

The Daily Collegian

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Students protest attacks on Gaza

By Annelise Hanson
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State Students for Justice in Palestine organized an emergency protest at the Allen Street Gates in response to the recent attacks led by Israeli forces on Gaza. Following the collapse of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire under an intense air assault, local health officials reported hundreds of casualties.

"In the past 24 hours, we've seen Israel effectively end the ceasefire that would have been happening for the past two months, and they killed over 400 people in one day," Sarah Dweik, an executive board member of SJP, said.

Approximately 60 students and community members gathered, waving Palestinian flags and holding signs that read, "We will not stop nor stay silent, it's free Palestine, until Palestine is free," and "Long live the intifada."

Across the street, a single counter-protester stood holding a sign in support of Israel, while passing cars honked in solidarity with the demonstrators.

The protest featured several chants denouncing U.S. govern-



authorities and faced potential deportation for his participation in pro-Palestinian demonstrations on campus.

Daas then called attention to the university's "complicity" in the conflict.

"We know that as people that live within the United States, which is funding and enabling this genocide, and as students that go to a university which is still complicit in the genocide of the Palestinian people through their partnership with war profiteers, their investments, their study abroad," Daas said.

Ayah Rub said there was never a ceasefire and that it was only a period where Israel killed Palestinians in dozens instead of hundreds or thousands.

"When children and families were waking up to eat food, they were attacked with fires, missiles, bombings," Rub, a graduate student studying architectural engineering, said.

After the sun set, the demon-

strators dispersed, vowing to continue their activism in the days ahead.

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Students react to Dear Colleague Letter

Letter threatens race-based programs in U.S.

By Rubi Orellana
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

There have been several significant debates surrounding the Dear Colleague Letter issued by the U.S. Department of Education, which states that academic institutions must cut race-based programs.

"For example, colleges, universities and K-12 schools have routinely used race as a factor in admissions, financial aid, hiring, training and other institutional programming," the letter said. "In a shameful echo of a darker period in this country's history, many American schools and universities even encourage segregation by race at graduation ceremonies and in dormitories and other facilities."

Student leaders at Penn State shared their opinions and concerns regarding this letter, its impacts and the significance of multicultural organizations.

Daliah Garibay, president of the Mexican-American Student Association (MASA) believes compliance with this letter would create barriers to academic and financial success.

"The multicultural programs and DEI initiatives help foster inclusivity, amplify underrepresented voices and create a sense of belonging," Garibay, a third-year studying biology, said.

However, Garibay said concerns arise when individuals feel that such initiatives unfairly single out or stigmatize certain groups.

"In MASA, we value diverse opinions and a safe space for all students of color, but specifically Hispanic students," Garibay said.

DEI initiatives acknowledge ongoing disparities in education and ensure students from marginalized backgrounds are aware and have access to opportunities that are out of reach, according to Garibay.

At a predominantly white institution, Garibay said multicultural organizations have a purpose to create a sense of belonging for students to relate to one another.

"The letter reflects a lack of recognition to students that must

work twice as hard to get to the same place other students don't have to work nearly as hard for," Garibay said. "Students of color face cultural isolation and a lack of representation, which leads to alienation within academia."

There could be a decrease in higher level academic success by marginalized students and an underlying weak support system for students in future generations, according to Garibay.

Josiah Policard, treasurer of the Multicultural Undergraduate Law Association (MULA), believes the letter weaponizes the rhetoric multicultural organizations use to build communities, claiming instead that they are isolating people.

"I find that multicultural programs are pivotal in creating a feeling of community, and is a place where we can finally feel like we belong," Policard, a fourth-year studying political science, said. "Our white counterparts and people who do not share the same culture are always welcome to experience it with us."

With Penn State being a state-funded institution, Policard said he worries there will be a reduction in funding for opportunities for students of color and rollbacks in need-based admission and scholarship.

He said he worries a reduction may be seen in places like the Paul Robeson Cultural Center or academic departments like women's, gender and sexuality studies or African American studies.

The effects of diversity initiatives are complex and have helped people in disenfranchised communities, but DEI initiatives have statistically helped more white women, Policard said.

According to a McKinsey & Company study, white women hold nearly 22% of all C-suite positions, while women of color only hold 7%.

"While being a good leap towards equality, it still shows an imbalance in aid given to racial majority groups," Policard said.

Though it was recently revoked in FAQs released last Friday, the initial threat to cut federal funding would have severe impacts.

according to Policard.

Funding helps MULA host law school visits and its annual Diversity in Law conference. Without funds, Policard said the organization would struggle to provide a pre-law experience to Black and Brown students.

"Based on this kind of letter, I would really hope that what we see for future students is that they still have a means of building a real community," Policard said.

Michael Thieblemont, vice president of the Multicultural Innovators in Computer Sciences (MICS), disagrees with the letter and believes multicultural programs and DEI initiatives provide essential support.

"These programs don't create division, but help students who might otherwise feel isolated find a community," Thieblemont, a first-year studying computer science, said.

MICS exists because students in early computer science classes lacked a sense of belonging and needed a space to work and grow together, according to Thieblemont.

"If support for DEI programs is cut, it will impact clubs like MICS by reducing access to funding, networking and mentorship opportunities," he said. "Without these programs, many students would struggle to navigate college and break into competitive industries."

Thieblemont said programs that offer scholarships and target students from different backgrounds help those students access the same opportunities.

"Ignoring race does not make the system fair, it just ignores the existing inequalities," he said.

Thieblemont said multicultural student groups aren't about exclusion, but rather provide spaces where students from similar backgrounds can support each other in environments that weren't designed for them.

"Without targeted support, many students will struggle to access the same opportunities that others take for granted," Thieblemont said. "It will make organizations like MICS even more important, because they will be some of the only spaces left to provide mentorship and career development."

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Meet Bellisario's interim dean

By Claire Huss
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN



Courtesy of Jonathan McVerry

Interim Dean of Penn State Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications Denise Bortree.

Abdullah said Bortree brings her love of learning to the position of interim dean.

"She is a true academic — she loves the understanding and the knowledge in the world of communications," Abdullah said.

Although the role is not permanent, Abdullah is excited nonetheless to see Bortree continue Bellisario's forward momentum.

"I'd love for her to be able to step into this position and to continue to be that support, to provide additional ideas and knowledge and to make sure that we don't rest back on our laurels," Abdullah said.

Corroborating Abdullah's point, academic adviser Del Schwab taught a class with Bortree and complimented her love of learning.

"Technically, she is my boss's boss, but it never feels that way," Schwab said. "She always wants to learn from people. It's not like she just sits there dictating, she's always willing to learn."

With an upcoming accreditation visit in the fall, an expanding communications program and the shoes of Dean Hardin to fill, the new dean will need a strong foundation to work upon.

Bortree aims to do everything she can to "keep the trains running."

"My priorities are taking care of the faculty, taking care of the staff and making sure students have what they need," she said.

Despite her readiness for the new position, Bortree recognized the successes of Dean Hardin and her legacy in the college.

"Marie is beloved by everyone," Bortree said. "I don't think there's a single person in this college who's glad to see her go, which is highly unusual for a dean. She is amazing. It's a huge loss for us, but she's set us up for the future to continue to build and be successful as a college."

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‘Everyone feels like they belong’

Voice studies focus fosters personal growth

By Ashlyn Kafer
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State’s School of Music offers students the opportunity to engage with a primary focus in a variety of music-related disciplines, including voice studies.

The voice studies focus at Penn State is a tight-knit community with four faculty and a small student body, encouraging individuality and personal growth for each student.

The program is offered to both undergraduate and graduate students looking to further engage their skills in singing and incorporate it into their future careers.

Joseph Carney loved teaching growing up, but he wanted to incorporate his passion for musical performance into his future career after joining choir in high school.

“When I joined choir in ninth grade, I really found such a love for music education and singing,” Carney, a graduate student studying voice pedagogy and performance, said.

“That’s what led me to my bachelor’s in music education, and then I wanted to explore every single option that I could. This degree program allowed me to not only perform, but work on my teaching as well.”

Voice studies additionally offers students more specialization for their skill sets and resources to better their craft through lessons and outside activities.

Opportunities such as opera performances, weekly performances at local community spaces and extracurricular choirs are offered to students to engage them beyond their coursework.

First-year voice professor Dawn Pierce has appreciated the ways that the small-school feel of



Nora Vitale, a first-year studying music education, and professor Dawn Pierce perform a vocal exercise during a private lesson in the Music Building II in University Park, Pa.

the program still allows for students to branch out and receive immersive education.

“I really love the idea here that we can specialize in the voice area because we’re small,” Pierce, an assistant professor of music in voice and opera, said. “We have these amazing resources to collaborate and connect with across campus as a whole.”

The area functions by offering general classes, one-on-one lessons and group sessions, which tend to be specialized in areas like opera or technical skill application.

The one-on-one sessions allow for students to develop their art and create work that they are proud of based on personalized guidance from their instructors.

Ava Bernardo has had a love for singing after participating in musical theatre as a child, further

improving her skills with her instructors during the one-on-one sessions.

“In terms of private voice lessons, I get assigned a certain amount of songs each semester to learn and improve on,” Bernardo, a second-year studying music education, said. “In terms of voice specifically, it’s really about personal improvement and how you as a singer improve over the semesters.”

The program also requires its students to be able to sing in four languages, including English, German, Italian and French. Diction classes are offered to help master the phonetic and technical use of these languages.

Requirements like these help to make students more well-rounded and approach new avenues beyond previous experience they’ve had.

Connor Peterman has always enjoyed music, playing several instruments throughout his life, but he has found enjoyment in developing in new areas within the School of Music, such as language.

“Throughout freshman year, and this year, I really dug into the German language and the Italian language,” Peterman, a second-year studying music education, said. “But being able to explore that and see the growth from where I’ve started to now has been truly remarkable.”

This program utilizes its small numbers to encourage a strong relationship between the professors and their students, which works both ways, as Pierce reflected upon in her first year at Penn State.

“It’s a true community of individuals where everyone feels

like they belong and they have a space at the table,” Pierce said. “They are all so supportive of each other, and of me. I was very humbled by how the students, even from day one, supported me.”

The students are incredibly fond of this relationship, finding it breeds less competition and encourages growth throughout the entire program.

In his master’s program, Carney has felt this sense of community and looks forward to going to school to learn every day with the support of both faculty and his peers.

“I feel a strong sense of community, I feel a strong sense of support. I don’t feel competition, which is found at other schools,” Carney said. “I really feel a genuine support system from my peers and my teachers that makes me excited to go to school every day.”

The small feel and personalized instruction makes the students involved with voice studies proud to be a part of the program, encouraging those who have an interest in singing to reach out to professors and look into the programs.

Bernardo has found in her time as a voice studies student that the community has helped to not only allow vulnerability with her peers, but enhance her overall musicianship.

“In a big school, it’s really nice to have that small community that will really push you to become the best musician you can be,” Bernardo said. “It provides you with all of the opportunities that you can possibly want in order to do so.”

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COVID policies 5 years later

By Kiera Ginn
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

ing to Mike Dawson, assistant director of World Campus communications.

“I don’t remember that Zoom was a big part of our day-to-day stuff,” Dawson said. “(Then) the pandemic happened, and that was the way to replicate that in-person interaction, and then it became a must-have tool.”

Smith said Zoom provided another way for students to meet with advisers in addition to in-person meetings coming out of the pandemic. He said it was a way to connect people.

“Zoom allowed for advising to continue uninterrupted during the pandemic, and then most advising offices across Penn State as a whole have retained some aspect of remote appointment possibility,” Smith said.

Admissions became test optional as a result of standardized testing accessibility for high school students during the pandemic, according to tour guide coordinator and admissions counselor Brandon McDonald.

“We moved to test optional during the pandemic due to access to the test,” McDonald said. “This was done to not hinder students’ admissions during the pandemic.”

Test optional admissions policies for Penn State are still in place up to applicants applying for Fall 2026, and the Faculty Senate has yet to determine whether the policy will be extended or expire, according to McDonald.

“The Faculty Senate looks through the data and academic profiles of students admitted through test optional to see if they want to continue the practice,” McDonald said.

Pollack said most students who utilized online and World Campus courses moved back to their original campus coming out of the pandemic.

“In general, the residential student interest in taking online courses has increased,” Pollack said.

“More (students) are doing that today because of the increased awareness from the pandemic.”

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Courtesy of Katherine C. Pearson

Katherine C. Pearson speaks at a ceremony with the Fulbright Scholar organization and University of Ottawa to celebrate the signing of an agreement to extend the program.

Fulbright winners reflect

By Veronica Figg
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Established to foster connections between Americans and people from other countries, the Fulbright Program has given over 400,000 students and professionals the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research abroad.

Penn State produced the second most faculty Fulbright scholars in the nation and was named a top producer of student Fulbright scholars in the 2024-25 year.

Nitya Devireddy is one of the Fulbright student scholars this year.

Devireddy, a fourth-year medical student, was excited to win the award and use it to research diabetic retinopathy in Jamaica this year. By talking to medical professionals, she hopes to understand the barriers to diabetic retinopathy screenings in Jamaica.

“I applied for a Fulbright my senior year of college, and I didn’t get it,” Devireddy said. “My advice would be don’t be afraid to try again.”

Lindsay Walsh is currently studying in Jordan with the help of her Fulbright award.

Walsh, a fifth-year student pursuing a dual title in comparative politics and women’s, gender and sexuality studies, said the Undergraduate Research and Fellowships Mentoring Office

gave her a lot of support during the application process — especially Director Tineka Lebrun.

For her dissertation, Walsh is looking at differences in political ambition between men and women. She is conducting survey research with The Center for Strategic Studies at The University of Jordan and interviewing candidates who ran for the country’s elections in September 2024.

Walsh’s advice for aspiring Fulbright scholars is to “try to connect with Fulbright alumni, or your professors, or a mentor who is willing to read through statements, to help you read and write your application materials and give you feedback.”

Professor Katherine C. Pearson at Penn State Dickinson Law said she was introduced to the program by her colleague, Laurel Terry. Terry, Dickinson Law professor and chair emerita, has received three Fulbright awards over the course of her career.

Pearson has used her 2024-25 award to research drug treatment programs for Alzheimer’s and helped develop an app to provide information on community resources for people with the disease.

“These research fellowships have been wonderful for my career and wonderful for my ongoing research,” Pearson said.

Terry advises aspiring Fulbright scholars to apply for the full academic year and reread their application proposal many times before submitting it.

Associate professor of history at Penn State Behrend Dr. Amy Carney is currently utilizing her award for research in Austria. Her research revolves around the history of two Jewish families, one Austrian and the other German.

Carney advises Fulbright scholar aspirants to visit the Fulbright resource center on campus as soon as possible so staff members can assist with putting together a good resume.

“Start early,” Lebrun said. “It’s a competitive award, and they get a lot of applicants, and it takes time to craft a good application.”

The primary source of funding for the program is an annual appropriation made by the U.S. Congress to the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

According to AP News, Fulbright program funding from the U.S. government is currently frozen. There have been no updates as of Wednesday for when the funding will be unfrozen.

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BLACK HAIR CARE

By Gianna St. Thomas
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

College becomes a home away from home for many young adults — but some everyday essentials can be harder to find, especially for Black students at a predominately white institution like Penn State.

From haircuts to loc retwists, many Black students tap into their entrepreneurial spirit to provide hair care services for their peers.

Courtney Richardson specializes in locs, box braids and other protective styles.

Richardson, a fourth-year studying biobehavioral health, has done her own hair since high school. Once she got to college, she did her roommate's and friends' hair. Through word of mouth, it eventually grew into a business.

"I feel like it helps the community because hair care is taking care of yourself, and college is really stressful," Richardson said. "Being able to help students take care of themselves while they're studying for exams and stuff makes me feel good."

She highlights her work on her Instagram page, @crownedbycourtney, and uses the Booksy app for people to book appointments.

"When clients decide to start their loc journey, it's also a self-love journey, because they're learning how to love their hair how it is," Richardson said. "Every time I help a person with that, I'm playing a big role in their hair care journey."



Courtesy of Elijah Vega

Elijah Vega, a self-taught barber, cuts others' hair as a way to create relationships with others and advance his professional and personal goals.

After developing her brand during her second year of college, she now has an established client base, with over a 1,000 followers on Instagram.

Elijah Vega is a barber who cuts people's hair in his apartment complex or in his clients' homes.

Vega, a fourth-year studying management information systems, specializes in haircuts such as low fades, all-around fades and lineups.

"I need to learn how to cut hair in a way that I'm catering towards people who don't have (specialized barbers) up here because I know there's not that many barbershops," he said. "They upcharge a lot of the college students here, so I wanted

to be the person who was able to provide a semi-affordable haircut while also specializing in specific hair types and different hair textures."

After a steep learning curve cutting his own hair during his sophomore year, Vega gained confidence in 2022 and began cutting hair for others. Vega takes appointments via the link in his Instagram bio @tempfaded.

"I've always been a natural entrepreneur," Vega said. "I've done a lot of things like resold clothes and shoes. At one point, I was reselling cars. So when I started cutting hair, that's what everybody knew me as."

He said including his barber business on his resume helped him land an internship, allowing

him to advance his career and grow personally.

"I had relationships with people that I never even knew I would have talked to, but then they will book an appointment with me, and we'll have a full-blown conversation like we were best of friends," Vega said. "There's a lot of relationships that I built from this business that I would never have obtained if I didn't start to market myself."

Trinity Thompson, who focuses on a variety of services from sew-ins to twists, created an Instagram page for her business this year, @trinstouch.

"My mom actually went to cosmetology school, and I was very tender-headed as a kid,"

Thompson, a second-year studying nursing, said. "She only did my hair, so I kind of picked up on it from seeing and feeling her do it."

Having grown up in a predominantly Black area, she said she felt culture shock when she arrived at Penn State. She realized a lot of people needed the service she was offering.

"Black hair care means a lot," Thompson said. "I don't want to say that hair is our whole identity, but it is a really big part of who we are as Black people. We have a very unique hair texture, and it needs a lot of proper care."

She added that it can be hard for Black people to take care of their hair without prior knowledge.

"Especially with Black girls, they struggle a lot with dealing with their natural hair because of how curly and thick it can be," Thompson said. "So it means a lot in terms of embracing the texture and all the different styles we can do."

Thompson recalled receiving a message on Instagram from a girl seeking hair care advice. She didn't own a blow dryer or know which products to use, so Thompson guided her through it.

"She had no idea how to braid. Although it was such a simple style — just two braids, but she didn't have the resources," Thompson said. "To be able to offer that to her and give her that same joy and happiness reaffirmed why I do it in the first place."

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Best Boba?

By Justina Geosits
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Boba is a delicacy State College is lucky to have access to — a justified sweet treat in the middle of the day and a refreshing reward.

If you want the inside scoop on what's new and delicious in bubble tea news for Central Pennsylvania, listen to this list for what's hot and what's not.

Here are the updated rankings around campus

Teadori

By far, Teadori takes the cake with a whopping 4.9 stars on Google and unique, flavorful drinks leaving a serious dent in your wallet.

It's a cozy shop with the ability

to customize the sweetness level of your drink to your liking. It offers any combination with tons of drink additions, from tapioca pearls to crystal boba.

Teadori has a bustling atmosphere well into the late hours of the night with games, music and a shy little dog who makes occasional guest appearances greeting customers.

Mr. Wish

Coming in at No. 2 is a staple downtown, Mr. Wish.

This beloved boba chain has the best fruity flavored teas in town, making you wish State College was a tropical beach town.

Many of its signature drinks include fresh fruit, perfect for a

little refreshment after class. Its mango green tea base is a familiar favorite to grab with your friends for a cute little study date.

Cafe Wow

One might call Cafe Wow a hidden gem. Hiding below the Urban Outfitters on East College Avenue, this shop has top-tier desserts and an impressive selection of boba drinks.

From this little shop, satisfy your sweet tooth with one of the shop's milk teas, specifically taro is a fan favorite. It honestly tastes like Fruity Pebbles and Lucky Charms had a baby.

The sweeter the tea, the sweeter the reward.

Side note: Their crepe cake is divine. Try it.

The Whale Tea

Aside from the aesthetic interior of the shop, The Whale Tea has to be on the list. In a very convenient area on East Beaver

Avenue on the ground floor of The Edge, this shop is the cutest thing I've ever seen.

The bubble tea keeps the trend in line with the vibe of the shop — adorable, cute, sweet and tasty.

The boba itself is packed with flavor and is great for a little pit stop in the middle of the day.

Momotaro

Down by the west side of campus, you might come across this pricey place. Did I say pricey? I meant pretty.

In all seriousness, this place is great for pictures and a cool backdrop if that's what you're looking for, but the boba is just alright.

There's lots to its selection, but unless you have a severe attachment to this place, I'd recommend one of the other options higher on the list.

Your wallet will thank you.

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Graphic by Rohan Karunakaran

In downtown State College, there are many Boba places that provide a sweet treat for students.

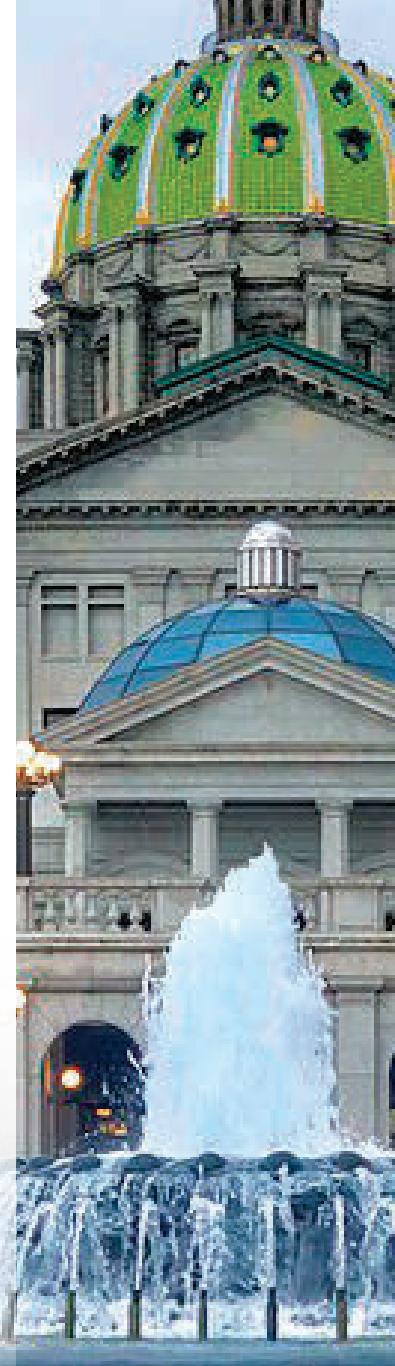
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Best sandwiches in State College

By Carolena Bongi
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Let's get one thing straight — I'm a simple sandwich eater. No fancy toppings, no complicated orders, just turkey, cheese, lettuce and mayo on a roll.

If you're like me and appreciate the simple joy of a well-made sandwich, you'll want to know where to find the best one at Penn State. Well, you're in luck, because I ate the same turkey and cheese sandwich all across campus so you don't have to.

On A Roll

My journey began at On A Roll, East Dining Hall's sandwich spot. The name alone gave me hope — I mean, if you're going to name yourself after bread, you better deliver.

The verdict is simple: it was decent. It had everything I asked for, so I can't complain. The roll was soft, the turkey and cheese were there and the mayo did its job.

It wasn't life-changing, but when you're hungry and meal points are your currency, it gets the job done.

McLanahan's

Next, I made my way downtown to McLanahan's. Known for selling everything from Penn State gear to late-night snacks, I had high hopes for their sandwich game.

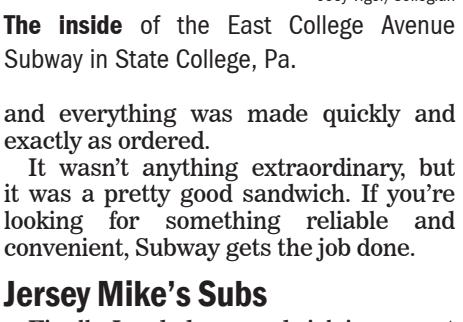
To my surprise, this might have been one of the best sandwiches. The bread was incredible, the turkey and cheese had so much flavor, and the mayo-to-lettuce ratio was on point.

McLanahan's, you have my respect — for a place that sells everything from snacks to school supplies, I did not expect you to deliver one of the best sandwiches I've had.

Subway

Subway is exactly what you expect. No surprises, just a solid, no-fuss sandwich.

The turkey was decent, the roll was soft



The inside of the East College Avenue Subway in State College, Pa.

Joey Tiger/Collegeian

and everything was made quickly and exactly as ordered.

It wasn't anything extraordinary, but it was a pretty good sandwich. If you're looking for something reliable and convenient, Subway gets the job done.

Jersey Mike's Subs

Finally, I ended my sandwich journey at Jersey Mike's Subs. Unlike the on-campus options, Jersey Mike's is off-campus, meaning you would have to drive there.

But trust me, it's worth the trip. The employees slice the meat right in front of you like some kind of deli-based performance, and the quality is unmatched. The bread has that perfect balance of soft yet structured; it was truly chef's kiss.

This was the sandwich of all sandwiches — the ultimate reward for any sandwich lover willing to venture beyond campus limits.

And there you have it. If you're a fellow simple sandwich enthusiast, now you know where to go.

If you prefer more extravagant subs with a million toppings, well ... I admire your ambition. But as for me, I'll be happily sticking to my turkey and cheese.

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MY VIEW | JADZIA SANTIAGO

As tough as nails

October 2023. I'm listening to "Lavender Haze" by Taylor Swift and absolutely fuming.

Like, I'm genuinely 2 inches away from steam coming out of my ears. And Santiago yet, to my roommate at the time and any other observer, I look totally normal — I'm sitting cross-legged on the floor, meticulously filing and painting my nails.

Unsurprisingly, I have many anecdotes like that — not necessarily when I'm one minor inconvenience from flipping my lid — but when I'm feeling something intensely, and my immediate instinct is to reach for my nail polish.

Since I started college, my nails have become a part of my identity and a method of self-expression, almost a signature feature. I often joke that the state of my nails is indicative of how I'm doing mentally.

If they're short and bare ... I don't want to talk about it.

All jokes aside, painting my nails allows me to put my feelings into colors — sparkling electric blues, gentle pinks and rose golds and my signature emerald greens.

It's fun to pick out outfits that match my manicure or vice versa, and it's even more fun when other people notice. Back when I was working the early morning shift at a coffee shop, the compliments from customers made the long hours standing at the register just a bit more bearable.

I also don't often have time for self-care outside of my regular maintenance, so there's something therapeutic about doing my nails. I love the process of it — brushing on the oil, followed by the hardener and the layers of color, finishing with a shiny topcoat.

As I said in my eczema column, I don't often feel proud of my hands, but I feel better when I turn my nails into gems.

Of course, though, to approximately nobody's surprise, most people I know think my slight obsession with my fingernails of all things is a bit

odd, bordering on vain.

Regardless, they still indulge me. Every Christmas, I always open at least one package to reveal the new colors I meticulously picked out, or receive a gift card to grab them myself.

I've probably spent — and cost my loved ones — a wild amount of money on my small army of glass bottles. But they understand that we all need those little things that keep us grounded, especially in college.

That's what this little hobby of mine is all about, really. It's a process that keeps me present within myself and helps me remember who I am.

It's also probably the reason several people haven't been punted into the sun —

Kidding, kidding. But in all seriousness, when you're in college, it's easy and necessary to get caught up in the big things.

"Painting my nails allows me to put my feelings into colors — sparkling blues, gentle pinks and my signature emerald greens."

Jadzia Santiago

However, that doesn't mean you should neglect the details, even if they seem silly. Over your time here, you'll often be climbing mountains, making steps with no end in sight.

That makes the little victories all the more important. For me, watching my nails grow from the oils, getting the last manicure out of a bottle before buying a new one and putting the topcoat on over a gorgeous color makes me feel accomplished.

If you need an illustration, let me take you back to October 2023. Not long after I angrily painted my nails

to the tune of "Lavender Haze," I helped my organization put on a poetry slam.

I was hosting, which meant that even though I wasn't performing per se, I still had to be charismatic and engage the audience. Needless to say, I was scared out of my mind.

During preparations, one of my fellow executive board members took one look at my hands and said, "You, nails, open this."

Whether that was a fragmented sentence or an attempt at a nickname (which didn't stick), I still don't know. But I do know how it made me feel, which was weirdly empowered.

Regardless of how I was going to fare hosting, something I'd put work into was being noticed. And even though the pictures from that slam haunt me (I may be good at writing, but I'm far from photogenic), my manicure looked great.

So, don't ignore the little things, whatever it is that makes you happy — whether it's a craft, a beauty routine, etc. In your nervous moments, they're the things that remind you that you're tough as nails.

Jadzia Santiago is a columnist and DEI committee member for The Daily Collegian. She's a third-year double-majoring in English and communication arts and sciences. Email her at jas9280@psu.edu and follow her on X @JadziaASantiago.



October 2023. I'm listening to "Lavender Haze" by Taylor Swift and absolutely fuming.

Like, I'm genuinely 2 inches away from steam coming out of my ears. And Santiago yet, to my roommate at the time and any other observer, I look totally normal — I'm sitting cross-legged on the floor, meticulously filing and painting my nails.

Unsurprisingly, I have many anecdotes like that — not necessarily when I'm one minor inconvenience from flipping my lid — but when I'm feeling something intensely, and my immediate instinct is to reach for my nail polish.

Since I started college, my nails have become a part of my identity and a method of self-expression, almost a signature feature. I often joke that the state of my nails is indicative of how I'm doing mentally.

If they're short and bare ... I don't want to talk about it.

All jokes aside, painting my nails allows me to put my feelings into colors — sparkling blues, gentle pinks and my signature emerald greens.

It's fun to pick out outfits that match my manicure or vice versa, and it's even more fun when other people notice. Back when I was working the early morning shift at a coffee shop, the compliments from customers made the long hours standing at the register just a bit more bearable.

I also don't often have time for self-care outside of my regular maintenance, so there's something therapeutic about doing my nails. I love the process of it — brushing on the oil, followed by the hardener and the layers of color, finishing with a shiny topcoat.

As I said in my eczema column, I don't often feel proud of my hands, but I feel better when I turn my nails into gems.

Of course, though, to approximately nobody's surprise, most people I know think my slight obsession with my fingernails of all things is a bit

odd, bordering on vain.

Regardless, they still indulge me. Every Christmas, I always open at least one package to reveal the new colors I meticulously picked out, or receive a gift card to grab them myself.

I've probably spent — and cost my loved ones — a wild amount of money on my small army of glass bottles. But they understand that we all need those little things that keep us grounded, especially in college.

That's what this little hobby of mine is all about, really. It's a process that keeps me present within myself and helps me remember who I am.

It's also probably the reason several people haven't been punted into the sun —

Kidding, kidding. But in all seriousness, when you're in college, it's easy and necessary to get caught up in the big things.

"Painting my nails allows me to put my feelings into colors — sparkling blues, gentle pinks and my signature emerald greens."

Jadzia Santiago

However, that doesn't mean you should neglect the details, even if they seem silly. Over your time here, you'll often be climbing mountains, making steps with no end in sight.

That makes the little victories all the more important. For me, watching my nails grow from the oils, getting the last manicure out of a bottle before buying a new one and putting the topcoat on over a gorgeous color makes me feel accomplished.

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Cartoon by Ethan Capitano

MY VIEW | AMELIA HOUCK

Impact of political discourse, action abroad

After being in Greece for one month, I've learned about the political climate, culture and how Greeks view American democracy and politics.

While enjoying a nice dinner with friends on the coast in Nafplio, a woman approached us, recognizing our foreign accents. She asked where we were from, and we said the United States, particularly, the Philadelphia area.

Immediately after hearing we were from the U.S., she asked how we were coping with the "orange man" — her words exactly — being back in office.

She started explaining how she's Greek but grew up in England, going into detail about how she believes British politicians are focused on serving themselves and catering only to the wealthy, and how this is the political climate she's used to.

We discussed American politics, and she clearly stated how she's horrified by Trump's new policies, specifically the firing of about 400 Federal Aviation Administration employees.

As the conversation came to a close, the woman was most interested in how we, as Americans, feel about the Trump administration and how rapidly our govern-

ment is changing with right-wing policies being put into place.

It was fascinating to hear a European perspective on U.S. politics, and this interaction has stuck with me since. But it's not the only interaction I've had.

While exploring the town of Sparta, the students in my program and I entered a mosaic shop and interacted with the store owner, a woman from Canada. She explained how she grew up in Canada and moved to Greece to open her small business in recent years.

Once hearing we were American students studying abroad in Athens, she immediately began showcasing her distraught that Trump was attempting to start a trade war with Canada.

"We've been neighbors and allies for years," she said with distress. Our group empathized with her and chatted briefly about how shocking it was to hear this news abroad.

With Greek politics and government, despite still attempting to pull out of an economic deficit, I've been impressed at the resil-

ience and activism of Greek citizens.

On February 28, 2023, two trains traveling in Greece collided in a fatal accident that killed 57 people, many of whom were university students. It was the deadliest railway accident in Greece.

Now, two years after the collision, protests have broken out calling for national politicians to be held accountable. On February 28, 2025, public transportation and local shops shut down as a form of protest.

With much speculation around the cause of the rail crash, many Greeks believe the government is at fault for the tragedy and is concealing information from the public. I was impressed with the commitment and dedication of many Greek citizens, as virtually all businesses closed and many took to the streets to voice their outrage.

The protests were a reminder of just how much government influence — or a lack thereof — can affect individual livelihoods abroad and in America.

Amelia Houck is an abroad columnist for The Daily Collegian, a d year student. She's a third-year studying history and public relations. Email her at ah6635@psu.edu and follow her on X @AmeliaHouck.



Courtesy of Amelia Houck

A bench and a lamp post sit on a bank overlooking the water in Poros, Greece.

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Penn State's Arts Ambassadors

By Ava Krysko
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

From professional development to student engagement, the Arts Ambassadors help to prepare students in the College of Arts and Architecture for success in the art world.

Robin Bierly, the director of student engagement in the College of Arts and Architecture and the advisor of the group, described what the organization is and the benefits it yields for students.

"It's a group of students who are dedicated to making the experience of being a student of Arts and Architecture better," Bierly said. "They're a welcoming committee, and it is a place for people to fit in and belong."

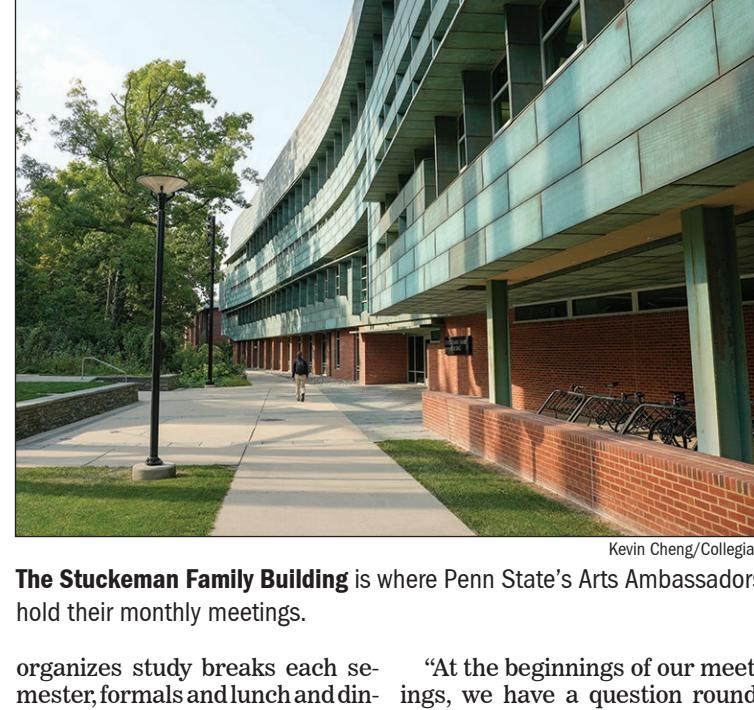
Bierly also explained that students in the organization can become tour guides, student panelists and early welcome leaders.

"The Thursday and Friday before school starts, those students have a picnic for our brand new students, and then they lead team-building, which they are trained to do by Shaver's Creek Environmental Center," Bierly said.

There are also opportunities to meet other students in the college, as the organization holds socials usually once a month.

"In December, we went to Light Up Night," Bierly said. "We did a pumpkin-carving contest in the fall, and in the past, students have gone thrift shopping."

On top of that, the group



Kevin Cheng/Collegian

The Stuckeman Family Building is where Penn State's Arts Ambassadors hold their monthly meetings.

organizes study breaks each semester, formals and lunch and dinner sessions that include cookie decorating, food and Mario Kart.

Bierly said the program is open to anyone in the College of Arts and Architecture, and students can decide how much they want to be involved.

"If they just come to the monthly meetings, we're happy to see them with the hope that eventually they want to get involved, but it can be frightening when you're a first-year," Bierly said.

Bierly said one of the highlights of advising the organization is the icebreakers they do before each meeting and getting to interact with students.

"At the beginnings of our meetings, we have a question round, and it's really fun to hear what the students are up to," Bierly said. "I've also really enjoyed seeing students get more involved and take on leadership roles."

To sum up all of the numerous opportunities students can obtain from Arts Ambassadors, Bierly describes the program as "a community-building leadership volunteer organization that helps to represent the College of Arts and Architecture."

Andrea Panaiteescu, a co-chair in the Admitted Student Events Committee and a chair of the Pre-test Destress/Festivus Committee, said she enjoys the

sense of community that comes from being involved in Arts Ambassadors.

"I get to work with so many people who are doing so many cool things," Panaiteescu, a third-year studying digital arts and media design and advertising/public relations, said. "I can't believe that I'm surrounded by so many hard workers and people who do things that I could never dream of doing."

Panaiteescu said that Arts Ambassadors has helped her gain more leadership positions.

"I have become a lot more confident talking to a group, especially when it comes to giving tours to prospective students and their parents," Panaiteescu said. "Having the opportunity to be co-chair and chair on some of the committees is really valuable leadership experience."

Mack Leach, a co-chair on the Admitted Student Events Committee, said the best part of being an Arts Ambassador is all of the connections that can be made.

"It's been really cool getting to know everyone from different aspects of the College of Arts and Architecture," Leach, a first-year studying professional photography and journalism, said. "I'm now kind of close with the girl who gave me my admitted students event tour last year, so it's cool to see the behind the scenes of all that."

Leach said stepping into a position on a committee has been gratifying as well.

"Even though I'm a first-year, I

had the ability to get into a leadership position," Leach said. "Being able to teach other people about leading a panel or a tour has been a really cool experience, and I'm extremely grateful."

Brody Ivy, a co-chair of the Admitted Student Events Committee, said he loves being in Arts Ambassadors and thinks it's fun to work with students from other majors within the college.

"Through being an ambassador, I have been able to network with upperclassmen in my major, which makes it easier to get through my classes because I have a way to reach out to those who have (taken the classes)," Ivy, a first-year studying architecture, said.

Ivy fervently recommends joining Arts Ambassadors because of how enjoyable it is.

"If anyone was even considering joining, I say go for it," Ivy said. "It is so much fun, there's always food and there is always some sort of event coming up that I can go to with friends."

Ivy also said he has gained a lot of experience from being a co-chair on a committee.

"Being in this committee allows me to understand how large events are run, and it allows me to grow within the club, as I look up to those who are leaders," Ivy said. "I love Penn State and its architecture program, and I want to share that love with those who are considering the program."

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Reviewing Starbucks' spring selections

By Talia Rittenhouse
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Spring break is only days away, and Starbucks is here to prepare Penn State students with its new spring selections.

There are multiple Starbucks locations downtown, one in the HUB-Robeson Center and another in the Pattee and Paterno Library, where students can purchase spring lattes, matcha, refreshers and food items.

I tried four of the spring drinks, all in their grande size. I really enjoyed two of the drinks, and even though the others were not my favorites, I still believe they were worth the try.

Iced Cherry Chai Latte

Starbucks' new Iced Cherry Chai looks like Valentine's Day in a cup. The beige-colored chai and the light pink cherry cold foam builds the base to this drink, as the pink, red and white sprinkles are the cherry on top.

This drink brings me nostalgia. The cold foam tastes like the whipped cream and cherry on the milkshakes I would get at a local diner as a kid. I really enjoyed this flavor in combination with the taste of chai, a mix I didn't expect to work this well together.

The cinnamon in the chai and cherry cold foam complement each other with their spice and sweetness. I associate chai with the fall season, so I enjoyed trying this drink with a spring spin on it.

I plan to get this drink again, even as a religious coffee drinker.

Rating: 9/10

Iced Lavender Oatmilk Latte

The taste of this latte completely demonstrates the stereotypical idea of spring — a field of flowers with sunlight shining on it.

Within the Iced Lavender Oatmilk Latte, the distinct taste of lavender is noticed throughout each sip, as if the coffee roast was lavender itself. The lavender comes from the added flavor, resting on the bottom of the cup in its dark purple hue.

This drink was not my favorite because I don't love lavender. For me, it was a little too strong and flowery, whereas with my coffee, I like it to have a caramel or vanilla flavor to it.

That being said, I think that customers who enjoy tea with a flower taste or love lavender should give this drink a try.

Rating: 4/10

Blackberry Sage Lemonade Refresher

This deep magenta drink brings the flavor from spring to summer in a great way. The idea of summer comes from its tang and sweetness that you taste all at once. The sage is not as distinct as the blackberry flavor, but it's still there and brings a nice subtle hint of spring.

The Blackberry Sage Lemonade Refresher is a new favorite of mine that I will purchase again. It reminds me of the taste of a blue raspberry lollipop, but without the pure sugar flavor.

The burst of blackberry and the light sage make this drink very sweet and flavorful as a whole, and they complement each other well — another combination I didn't expect together but am pleasantly surprised with.

Rating: 10/10

Iced Lavender Cream Oatmilk Matcha

This sage green beverage is perfect for matcha-drinkers and lavender fans. The sweetness of the cold foam and the cream added to the drink are swirled together with the matcha tea.

The Iced Lavender Cream



Kayla McCullough/Collegian

Starbucks' spring menu drinks sit on a table on March 5, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

Oatmilk Matcha allows its tea flavor to be subtle but also shine through at the right times between the lavender cold foam.

Again, this lavender cold foam brought a great sense of spring through its more floral taste and pale purple color.

In my opinion, the drink was a little too sweet, but I often think this about different drinks and foods.

I'm not a matcha fan, so this

drink unfortunately was not for me, but for those who love matcha, I think this drink could be perfect.

From what I have heard about other matcha orders, I think this drink is an interesting spin on the tea through the added lavender and cream.

Rating: 2/10

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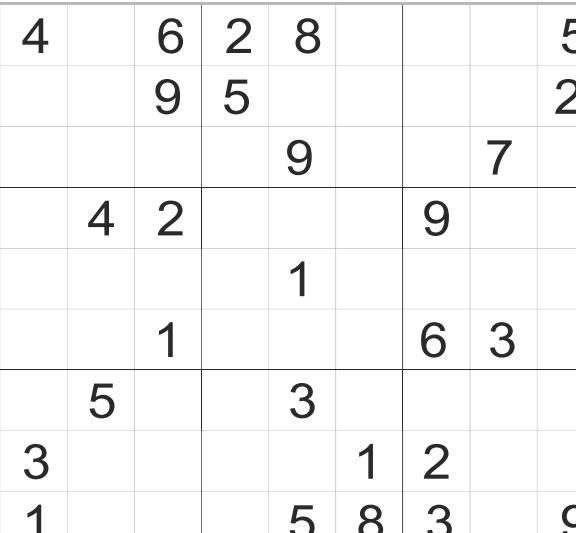
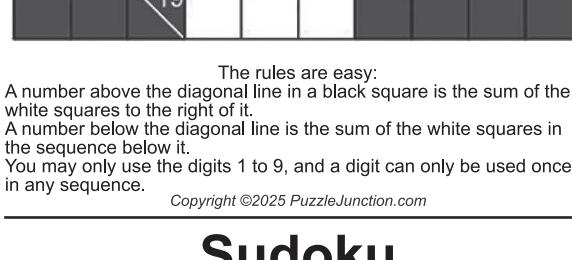
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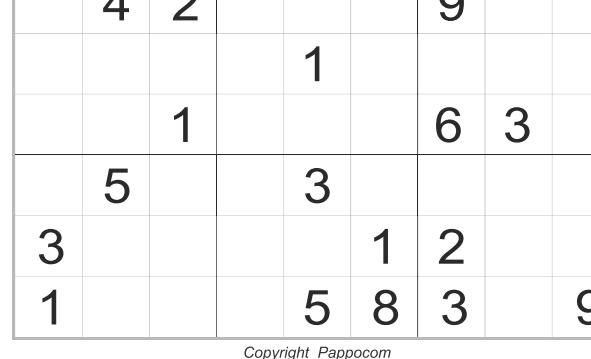
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Stair
Stool
Wise

Kakuro



Sudoku



Crossword



Across
1 Winter warmer
6 Bridge site
10 Take out of the freezer
14 Kind of anesthetic
15 Curved molding
16 Like some loads
17 Makarova of tennis
18 Way to go
19 Aunt Bee's charge
20 Skill in an occupation or trade
23 Pea jacket?
24 Clear the tables
25 Small salmon
27 Willow twig
30 Hovered
32 Run through
33 Crooked
35 Argentina president, once
38 First-class
39 Bubbly drinks
41 King of the road
42 California's San Bay
44 Make eyes at
45 "You got that right!"
46 Heavenly
48 Decimal system founder
50 He took two tablets
51 Prospector's need

52 Aquatic shucker
53 Music genre
60 Guisado cooker
62 Flexible armor of the Middle Ages
63 Bone-chilling
64 Within earshot
65 Film director — C. Kenton
66 Edge tools
67 Antitoxins
68 Tear apart
69 Crucifixes
Down
1 Knocked off, in a way
2 Wyo. neighbor
3 Tennis whiz
4 Colonel or captain
5 Hot dessert?
6 Bulls have them
7 Prima donna problems
8 Mother of Levi and Judah
9 Physician
10 Wee hour
11 Stadium for horse shows
12 Parting word south of the border
13 Garden intruder
21 Atmospheres

Wrestling for history

Penn State fields 10 wrestlers at NCAA Championships

By Evan Smith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State is almost certainly going to win the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Team Championship. Its lineup is being tabbed as potentially the best yet in the Cael Sanderson era.

Their chance to live up to that hype comes this weekend, where the target will be becoming the first team in history to consist of 10 All-Americans.

Here is each wrestler's path to a history-making tournament.

125: Luke Lilledahl

After an upset of Matt Ramos en route to becoming a Big Ten champion, the true freshman is the betting favorite to win the national title as the No. 1 seed.

Luke Lilledahl looked like he'd evolved past his two-loss form in the tournament, earning the top placement in the rankings.

However, Penn State saw this same path last year with Braeden Davis, who went 1-2 at the NCAA Championships.

Three true contenders oppose Lilledahl in the bracket. No. 2 Ramos, who he beat, was the dominant force at 125 throughout the season. He can't be overlooked despite the head-to-head.

No. 5 Richard Figueroa out of Arizona State is the defending champion. He was upset in the first round of the Big 12 Championships but dominated his way back to third place.

NC State's Vincent Robinson, who's seeded No. 4, looked like the best freshman in the weight class until tournament season rolled around. He only lost to one opponent in his 19-2 season and



Jacob DeLuca/Collegian

Penn State's Braeden Davis wrestles Ohio State's Nic Bouzakis, losing by pin during the third place consolation round of the Big Ten Championships on March 8, 2025.

will look to see Lilledahl in the semifinals.

133: Braeden Davis

Davis is the lowest-seeded Nittany Lion sitting at No. 8, which would still tab the sophomore as an All-American.

Davis has struggled with consistency this season, which doesn't bode well entering a deep tournament where one mistake can cost him his spot.

We saw it in the Big Ten tournament, when Nic Bouzakis rolled him over and pinned him.

Luckily, Davis has competed with all of the top contenders in Lukas Byrd, Drake Ayala and Nasir Bailey, so he knows what to expect from the upper levels of competition.

Davis has the widest

projectable range of outcomes among the lineup, potentially placing anywhere from outside the top 10 to a top-three finish.

141: Beau Bartlett

Bartlett is the No. 2 seed after getting upset by Vance VomBaur in Evanston last weekend, but he is the betting odds favorite to take home the 141-pound trophy.

Seeded ahead of him is Big Ten champion Brock Hardy, who Bartlett beat earlier this season. Bartlett has shown the ability to beat everyone in this class outside of VomBaur so far.

The contenders against him are highlighted by Bartlett's noted rival, No. 3 Jesse Menendez, and 2023 national champion No. 8 Andrew Alirez of Northern Colorado.

Bartlett is the top contender in a loaded class to end his career with the elusive national championship.

149: Shayne Van Ness

Similar to Bartlett, Van Ness is the betting odds favorite at his weight class despite not being the top-ranked contender, sitting at no. 3.

The top end of the class in the Big Ten, featuring Van Ness, No. 5 Kyle Parco and No. 2 Ridge Lovett, traded wins throughout the season. Lovett ended up with the Big Ten championship belt around his waist.

Van Ness will likely be an All-American, but this weight class is very top-heavy, meaning a championship will be a great task.

Caleb Henson is the undefeated favorite to take the title, but Van Ness is seeded to avoid him until

the finals if he makes it there.

157: Tyler Kasak

Tyler Kasak stands alone atop a weight class that many viewed as unpredictable entering the season, and for most of it, it was.

Now, Kasak is the heavy favorite, with a series of contenders looking him down. There are 10 wrestlers in the discussion for the top three in this weight class.

No. 2 Meyer Shapiro has been limited this year but is the highest-touted opponent Kasak has yet to face.

Other intriguing possible matchups include a full bout with Ethen Miller, a healthy Jacori Teemer and a scrap with 25-4 Northern Iowa star Ryder Downey.

165: Mitchell Mesenbrink

The 165-pound weight class is much easier to predict. Mitchell Mesenbrink is the second-heaviest favorite on the weekend with -500 odds to win the bracket.

Iowa's Michael Caliendo is the No. 2 seed — a man who Mesenbrink has beaten several times already.

Two intriguing matchups for Mesenbrink include a clash with 30-1 Big 12 champion Peyton Hall, and a sendoff bout for former Nittany Lion Terrell Barraclough.

174: Levi Haines

The 174-pound weight class is top-heavy, with Haines seen as the second-best wrestler.

Haines fell to No. 1 Keegan O'Toole in overtime earlier this season, and both have continued to win. The rematch has been circled on calendars since then.

The main roadblock in Haines' way is Oklahoma State's Dean Hamiti, who Haines is projected to see in the semifinals.

Hamiti is coached by Haines' former mentor, David Taylor, meaning a scouting advantage could be used that Haines hasn't seen before.

There is a large group of contenders to be All-Americans in the field, but only O'Toole, Haines and Hamiti stand as true title threats.

184: Carter Starocci

The 184-pound weight class got a lot more fun at the Big Ten Championships, with Max McEnelly from Minnesota pushing Starocci to sudden victory in the finals.

McEnelly established himself as a contender against Northern Iowa's Parker Keckeisen, who Starocci also beat in sudden victory.

The three wrestlers dominated the weight class all year, so the final is expected to be a combination of them.

Dustin Plott will be an interesting opponent for Starocci, having only lost one match this season that wasn't to Keckeisen. The two could meet in the semifinals.

A potential Starocci vs. Gabe Arnold clash would have to wait until the championship bout.

197: Josh Barr

Speaking of weight classes cannibalizing themselves, 197 was the prime example of that.

Barr, Jacob Cardenas and Stephen Buchanan shuffled victories between each other, with AJ Ferrari being the odd man out.

The 2022 champion is the betting favorite despite having not faced many top opponents this season.

285: Greg Kerkvliet

Kerkvliet is seeded third after his loss to Gable Steveson at the Big Ten Championships.

Simply put, Steveson outclasses the weight class and virtually every wrestler in the country. He's the largest betting favorite of the tournament in a class with three bona fide superstars.

To earn a rematch against the Olympic gold medalist, Kerkvliet will likely have to take down the most statistically dominant wrestler in the nation, Oklahoma State's Wyatt Hendrickson.

It's a three-horse race at 285.

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Jacob DeLuca/Collegian

Penn State's Carter Starocci wrestles Minnesota's Max McEnelly at the Big Ten Championships on March 9, 2025.

Should Penn State have opted out of postseason?

By Will Horstman & Joe Tuman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State had a chance to earn a bid to the NIT or the College Basketball Crown, but the team announced last Sunday it would willingly end its season early, regardless of whether an invite was extended.

The Nittany Lions endured a turbulent season, but they were still good enough to make a case for an at-large bid into either the NIT or Crown. With the team declining any sort of potential bid, one question remains.

Did Penn State make the correct decision to end its season without an NIT or Crown bid?

Will Horstman: Yes

The Nittany Lions have 10 straight NIT wins with two NIT championships in their last two appearances — 2009 and 2018.

While those accomplishments are neat, Mike Rhoades is attempting to build a winning culture in Happy Valley, and the fact is that participating in the NIT or the Crown is a waste of time to accomplish that goal. As such, the team focusing on 2025-26 is the best course of action.

The goal of a successful college basketball program should be to make the NCAA Tournament consistently. With three tournament appearances — four had the 2020 tournament not been canceled — since 2000, Penn State isn't close to that level.

Winning the NIT or the Crown can provide a memorable moment for a team, but when look-



the Big Ten Tournament.

Additionally, it's worth noting Rhoades was openly upset with the changes to the conference tournament's structure that caused three teams to be boxed out of the bracket.

"I think that's horse s—, to be honest with you," Rhoades said in February. "Everybody bangs their chest about student-athlete experience ... I don't think you take away experiences from student-athletes. I think it's ridiculous, I think it's not professional."

If Rhoades and his staff truly believe the Big Ten took away opportunities from college athletes, wouldn't a trip to the NIT or Crown be the perfect way to make up for this issue? Instead, Rhoades' words now ring hollow.

Of course, it's possible the players voted not to compete in the NIT or Crown and end their season. If that's the case, Rhoades can't be faulted as much for contradicting himself.

However, that would mean the team's comments about believing it's capable of more than its record shows might not be entirely accurate.

Regardless of who made the call to end the season, it was the wrong choice.

The 2024-25 Nittany Lions will go down as a team that played zero postseason games, and that doesn't benefit the program one bit.

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the team, so Rhoades getting a headstart on the recruiting trail only helps.

Furthermore, those seniors ended their college careers on a high note with the team's upset of then-No. 12 Wisconsin on March 8. It was a rough 2025 for Penn State, so it might as well end on a win.

As for the Nittany Lion underclassmen, they'll get a headstart to prepare for the new-look starting lineup the team will see next season, as well as develop their own game.

Joe Tuman: No

Penn State's season was filled with "what if" moments thanks to an abundance of late-game collapses, narrow defeats and

nagging injuries.

Though the team fell short of its goals, a trip to the NIT or Crown would've offered it a chance to build off its win over Wisconsin and flip the script by going on a postseason winning streak.

Rhoades has often spoken about wanting to build a strong team culture and put Penn State on the map. While Penn State isn't ready to permanently change its national reputation, a strong run in the Crown or NIT would've been a strong starting point.

I'd also argue last season's Nittany Lions team deserved an invite to the NIT, so competing this season would've given the team's veteran core a chance to make up for both their 2024 snub and their mathematical elimination from