham Lincoln after his assassination, this poem is about honoring something that has guided you through hard times to get you where you are today.

In a time of transition where many feel they have to leave their friends and professors behind for their future, “O Captain! My Captain!” is a story that resonates and helps us remember those who guided us on our paths.

“Dreams” by Langston Hughes

In a time where life’s path may seem different from personal goals, “Dreams” by Langston Hughes can offer a short reminder about the possibilities of our dreams.

Comparing a life without dreams to “a broken-winged bird,” Hughes emphasizes how important personal aspiration is to the quality of life. With so many of us feeling the pressure to ditch childhood dreams for stability, Hughes’ reminds us not to.

“Dreams” is a poem, not only for the students trying to pick

their majors or careers, but a reminder for all of us that our dreams are valid.

“Wild Geese” by Mary Oliver

One of the biggest struggles college students’ face is perfectionism, making “Wild Geese” by Mary Oliver a must-read.

With its strong imagery and storytelling, this 18 line poem is more than just a collection of words, but a reminder for readers to not strive for perfection, but rather self acceptance.

Since the end of the semester is when many students typically feel the most pressure to reach for perfection, this poem is for those who need a quick reminder that doing their best and being proud of themselves is what really matters.

“The Walrus and the Carpenter” by Lewis Carroll

In this whimsical, absurdist poem about a walrus and a carpenter on a beach adventure, author Lewis Carroll uses both rhyme schemes and clever storytelling to produce a humorous poem.

Even though it may be one of the longer options on this list, this poem creates such an absurd storyline readers are automatically pulled into and need to finish.

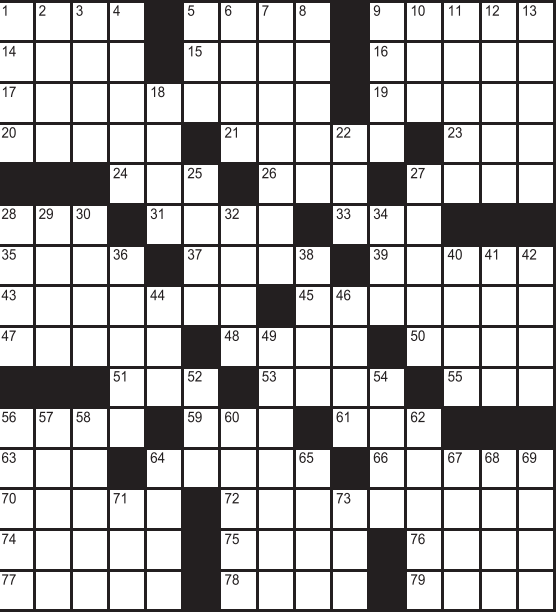
This poem is a great recommendation for a student who just needs a distraction from all their responsibilities and a laugh to make them feel better.

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Crossword

Across

- 1 Kind of dancing
- 5 Meal in a shell
- 9 Shopping centers
- 14 Jewish month
- 15 Crooked
- 16 Anticipate
- 17 Comic’s offering
- 19 Cheeky
- 20 Bored
- 21 Orderly grouping
- 23 Solidify
- 24 ___ foo yung
- 26 Bluejacket
- 27 Medicinal amount
- 28 Literary piece
- 31 Fill to excess
- 33 Cornfield sound
- 35 Office note
- 37 Fashion
- 39 Musical show
- 43 In love
- 45 Eternal
- 47 Poker pot
- 48 Nimble
- 50 Historic Virginia family
- 51 Seabird
- 53 Cobras
- 55 Before amble or cede
- 56 In the past
- 59 Consume
- 61 Lawn base
- 63 Sleep acronym
- 64 War horse
- 66 Boxer’s stat
- 70 Muse of poetry
- 72 Calculator, of sorts
- 74 For the birds?
- 75 Cantina cooker



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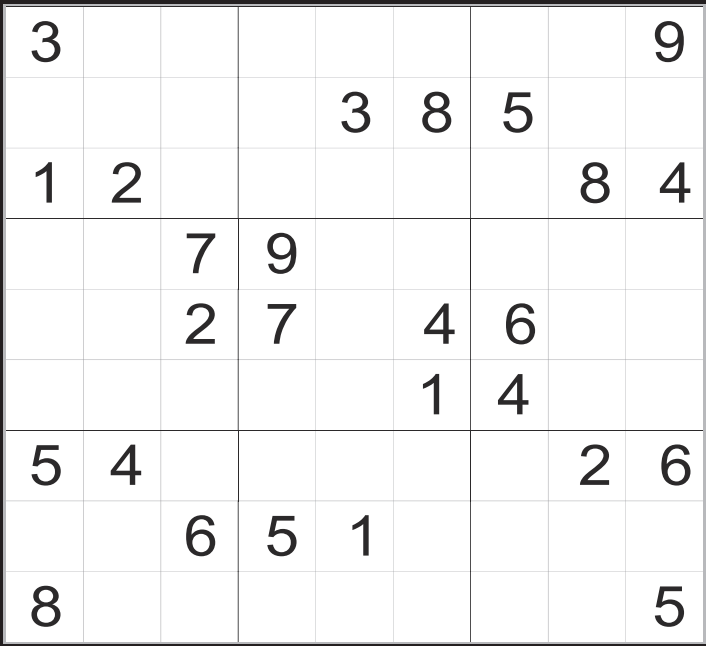
- 12 Nine ___
- 13 Newspaper section
- 18 Staying power
- 22 Compass doodle
- 25 Willing
- 27 Inhabit
- 28 City in the Asian part of Russia
- 29 Actress Moore
- 30 Radiate
- 32 Heavy weights
- 34 “___ you sure?”
- 36 Weasel relative
- 38 Canal zones?
- 40 Political second banana
- 41 Manipulative one
- 42 To be (Lat.)
- 44 Norse war god
- 46 Swindles
- 49 Kneecap
- 52 Butterfly catcher
- 54 Ticked off
- 56 Mountain nymph
- 57 Vitality
- 58 Internet messages
- 60 Fable writer
- 62 Churchill Downs event
- 64 Some offspring
- 65 Pickle flavoring
- 67 Subtle glow
- 68 Scratch
- 69 Coop group
- 71 Chi predecessor
- 73 Water holder

Down

- 1 Gyro meat
- 2 Object of worship
- 3 Zola heroine
- 4 Jagged
- 5 Lao-tzu principle
- 6 Pond organism
- 7 Romanced
- 8 “Lohengrin,” e.g.
- 9 Umpteen
- 10 Reverence
- 11 Florida’s Key ___

su|do|ku

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WORD SEARCH

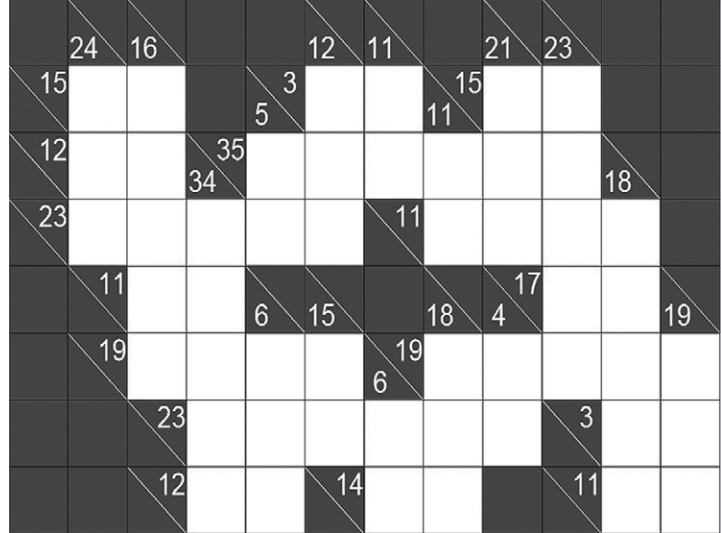
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Flowers & Plants



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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Graduating? Read these books



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

Books sit on shelves in Pattee and Paterno Library on Monday, Feb. 2, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

By Allie Satterfield
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Lots of thoughts are swirling around in the minds of Penn State’s graduating class as their time at Penn State draws near. With so many questions to be answered — where you’ll work, where you’ll live — it’s hard to focus on anything else in the time leading up to graduation.

But if you have some free time post-graduation, here are some reading recommendations to help you feel more prepared or comforted in this new phase of your life.

“You Are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life” by Jen Sincero

This is a self-help book, and I’m aware this simple fact may already be turning some readers away. However, I ignored my self-help-book-ick and actually really enjoyed this.

Sincero has an unapologetic writing style that’s honest and empowering. Throughout the book, she emphasizes things you can actually do to help change your mindset, and I found that

super helpful.

“You Are a Badass” is one of the things that helped build my self-confidence in my personal life and career, and it’s great for recent graduates. It can help you design the life that you want to live yourself.

“Retire Before Mom and Dad: The Simple Numbers Behind a Lifetime of Financial Freedom” by Rob Berger

Though I haven’t read this book yet, my dad raves about it. It’s a guidebook for financial literacy and independence, focused on efficiently building wealth. It wouldn’t necessarily be my cup of tea (although my father will probably force me to read it eventually), but it offers important lessons in budgeting and saving.

As you move into the workforce, you’ll probably have a larger paycheck than you’re used to seeing. This book provides advice on how to handle that, a lesson worth learning for recent graduates.

“Beautiful World, Where Are You” by Sally Rooney

Graduation is honestly a time filled with expectations. You ex-

pect to get your diploma, land a job, move to a new city and, ultimately, be successful. But sometimes we don’t meet our own expectations because of life’s curveballs, and that’s okay.

That’s the lesson “Beautiful World, Where Are You” taught me. It follows a few young people navigating their lives and relationships. Even though it’s a work of fiction, these characters feel real, and they’re reminders that you have the authority to create the life you want.

It’s a great reminder for everyone, but it may be especially necessary if you’re feeling behind as graduation approaches.

“The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho

This novel chronicles the journey of a young man looking for his calling.

I think it’s a great read for anyone looking for purpose, or who thinks they’ve already found what they’re meant to do.

It’s a reassuring story that the universe is orchestrating things well.

For me, it reiterates the idea that everything is always working out. Recent grads may not feel like that’s a true statement, so this novel may be a necessary reminder.

“Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson” by Mitch Albom

While it’s a tear-jerker, this memoir is a lesson on not taking any day or experience for granted, and to recognize how beautiful life can be.

It perfectly intertwines the lives of a mentor and former student. Any reader becomes one of Morrie’s students in recognizing that learning doesn’t stop after you toss your cap.

Congratulations on all of your accomplishments and happy reading.

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Column | Long live jazz

During his monologue during the 98th Academy Awards last month, host Conan O'Brien addressed Timothée Chalamet's controversial comments about how "no one cares" about ballet and opera. "They're [the opera and ballet communities] just mad you left out jazz," O'Brien said jokingly. If it's not the butt of the joke, jazz generally tends to fly under the radar. In comparison to other genres, few engage with it. There are modern day jazz artists like Samara Joy and artists that have introduced a jazz-infused style of pop music like Laufey. Regardless, jazz is still a fairly niche genre.

Created by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History to celebrate jazz and honor the genre's history, Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM) is recognized every April.

The genre's origins can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century in New Orleans. It's primarily a product of the African American community, where African musical traditions, spirituals, blues, European harmonic structures and ragtime were fused into the genre we know today. It eventually spread to major cities like Chicago, New York and St. Louis during the Great Migration and further gained popularity.

One of the more defining characteristics of jazz is the use of improvisation, which is when a musician creates their own melodic solo on the spot in accordance with the rest of the band members. With this in mind, it makes jazz one of the freer musical genres. Improvisation allows the musician in that moment to express themselves by being in creative control. The listener is at their mercy.

It's unpredictable and spontaneous. It's a nice change of

pace from the popular music of today that's often repetitive and predictable.

Jazz is a collective effort, placing an importance on group collaboration. Jazz lets everyone in the ensemble shine by having many opportunities for multiple players to solo in a song. It's unlike other genres where normally leading instruments like guitar are the ones to solo and therefore get the most recognition. It's a more democratic art form.

One of the things that attracted me to jazz is how it can capture emotions within the song. There seems to be a song that can accurately capture any mood.

A driving drum beat with a fast rhythmic pattern on the ride cymbal creates frantic energy. The slow and brooding horn section brings melancholy. The warmth of the alto singer's voice is like an aural sunshine.

It's storytelling, regardless of whether the song is lyrical or not. The musicians are telling a

story through their instruments and are also communicating with the other instrumentalists of the ensemble during the song.

I feel like jazz turns people off because it gives the impression that you need to have a music background to enjoy it. It's been labeled "too intellectual," whatever that means. You don't need to have a deep understanding of music theory to enjoy it. Like I mentioned above, jazz is able to convey emotion. Chances are if the song is creating or reminding you of an emotion, it's probably doing the same for someone else.

Therefore, it allows us to connect with others, similar to other genres. It's only deemed intimidating and inaccessible because someone put that label on it. It requires a higher level of attention than other styles of music, but to label it inaccessible because of an unwillingness to be present isn't fair.

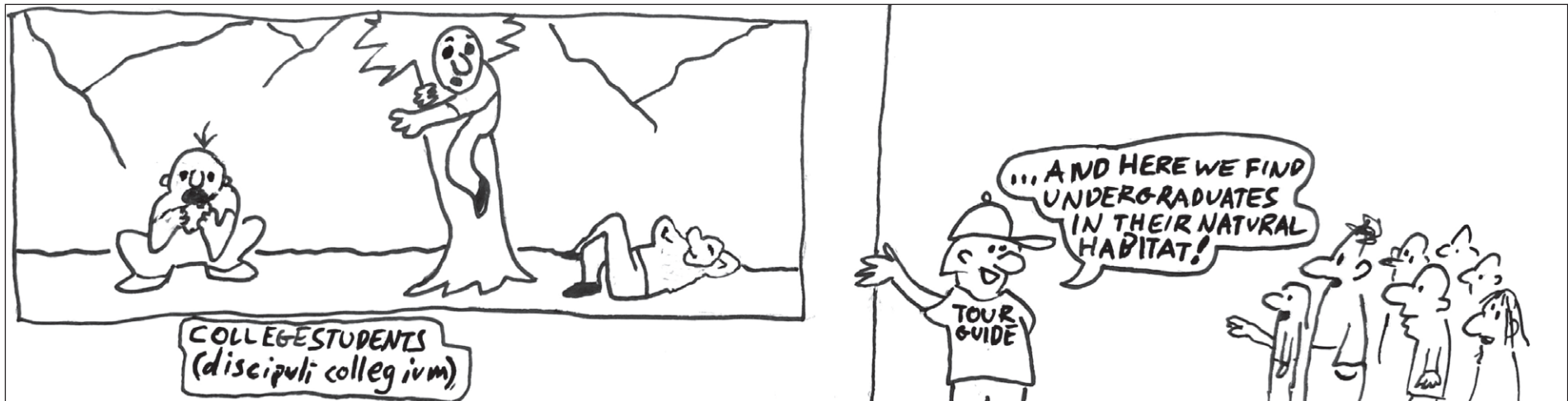
Similar to anything, becoming

familiar with jazz is about finding what you like. There are several subgenres to jazz including swing, bebop, cool, and avant-garde to name a few. They vary in tempo, themes, musical characteristics and ensemble size. But at the end of the day, they all create the diverse tapestry that is jazz.

While I understand that not everyone is going to like jazz, I think it's important to at least try it before you decide it's not for you. If you don't know where to start, allow me to offer some of my favorites to begin with: Ella Fitzgerald, John Coltrane and Charles Mingus.

It's no secret that popular music has an edge over jazz, but the genre has continued to persist regardless. May that vitality continue on. Long live jazz.

Emma Strickling is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a fifth-year studying English with minors in film studies and Italian. Email her at eks5726@psu.edu



Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | Miss Behave

Off the record | Dear, Daisy

Dearest reader, I hope you've had a chance to bask in the sun these last couple of days. I know I did. And if you didn't get a chance to lay out on the HUB lawn for a little while, then I hope you at least got to catch a glimpse of the hot men, shirtless around campus. Quite a view if I do say so myself, one may consider it a public wwwservice. Those silly little packs of boys playing volleyball, spikeball or any other type of "ball" they're into these days.

My spicy little readers, I'm honored many of you have written to me over the course of the semester. It's been my absolute pleasure to write you back, offer my perspective and help guide you through all things love, life and sex.

This week, Daisy writes in with a question that's equal parts vulnerable and universal to everyone.

She writes that she's facing body insecurities in her relationship which have contributed to confusing feelings related to her sexual activity.

First of all, take a deep breath. You're not alone and

you're definitely not "behind." There's no timeline for intimacy. No scoreboard or gold medal.

Second, you say you're a "bigger girl" like it's a disclaimer, like you're apologizing before the story even starts. Absolutely not. Your body isn't a warning label. It's not a problem that has to be solved before you're allowed to be loved, touched or desired.

And here's the thing people don't tell you enough, confidence isn't about loving every inch of yourself all the time, it's about deciding your worth isn't up for debate. Knowing your worth and value isn't defined by anyone else but you.

Now, onto the bedroom insecurities. You're worried you don't know what you're doing. Newsflash! Neither did your boyfriend at some point and experience certainly isn't a measure of your value. If he truly cares about you (and it sounds like he does), then he's not grading you or ranking you on a scale.

This is also important. You don't owe anyone confidence you don't feel yet. If you're feeling insecure, nervous or just not ready, that's not something to push through for the sake of keeping up with someone else's experience or expectations.

Move at the pace you're

comfortable with. The right person will meet you where you are.

Let's zoom out for a second. Right now, this relationship might feel like everything. The kind of everything where if he doesn't text back every few hours, your mind starts spinning on the "what ifs." Totally normal.

As you get older though, your understanding of love will shift. You will start to realize that love isn't about proving yourself or having to perform perfectly. It's not about being the most confident or most experienced. And it's certainly not about giving into something you're not ready for, especially when it comes to sex.

It's about comfort. It's about ease. It's about feeling like you can exist. Fully, imperfectly, sometimes awkwardly and still be wanted.

Love, when it's right, feels like home.

Daisy — here's your takeaway. You don't need to shrink your body. You don't need to fake your confidence or fast-track your comfort level just because your partner is more experienced or feel like you need to "keep up" with his expectations to be worthy of love and intimacy. You already are. Exactly as you are.

And trust me anyone worth

your time will care far more about how you feel than how experienced you are. You shouldn't be receiving or feel like your partner is pressuring you in any way. That isn't love, that's control.

Daisy, I hope you know how proud I'm of you for being so vulnerable and offering me your deeper thoughts and insecurities. I hope I was able to offer you some advice in return.

I am always cheering you on.

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.



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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.

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‘It’s an honor to have this role’

Clarisa Crowell reflects on leadership

By Gianna Dowling
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

One of the longest-tenured coaches at Penn State steps onto the dirt every spring and leads a team full of women to constant victories. The Nittany Lions’ softball coach, Clarisa Crowell, has found success in recent years, helping bring the program to higher levels over the past three seasons. Crowell has been at the helm since 2020 and has had three 30-win seasons in her five completed campaigns. Most recently, in 2024, Crowell led the blue and white to its first NCAA Regional appearance since 2011. With the program, she’s posted 150 wins and a 0.535 win percentage, both of which are the third most in program history.

“I am very fortunate to have this opportunity here at Penn State, and to, you know, to be the head coach here for our softball program,” Crowell said. “There’s been a lot of women in all sports, in all really areas of life, that have allowed women like me to be able to be in this type of leadership position here at Penn State.”

In addition to Crowell, 10 other Nittany Lions’ athletic teams are led by a female head coach.

“I love Penn State because when you look at not only our athletic department, but when you look at our school as a whole, there are so many strong women that are in power,” Crowell said. “I think it says a lot just about Penn State just embracing female leadership and also diversity, because I am a person of color, and there’ve been a lot of women who have paved the way that has allowed me to be in this position.”

Before joining the Nittany Lions softball program, Crowell saw success in her own softball career. Her accomplishments in the college softball world started in her playing days at Virginia Tech, where she was a three-time All-Conference selection and was later inducted into the Virginia Tech All-Sports Hall of Fame in 2013. After a couple of stops as an assistant at Syracuse and Oklahoma State, Crowell earned her first head coaching gig in 2013



Lucas Yendrzewski/Collegian

Head coach Clarisa Crowell walks toward the dugout during the softball game against Wisconsin at Beard Field at Nittany Lion Softball Park on Sunday, March 22, 2026, in University Park Pa.

with Miami (OH). In 2016, Crowell guided the Red Hawks to a MAC Tournament Championship, earning a spot in an NCAA Regional for the first time in four years.

In Crowell’s final year with Miami, she was named MAC Coach of the Year after leading the Red Hawks to a 35-16 record and regular-season conference title. This achievement paid off for Crowell as she made the jump to the Big Ten the next year.

“You dream about having this life that I’m able to live right now, where you’re living out your dream, because this is what I’ve always wanted to do,” Crowell said. “It truly has been a blessing for me, this profession, and what softball, the sport in itself, has brought to me.”

Becoming a high achiever and working to reach a high leadership role isn’t easy, but Crowell has passed on the success. Under her tutelage, the program saw many high-character student-athletes bring home accolades both on and off the diamond.

Lexie Black won both the Big Ten Medal of Honor, the highest academic honor in the conference, and the Big Ten Postgraduate Scholarship in 2023, both firsts for the softball program. In 2025, Crowell continued the pipeline of high achievers, with Maddie Gordon bringing home the Medal of

Honor, and six athletes achieving Big Ten Academic accolades.

From Black, who went on to study at Iowa State’s College of

“It’s important for them to see just the amount of female leaders, elite level leaders that we have here at Penn State.”

Clarisa Crowell

Veterinary Medicine program, or other players coached by Crowell, like outfielder Haylie Brunson, who, after graduating last season, joined Longwood as a graduate coach, there’s no shortage of players coached by Crowell making changes in the real world. “The mindset that I have as a professional and just on a personal level, is there’s no such thing as failure,” Crowell said. “You’re going to be stronger because of the adverse moments that you’ve had.”

In Crowell’s first season with Miami, the team finished 20-34, and improved by just two wins the next year. However, after that, Crowell and the Red Hawks completed three 30-win seasons and

fell just short of 30 in the other two.

With the Nittany Lions, Crowell went 7-34 in her debut season, but that wasn’t a preview of how the blue and white would continue to perform under its new program head.

Following this first season in 2021, Crowell led Penn State to a 25-win increase in 2022, which was the largest single-season turnaround by any team in Division I. The Nittany Lions continued their incline, with 30-plus wins in 2023 and 2024.

“I’ve been through, you know, some tough seasons that didn’t go the way that I had planned,” Crowell said. “I find ways to grow and to get better and I think I’ve been able to do that in my career.”

When it comes to leading a softball team, teaching her players to work through adversity is one of the life lessons Crowell uses to help them become great leaders themselves one day.

The key to that is the support group Crowell assembled. It’s unique and unprecedented; currently, her coaching staff is one of three at Penn State made up entirely of women. In an area like coaching, where underrepresentation is an issue, there’s no lack of representation when Crowell’s players glance from the field to the dugout.

“We are going to prepare you

to be elite leaders in whatever profession it is that you have in life,” Crowell said. “A lot of the things that we teach on the field apply to what they do in life, how to overcome adversity, how to get through hardships, how to build your toughness.”

As people go through life, a question that often crosses their minds is how a younger version of themselves would view what they’ve become. This is especially true when achievements and accomplishments have come at a high level and may even feel unthinkable.

For Crowell, her younger self would be nothing short of proud because it’s taken a lot to get where she is. “My younger self would say, I’m proud of how hard you have worked and where you have gotten, but never settle and continue to get one percent better every day,” Crowell said. “And don’t ever forget about where you come from and the people who have helped get you there and be thankful every day for where you’re at.”

Those words ‘don’t ever forget about where you come from’ are the secret behind Crowell’s success and how she wouldn’t be where she is today without her biggest supporters – her family.

Crowell’s family comes from Hawaii, she’s a first-generation college student, and her family values back in the Aloha State have been the most important part of her softball journey.

“My family is everything to me; my parents have had to work really hard their entire lives to support our family,” Crowell said. “I get my work ethic from my parents, and just seeing everything that they gave to our family, and there’s absolutely no way I would be where I am today, without my family.”

There’s another importance that comes from being a woman in a leadership position like Crowell is, and that’s being able to lead a group of young female athletes.

“It’s an honor to have this role that I have because of the impact that I can have on our student athletes,” Crowell said.

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Trump’s executive order

By Will Horstman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

President Donald Trump made headlines in the collegiate athletics world on Friday as he signed an executive order titled “Urgent National Action to Save College Sports.”

Trump’s order outlines new regulations for the NCAA to have more control over eligibility and the transfer portal in addition to name, image and likeness (NIL). The order also calls for the protection of women’s and Olympic sports under these new rules.

The rules in the order are slated to become effective on Aug. 1, encouraging updates to policies to make the new regulations happen and invalidating any state laws that conflict with the order. For enforcement, an institution would risk a reduction of federal funding if it were to break the rules in the order.

So what does this all mean for Penn State athletics? Here’s what to know.

Eligibility

Current NCAA eligibility rules feature a five-year window to play in four seasons. While Trump suggests keeping a five-year window, his order states that athletes could play in five seasons.

The order says that this promotes “fairness, consistency, safety and opportunities for student-athletes.” It also states that professional athletes can’t return to collegiate athletics.

Mike Rhoades commented on players in the NBA Summer League and G League returning to college basketball on Dec. 31. While he said he wasn’t mad at college coaches who signed a former professional player as the NCAA allowed it, he wanted the NCAA to have standards and ways to enforce those standards.

“I just wish there were people who are in charge that said we’re going to stand for this and we’re going to fight for this because this

is who we are,” Rhoades said. “We just don’t have that right now.”

Trump’s order provides limited exceptions to the five-year eligibility window rule, including military service, missionary service and other periods of absence from participation that are in the public interest.

Transfer portal

The order outlines new rules regarding the transfer portal, featuring the fact that players could only transfer once in their five-year window without having to sit out a year. A player could transfer an additional time without penalty if they were to earn a four-year degree.

If a player were to transfer a second time without having already earned a four-year degree, they would have to sit out a year. The order doesn’t immediately change the transfer rule, which is noteworthy as the men’s basketball transfer portal officially opens on Tuesday in addition to the women’s basketball transfer portal opening on Monday.

In other words, this order would revert the NCAA back to the one-time transfer rule, preventing situations where a player would transfer to a new school every year. For example, former Penn State men’s basketball player Kachi Nzeh, who’s also played for Xavier and Little Rock, will be in search of his fourth team in four years as he recently announced plans to enter the transfer portal.

Meanwhile, a transfer player like men’s basketball forward Josh Reed would abide by the rules in Trump’s order. Reed played his first three seasons at Cincinnati before transferring to Penn State for his final year of eligibility in 2025-26.

NIL

The order also explains rules for NIL, banning the use of improper financial activities. Institutions can’t use federal funds for NIL or revenue sharing payments, and institutions can’t be a part of a fraudulent NIL scheme.

Trump’s order states that a fraudulent NIL scheme means a school can’t pay for NIL services that are above the actual fair market value. This includes the use of collectives or similar entities. The order also says that a school can’t tortiously interfere with a contract between a student-athlete and another institution.

Women’s and Olympic sports

Trump’s order says that the current state of collegiate athletics is chaotic and it jeopardizes women’s and Olympic sports as focus and resources shift more toward football and men’s basketball.

As such, the order calls for adequate protection of women’s and Olympic sports by preserving or expanding scholarships and collegiate athletic opportunities.

In revenue sharing, Penn State athletics reported that it spent \$110,000 on women’s basketball, \$95,000 on men’s hockey, \$50,000 on men’s lacrosse, \$10,000 on men’s tennis and \$10,000 on women’s volleyball during the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The Nittany Lions have seen notable results in women’s athletics in recent years, such as women’s volleyball winning the 2024 national championship and women’s hockey making the Frozen Four this past season.

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‘We need to be like Marie’ | Marie-Eloise Leclair turns heads in successful Penn State track season

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Offense energized early in dominant win over FDU

By Dom Megats
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It’s been a cold spring in Happy Valley; however, the bats for Penn State heated up against FDU in its second Dollar Dog Night of the season.

After what was a back-and-forth opening to the game, the Nittany Lions used the home half of the second inning to get five runs across the plate. This led to a dominant 11-5 win over the Knights in front of a crowd of 2,014 fans.

“We are working to make sure that we build a program that does that every night, but especially to stick with us when we’re not playing baseball the way any of us want to be playing right now,” coach Mike Gambino said. “This is not the standard we’ve set over two years and for the people who keep coming out we will reward them.”

Offensive contributions were displayed up and down the lineup throughout the contest. By the bottom of the third inning, seven out of the nine Penn Staters in the lineup had a hit. Ultimately, the blue and white were able to get 15 hits in the win.

Bryce Molinaro earned his sixth multi-RBI game as he continues to climb the program rankings. Jayden Davis and Spencer Barnett joined him with a pair of RBIs. As a team, the Nittany Lions showed efficient hitting throughout the game as they were able to consistently bat in runners.

“(Molinaro’s) having better bats consistently,” Gambino said. “He was having good at-bats, but he’s now consistently having better at-bats. His swing decisions are good. He’s hammering the baseball. He’s looking like (Molinaro).”

Not only were the bats alive, but the runners on base were constantly on the move. Penn State earned six stolen bases,

its most in a game on the season. Catcher Joey DeMucci led the pack with three.

The on-base awareness was on full display primarily in the second inning. DeMucci got the party started when he stole third. Shortly after, the Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, native stole home as a double steal forced a throw to second base.

“We want to be aggressive,” Gambino said. “We want to run the bases. It’s just harder to do that when you’re chasing. We had an early lead, so we can go be aggressive.”

The action-packed second inning continued after Michael Anderson was hit by a pitch. With two runners on, Molinaro ripped an RBI double into left field for his second extra-base hit of the game. Barnett followed suit with a shot up the middle of the field, scoring two additional runs. Jack Porter was the last Nittany Lion to earn an RBI in the inning after flying a single into center field.

An 8-3 lead was challenged quickly as FDU was able to answer with a run of its own in the top half of the third. However, a strong Penn State bullpen kept the Nittany Lions in a comfortable lead throughout the game.

Gambino brought in five relievers who allowed two earned runs and struck out ten batters.

The win marks its fourth double-digit victory of the season for the blue and white. Although not a conference win, the Nittany Lions were able to get back into the win column heading into another Big Ten road trip.

“I think the last three performances combined going into Columbus this weekend against Ohio State is huge for us,” Robert Brown III said. “It gives you so much confidence, so much more to play for. You get the taste of winning, and you just want to keep getting it. You get addicted to that for sure.”

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Why students do ‘55 Days of Cafe’

By Skylar Williamson
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Each year after spring break, when the weather gets warmer, a familiar ritual returns to downtown State College. What began as a casual tradition has evolved into a social challenge, drawing students together for nearly two months of daily attendance at Cafe 210 West.

In 2008, Cafe started the tradition, “55 Days of Cafe,” and over the years, thousands of community members and Penn State students have participated. This year, 953 people registered, setting a new record for their registration day.

For many, the 55-day challenge starts as a casual idea that quickly turns into a part of their daily routine that students eagerly take on each spring.

The concept is simple but demanding — participants commit to visiting Cafe every day for 55 consecutive days. Each day, participants must purchase a menu item and document their receipt to ensure their attendance is being tracked.

After the 55 days, participants who have completed the challenge don’t just get the satisfaction of spending their money at a bar every day for two months but also receive fun incentives. The successful contenders will earn their name on a permanent plaque that’ll be hung in Cafe and an all-paid-for, end-of-the-year party with food and drinks at Tussey Mountain.

Despite the commitment, people are up for the challenge. For many, the event offers a structured way to make the most of the final stretch of the academic year. Some students, like Samantha Sullivan, chose to do it alongside their friends, even with initial doubts.



Stella John/Collegian

The bar line outside of Cafe 210 on Thursday, March 26, 2026 in State College, Pa.

“At first, we didn’t want to do it because we weren’t sure how it was going to fit into our schedules,” Sullivan, a fourth-year studying accounting, said. “Then we figured ‘let’s just do it,’ and now it’s been 15 days and so much fun.”

The environment at Cafe 210 plays an essential part in sustaining the event’s popularity. Known for its outdoor seating, good drinks and central downtown location, the space becomes especially lively during the 55-day stretch.

Cafe transforms into a social hub at all hours of the day, especially in warm weather. Groups gather around tables, some staying for hours and others stop by to grab a pitcher and do their homework just to keep their daily streak alive.

Darren Wilson said Cafe is the perfect spot to host an event like 55 Days.

“Cafe is huge, has a good

outside area, good music and good food,” Wilson, a fourth-year studying supply chain and information systems, said. “The chill environment makes it a good vibe, and I don’t mind coming here for 55 days straight.”

However, rainy weather, exams and travel plans can all complicate the routine. Still, participants often find ways to adapt, whether that means stopping by in between classes or coordinating visits with friends to stay motivated.

Participants hold each other accountable for the challenge and for some, 55 Days is less about socializing and more about discipline.

Ashley Santana said accountability creates a bonding experience itself.

“I didn’t even think I was going to make it past seven days,” Santana, a fourth-year studying human-centered design and development, said. “My friends

and I always send a text to remind each other to go or try to go together when we can, and I haven’t missed a day.”

The social aspect of the experience, however, plays the largest role in students’ motives for joining in. Creating bonds and long-lasting memories are part of the goal after the 55 days.

For seniors, 55 Days is more than just a social experience — it’s one of the last Penn State traditions they can partake in with their friends before graduation. Liana Kosienksi said that being a senior motivates her during the challenge.

“This is one of the last times all my friends will be together at the same time in the same place,” Kosienksi, a fourth-year studying accounting, said. “55 Days gives us a set time of the day to see each other even if it’s only for a couple of minutes.”

The tradition has grown steadily through word of mouth

and social media. Students often track their progress online, documenting each completed day and encouraging others to join.

Some participants are creating new social media accounts or changing their social handles to

“This is one of the last times all my friends will be together at the same time in the same place. 55 Days gives us a set time of the day to see each other even if it’s only for a couple of minutes.”

Liana Kosienksi

fit the theme of 55 Days, posting videos of their food and drinks for each day.

55 Days reflects a broader aspect of student life at Penn State, much like the football season. It offers a sense of connection that extends beyond individual friend groups.

Whether students join for the social aspect, the challenge or simply out of curiosity, 55 Days continues to draw participants, breaking new records every year. In a college environment where time flies, the tradition offers a way to slow down, show up and be part of something steady.

“Cafe is just an everyday bar until 55 Days,” Wilson said. “Now, it’s like a consistent place that we can say we went to every day at the end of our last semester in college.”

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Local DJ Josh Kondé wants to make ‘timeless’ music



Courtesy of Hykina Cominskie

Behind the scenes of the shooting of Josh Kondé’s (pictured far right) “Ain’t Shi” music video on April 3 in State College, Pa.

By Ashlyn Kafer
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Skateboarders, videographers, vintage car owners and dancers swarmed Oliv Highland’s parking lot on Friday, prompted by their love of local DJ Josh Kondé’s music. Donning clothing reminiscent of 2016, the group served as background characters in a promotional video for Kondé’s upcoming song “Ain’t Shi.”

Mere hours before, Kondé signed with Swedish record label Electronic Future. The accomplishment had the fourth-year studying telecommunications and media industries, brimming with energy as he filmed the video, kicking off the start of a new journey in his music career.

Kondé’s DJing journey began the summer after his sophomore year, inspired by Lucas Damien, his fraternity Alpha Phi Delta’s (APD) former DJ. Damien taught him the introductory skills and from there he was able to land a job DJing in Maryland.

“My mom found some random Facebook group thing where they were going to teach people how to DJ for free,” Kondé said. “So I just show up to this random place an hour away by myself. Most people left after like 40 minutes but I ended up staying and screwing around and started DJing with his five different parties he had there, and I ended up making his kids dance, and he was like ‘no you actually know what you’re doing, let me give you a job.’”

Victoria Colucci, one of the participants in Kondé’s music video, said he has a knack for connecting audiences through sound.

“I feel that, if anything, the DJ themselves or whoever is performing sets the scene for what

the night is going to be,” Colucci, a fourth-year studying marketing, said. “I have known Josh ever since he was DJing at APD, which is his frat, and I will say that every time he came on, the room literally lit up.”

After DJing at his fraternity more frequently, Kondé realized if he were to pursue DJing after college, he wouldn’t want to get stuck exclusively playing “Top 40” hits. Instead, he said he’s more interested in festivals or music-centered events where he can experiment with niche genres.

He transitioned into engineering his own shows, so he could avoid getting stuck playing popular party music, which led to Kondé headlining a show at Superior Ingredients in New York City.

“I’m moving more toward festivals and music events where it’s about the music and not just about a party,” Kondé said. “But to get your way up to being the headliner at a festival, you need to make sure your music perfectly fits in one of the stage’s categories. Still, sometimes, I’ll just let the song turn into whatever it wants to be.”

DJing has connected Kondé to many new people and experiences, though juggling professional aspirations in the music industry and creating music himself as a full-time student has proved to be challenging.

Despite the challenges, the experiences and opportunities have made the struggles worth the effort. Kondé opened for DaBaby in the Bryce Jordan Center, performed before the National Act at THON and soon will take the stage at Mojofest, a student-run music festival happening in April.

Hykina Cominskie, who’s previously seen him play several sets and helped to create his music video as well, said Kondé adjusts

sets to match the audience and curate the vibe of the room.

“He’s very diverse and will perform with multiple types of DJs or play multiple types of sounds,” Cominskie, a third-year studying graphic design and engineering design and innovation, said. “I’ve heard him DJ Latin night and I’ve also heard him at THON. So it’s pretty awesome to hear him go from both of his styles. He’s definitely very good at keeping the vibe and I feel like he’s always smiling behind things, so that makes me feel like I can smile as well.”

As Kondé progresses in his career and looks to his future, he plans to work in the music industry. He hopes to bring back the hype of older house tracks and invite new elements into the scene to set himself apart from other DJs.

“I’m trying to combine pop with real vocalists,” Kondé said. “While everyone’s using samples of other things, I’m getting new stuff from scratch with vocalists I find all over the U.S., combining the elements that I really like from indie with the emotional drops of EDM to turn them into a cohesive piece.”

As his time at Penn State nears its end, Kondé said his love of music has made the challenge and hardship bearable.

“Working with vocalists takes forever, and I have to make all the words from scratch and every single individual inflection of any of their notes is another thing I have to think about,” Kondé said. “It’s harder, but that’s what I want to get into. I want to make something that’s timeless.”

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Scraps & Skeins combines crafts with inclusivity

By Ally Sons
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

From colorful fabrics and yarns to locally sourced donations and employment, Scraps & Skeins something for everyone. Guided by the mission to “empower, reimagine and reuse,” the State College craft supply store is weaving a unique place in the community.

Located at 3042 Enterprise Dr., Scraps & Skeins proudly employs people with disabilities and mental health conditions. Operating under the umbrella of Strawberry Fields, a nonprofit that supports people with disabilities, the store uses the motto “reuse is beautiful,” hoping to reduce waste and save textiles from the landfill.

The fabric store began as a simple idea between some of the “founding mothers” in the summer of 2014, inspired by a small boutique in Ithaca, New York. The group of women, whose children live in the Strawberry Fields group homes, came together to start the company.

Together, they grew from a pop-up stand at the Millheim Fiber Festival, to a rented room across the street from their present location and officially opened their current doors in January 2015.

Ellen Campbell is the former board president at Strawberry Fields and one of the founding mothers. She said Scraps & Skeins is a great opportunity for both Strawberry Fields clients and others in the community.

“One of the biggest needs for people with disabilities is employment,” Campbell said.

Along with Scraps & Skeins, Strawberry Fields also works with another local company called Good Day Cafe, located at 286 W. Hamilton Ave.

“The social enterprise is our business that is focused on employing people with handicaps,” Campbell said. “Our employees will go through the application process through Strawberry Fields, and our managers will make the selection.”

Scraps & Skeins began as a strictly volunteer-based store and donation center, but now has seven employees. Its hours have also expanded as time has passed, now open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every

third Saturday. It also now has an online shop.

Campbell said the business’ goal is to provide employment opportunities and affordable supplies for the makers in

Centre County and beyond. The donations are run primarily by Tammy Sue, who said customers bring in donations that are then weighed and sorted by fabric type.

“We’ve rescued, it must be now, 20 tons from the landfill,” Sue said.

Sue emphasized the importance of making sure customers have a good experience. As soon as the store’s bell rings twice, Sue said she makes sure to be out there to get the cart and book all of their donations.

Employees like Dottie Ewing, one of the store’s managers, emphasized the importance of being out in the community and taking care of one’s mental health.

“It can positively impact you,” Ewing said.

Scraps & Skeins has seen many success stories, according to Ewing. She shared a story of a former hire who built a career with the company and eventually retired there and said watching people grow in their career is special.

Laura Klein, a retired biobehavioral health professor, is one of the volunteers at Scraps & Skeins. Many of her students needed volunteer hours when she worked at Penn State, so she would bring Strawberry Fields employees and clients into the classroom and send her students out to the organizations.

According to her coworkers, Klein also has a knack for the sales floor.

“Everything she touches sells,” Sue said. “She’ll touch it for a few minutes, and that thing? Sold.”

After 27 years of working at Penn State, volunteering at Scraps & Skeins was always high on her list of things to accomplish. Klein said it’s truly a great place, and she’s loved her time there.

“Penn Staters are very involved in Strawberry Fields, but now another way to support them is to come to Scraps & Skeins,” Klein said. “This is like the best kept secret in town.”

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