

Operating ‘in the dark’

Recent lawsuits raise transparency concerns in Penn State Board of Trustees

By **Kahlie Wray**
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Editor’s Note: Barbara Doran and Terry Mutchler are alumni of The Daily Collegian.

In the past, calls for transparency directed at the Penn State Board of Trustees most often came from the outside, but more recently, those calls are coming from within.

In May 2022, Barry Fenchak was elected as one of three alumni-elected trustees on the Penn State Board of Trustees.

During his campaign, Fenchak published a post titled “How I will fix Penn State” on his Substack in which he wrote “As a trustee, I promise that you can hold me accountable. I will consistently inject reasonable analysis into the development of operating and capital budgets. I will demonstrate responsible stewardship of Penn State’s resources.”

Now on the cusp of his three-year term’s conclusion, Fenchak is involved in an ongoing lawsuit he filed on July 16, 2024, alleging the Board of Trustees was withholding information needed for him to fulfill his fiduciary duty.

Forty-nine days after Fenchak’s lawsuit was filed in the Centre County Court of Common Pleas, another trustee, Anthony Lubrano, filed his own lawsuit on Sept. 4.

Lubrano alleged the university pursued a retaliatory investigation against him after his proposed resolution to rename Beaver Stadium and his following public statements concerning the university’s programs and finances, according to the court filings.

The lawsuit, which was filed in Lackawanna County rather than Centre County, requests the university cover Lubrano’s legal costs for the investigation, which his counsel wrote “is retaliation for his exercise of his First Amendment rights.”

According to Section 4.02(a) (ii) of the board’s bylaws, trustees are entitled to indemnification “by the university against expenses and any liability paid or incurred by such person in connection with any action.”

In October, Judge James A.

Gibbons ruled the university must cover his legal funds, rejecting the university’s argument Lubrano was in a position to cover his own expenses.

In his memorandum, Judge Gibbons wrote “PSU argues that the ability to pay weighs heavily on whether or not irreparable harm would be visited upon Lubrano. We reject this argument. We reject it because PSU’s Bylaws seemingly reject it as well.” The university appealed the judge’s order in November.

Both Fenchak and Lubrano did not respond to requests for an interview.

In addition to Fenchak and Lubrano’s lawsuits, Spotlight PA sued the board almost a year ago over what it believes are multiple violations of the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, which “requires agencies to deliberate and take official action on agency business in an open and public meeting,” according to the Office of Open Records.

Penn State spokesperson Wyatt DuBois said Penn State does not comment on pending litigation.

This means the Penn State Board of Trustees is currently listed as a defendant in three ongoing lawsuits.

Terry Mutchler, an attorney with Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell and Hippel representing Fenchak, said transparency is a repeated theme in lawsuits brought against the Board of Trustees.

“You have three or four lawsuits all about one thing — transparency,” Mutchler said. “Anybody that’s interested, that wants to take a look, here can see that the Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania State University would rather operate more in the dark than in the sunlight, and that is a fact.”

Mutchler, along with Justin J. Boehret and Erika L. Silverbreit, joined Fenchak’s case as counsel in August after a GoFundMe campaign was launched by Penn State alumnus David Lapioli to assist in the hiring of a lawyer. Fenchak originally filed the lawsuit representing himself.

“I feel very strongly about the position that he’s asserting legally,” Mutchler said.



Joseph Klein/Collegian

The Old Main Bell Tower on Friday, Oct. 11, 2024, in University Park, Pa. The Penn State Board of Trustees is currently listed as a defendant in three ongoing lawsuits.

It’s the second case she’s defended of this nature. In 2021, Pennsylvania State Sen. Katie Muth filed a lawsuit against the Public School Employees’ Retirement System alleging the agency was withholding documents she needed to efficiently manage the PSERS pension fund as trustee. She hired Mutchler as counsel.

“The question of the PSERS case and the question of the Penn State case are identical,” Mutchler said. “Is a trustee entitled to information about the board and about the folks that invest before they vote on it? It’s as simple as that.”

According to Section 5512(a) of the Pennsylvania Nonprofit Corporation Law of 1988, which is referenced in Fenchak’s original court filing, the simple answer is yes.

The statute titled “information rights of a director” states trustees have a right to “inspect and receive information regarding the assets, liabilities and operations of the corporation and any subsidiaries.”

However, the statute also allows for corporations to reasonably restrict trustees’ access to information with the burden of

proof falling on the corporation.

The information Fenchak seeks concerns the management of the university’s \$4.57 billion endowment, which funds university programs and scholarships. According to the filing, Fenchak has repeatedly requested this data and has faced retaliatory acts, including the loss of “board social privileges” as a result of his persistence.

The lawsuit alleges that several different trustees verbally denied his request. According to the filing, Trustee Mary Lee Schneider told Fenchak at an in-person meeting on Feb. 16, 2024, “You will never be given that information. That is my decision, and I will make sure of it.”

Furthermore, in a letter attached to the lawsuit, former board chair Matthew Schuyler and current board chair David Kleppinger told Fenchak his requested information “is beyond that which is necessary to discharge your responsibilities as a trustee.”

Mutchler said she likens the ordeal to asking a judge to make a ruling without seeing the case briefs.

“It’s almost as though the board is, instead of giving them

bylaws, they want to give them a blindfold,” Mutchler said. “Hey, vote on this and trust us. Trust us. Everything’s cool here.”

While the lawsuit is still ongoing, Mutchler and her team secured a preliminary injunction for Fenchak in October.

Fenchak’s request for an injunction was filed on Sept. 23, after the Board of Trustees Governance Committee unanimously voted on Sept. 9 to recommend his removal on the basis he violated the trustee code of conduct.

The alleged violation occurred on July 19 at the Altoona campus after the board’s regular meeting, and three days after he filed his lawsuit. The Board of Trustees alleged Fenchak engaged in an inappropriate interaction with a female university staff member.

According to Penn State’s opposition to the injunction, Fenchak said to the staff member “My wife always tells me I look like a penis with a ball cap on. Can I try yours on?”

The employee later filed a formal complaint with the Office of Ethics and Compliance, stating the interaction made her uncomfortable.

SEE TRUSTEES, Page 6

Family Carnival festivities

By **Lily Groover & Julia Kushner**
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Penn State THON held its annual Family Carnival on Sunday in the Multi-Sport Facility, which provided an interactive environment for THON families and university students.

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

Finance Captain Molly Nagy said her committee had a ring toss table set up at the carnival for kids to interact with.

Nagy, a fourth-year studying advertising, said the carnival gives organizations the opportunity to hang out with their designated THON families.

“It’s bonding for the families and orgs,” Nagy said. “I just really love THON and its mission.”

Entertainment Captain Norah Martin escorted the day’s performers onstage at the front of the facility.

“For students and families, it’s really important that everyone gets these opportunities to have more close connections,” Martin, a fourth-year studying advertising and public relations and Spanish, said. “The THON community is just so humongous as an organization, so having events like this is a great way to actually meet some of the families and children.”

Entertainment Captain Derek Panaski said that this was his first time attending the carnival.

“It’s a really good opportunity to meet some of the families and



Matthew Kemper/Collegian

The 2025 THON logo is revealed during the THON Family Carnival at the Multi-Sport Facility on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024, in University Park, Pa.

really take in the whole experience,” Panaski, a fourth-year studying project and supply chain management and analytics, said.

Stephanie Bieber is a THON family member with children both enrolled in and graduated from Penn State. Bieber said THON helps keep her daughter’s memory alive.

“I lost my older daughter in 2009 to Leukemia and the orgs Pi Beta Phi and Sigma Phi Epsilon adopted us,” Bieber said. “Just watching the kids have fun and enjoying it is actually the best part of the carnival.”

Keegan Sobczak, executive director for THON 2025, said the theme and the logo of THON

2025 captures and showcases that home is more than a place.

THON 2025’s logo with visual representation to its theme of “A Home for Hope” was revealed at the end of the carnival.

Rachel Mamula watched the logo reveal.

“I absolutely love it. I think it’s so amazing how it ties together the idea of home being more than just a place,” Mamula, a third-year studying biology, said.

“I feel like the bear and the little kid ties (the idea) of THON together so well in one photo.”

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Kate Hildebrand/Collegian

Head coach James Franklin waits to run out onto the field during Penn State’s game against Illinois in Beaver Stadium on Sept. 28, 2024.

Penn State announces 2025 schedule

By **Lyle Alenstein**
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

While the 2024 season isn’t over for Penn State, its 2025 schedule has been released.

Leading up to the reveal, the Nittany Lions had all of its non-conference games at Beaver Stadium revealed, as well as its rematch against Oregon.

For the first time since 2015, Penn State’s nonconference schedule will not feature a Power Five team. The Nittany Lions previously faced Pitt from 2016-19, Auburn in 2021 and 2022 and then West Virginia in 2023 and 2024.

Penn State will play three teams that are set to compete in the College Football Playoff this season: Oregon, Ohio State

and Indiana.

The Nittany Lions will also face off against Nebraska for the first time since 2020.

Here is the 2025 schedule for Penn State.

Week 1: vs. Nevada
Week 2: vs. FIU
Week 3: vs. Villanova
Week 4: bye
Week 5: vs. Oregon
Week 6: at UCLA
Week 7: vs. Northwestern
Week 8: at Iowa
Week 9: bye
Week 10: at Ohio State
Week 11: vs. Indiana
Week 12: at Michigan State
Week 13: vs. Nebraska
Week 14: at Rutgers

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Reflecting on study abroad

By Rubi Orellana
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

As some Penn State students are wrapping up the fall semester with final exams, others are preparing for an upcoming spring semester abroad, where they will experience new cultures, foods and people.

Marsella Degnan said she will be studying abroad in Rome.

“I’m excited to see more of Italy and hope to walk to class, taking in views,” Degnan, a third-year studying earth science and policy, said.

Degnan said she chose Italy because she previously studied Italian from sixth grade through her senior year of high school.

During her time abroad, Degnan said she will take a mix of political science and art history courses, along with four credits of Italian to fulfill program requirements.

“I am expecting a (language barrier) since I haven’t taken an Italian class for three years, but I am using Duolingo to help me practice,” Degnan said.

Degnan said she thinks it may be a struggle to find a routine at first while abroad because she’ll be taking the same classes but going to different places every week.

In preparation for this transition, Degnan said she’s started by speaking with students who have studied abroad, as well as using Penn State resources, including health services that connect students with doctors in Rome.

“I am in my third year and wanted to change it up,” Degnan said. “I am super excited to experience new food and culture, as well as making new friends.”

Degnan said her advice for students who are thinking about going abroad is that “it may feel like a lot of homework researching, but the effort is worth it when you’re studying in a new place.”

Grace Schultz said will be going to a small area in Germany called Marburg to study abroad.



Courtesy of Emily Golden

The sun sets over Florence, Italy. Siya Kakadia, a second-year studying integrative science, will study abroad in Florence this upcoming year, taking courses similar to organic chemistry, biology, Italian 101, history of biomedicine and abnormal psychology.

“I chose Germany because of my family heritage, but also because I always wanted to go to Europe,” Schultz, a third-year studying psychology, said.

German education begins later in the month of February, according to Schultz. She doesn’t know her exact schedule yet and won’t be able to select her courses until January.

Her first six weeks will focus on German culture language courses. and the second half will consist of general education courses.

“I want to start by settling into my studies and getting familiar with the school, then explore the surrounding areas,” Schultz said.

One of the biggest challenges Schultz said she anticipates is researching and learning the local transit system, dealing with passports and visas and the currency used there.

Schultz said she’s been trying to memorize basic German phrases so she can communicate with others.

“I’ve learned to adjust to new environments before, having to move from California to Penn State for school,” Schultz said. “I’m ready to take on this next challenge.”

Schultz said she’s also excited to learn the daily routine of those in Germany, their way of life and eating habits.

“I’m so glad I chose Marburg because I really wanted to be immersed in the culture,” Schultz said.

Siya Kakadia will do her study abroad program in Florence, Italy.

“Florence was the best fit for my major, and I’m thrilled it also allows me to experience Italy while staying on track with my studies,” Kakadia, a second-year

studying integrative science, said.

While abroad, Kakadia said she’ll take courses like organic chemistry, biology, Italian 101, history of biomedicine and abnormal psychology.

“I’m particularly excited for the Italian biomedicine course,” Kakadia said. “It’s a great way to combine my passion for science with learning about the medical field in a different culture.”

Kakadia said she knows the environments will be fast paced, but thinks she’ll adjust well with the help of Italian 101 and the locals.

There have been Q&A sessions with the study abroad office and a discussion board for students headed to Florence, Kakadia said.

“It’s been great to connect with other students who are going through the same process,” Kakadia said.

Kakadia said she’s a bit

nervous about potential homesickness but is confident she’ll find her rhythm once she arrives.

“I plan on scheduling calls home regularly to stay connected, which I think will really help with homesickness,” Kakadia said.

Beyond academics, Kakadia said she’s looking forward to exploring Italy — with plans to visit Rome, the Amalfi Coast and possibly travel to Norway and Ireland.

Kakadia said she believes she’s taken the steps to prepare for any challenges that may arise, including researching health resources and planning for cultural adjustments.

“The key is to go in with an open mind and not be afraid to make mistakes,” Kakadia said. “That mindset will help me make the most of my time abroad.”

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Caroling at State

By Carolena Bongi
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It’s the most wonderful time of the year, and there’s no better way to spread holiday cheer than with some good, old-fashioned caroling.

But this isn’t your average door-to-door singalong. At Penn State, we’ve got some iconic faces and places that deserve a personal holiday serenade.

Here’s the perfect plan for your caroling adventure across campus.

The Willard Preacher

The Willard Preacher spends his days sharing his spirited sermons, so it’s only fair to return the favor in song.

Show up ready to perform a few festive tunes and see how he reacts.

Will he pause his speech to listen? Will he debate the theology of “Joy to the World”? Or will he simply raise his voice to preach louder than you’re singing?

Whether he listens, debates or keeps shouting over you, it’s a classic Penn State experience you won’t want to miss.

James Franklin

After Willard, make your way to Beaver Stadium to serenade Penn State’s head football coach, James Franklin.

A performance of “All I Want for Christmas is a National Championship” is sure to score

big with Franklin.

Be sure to wear your White Out gear for maximum effect. If you can get Franklin to clap along, you’ve won caroling.

Nittany Lion Shrine

The Nittany Lion Shrine is the ultimate symbol of Penn State pride and is a must-visit stop on your caroling journey.

No matter the time of year, you’re bound to find a mix of students, alumni and tourists posing with the famous statue.

Gather your group around the shrine and sing your favorite Christmas tunes for the assembled crowd.

If alumni are present, prepare for them to reminisce about their own Penn State days while snapping photos of your group.

Berkey Creamery employees

The Berkey Creamery is more than just an ice cream shop — it’s a sweet escape from the stress of college life.

Behind the counter, these employees are heroes, churning out happiness one scoop at a time.

Show your appreciation by bringing your caroling crew to sing to the hardworking staff.

Just make sure you’re not holding up the line too long — ice cream cravings are serious business at Penn State, and nobody wants to be the one delaying someone’s next bite.

That one professor you can’t escape

Every Penn State student has that professor.

The one whose exams feel like impossible riddles, or who assigns group projects with a dozen steps and zero clear instructions.

Maybe they’re infamous for cryptic emails, or the way they say “This will be on the exam” about 15 times — and it never is.

Well, this holiday season, it’s time to show them some “appreciation” with a little musical humor.

Gather your group and head to their office with a passionate rendition of “All I Want for Christmas is a Curve.”

Whether they laugh it off, awkwardly close their door or give you that dreaded “I’ll remember this” glare, it’ll be worth every second.

And there you have it — the perfect Penn State Christmas caroling day. This festive adventure will be a memory you won’t soon forget.

So, gather your friends and get ready to spread some seriously unique holiday cheer.

Who knows? Maybe your carol will be the highlight of someone’s holiday season.

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Samantha Oropeza/Collegian

Alexia Zografakis sings a song during the Movin’ On Holiday Series at the HUB-Robeson Center on Dec. 9, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

Bringing spirit to University Park

By Blake Barrigh
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Penn State’s annual student-run music festival Movin’ On hosted its “Holiday Spotlight Series” Monday afternoon in the HUB-Robeson Center, featuring holiday-themed live performances by student musicians.

The stage was set up in front of the HUB Monumental Staircase and was decorated with bright Christmas lights and paper snowflakes to create a festive atmosphere.

Movin’ On also set up a booth displaying posters with information about the music industry, sustainability initiatives and background information on the history and purpose of Movin’ On.

The show began with Ali Michels, a second-year studying secondary English education, singing “Winter Wonderland” by Bing Crosby. Michels followed with “I’m Not That Girl” from “Wicked” and “The Christmas Song” by Nat King Cole, and ended her set with a moving performance of “Snow Angel” by Reneé Rapp.

Songs ranged from holiday classics to more contemporary songs, providing the audience with a diverse mix of music.

Bridie Lawall worked behind the scenes to ensure the event ran smoothly, sharing what originally motivated her to get involved with Movin’ On during her first year at Penn State.

Lawall, a fourth-year studying geography, said

she has always had a “performance background,” focusing on entertainment and the music industry.

“When I got to the college level, my focus became less about performing and more about the operations and the direction behind it,” Lawall said. “I went to Lights Up, which is our fall concert, and I fell in love with the idea that students can put this on.”

Lawall explained the series is a showcase created to highlight different student performances. The event has a total of six acts and a variety of activities in between such as music trivia, guess that song and more.

Brianna Ferrante-Cook said Michels was enjoyable and she was happy to attend the series.

“I enjoy listening to the music while doing my work,” Ferrante-Cook, a second-year studying premedicine, said. “Live music is interesting and provides a different aspect to music instead of streaming it on Spotify.”

Julia Donahue said live music is “unique” and offers a different experience that sets it apart from other forms of music. Donahue said the event helped her embrace the holiday spirit on a “gloomy” Monday.

“Events like these help you relate to students more by seeing them perform and interact with the audience,” Donahue, a third-year studying biobehavioral health, said. “The vibe is chill and gives coffee shop, snapping and poetry.”

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Ryan Copeland/Collegian

Snow falls on the Nittany Lion Shrine on Nov. 22, 2024 in University Park, Pa. The shrine is a must-visit stop on your caroling journey.

MY VIEW | JULIA FREDERICK

The ‘write’ thing to do
this holiday season

For the second consecutive year, my roommate and I made holiday cards. The cards featured pictures of us in matching Grinch onesies, attempting our best just-stole-Christmas faces while posing with the



Frederick

Over Thanksgiving break, I grabbed a marker and sat at my desk to write personal messages on the back of each card before slipping them into envelopes to be mailed out. As family and friends got them, they told me how much they loved the card and thanked me for the note on the back. It didn't take long, was relatively inexpensive and was pretty relaxing — yet it made a huge impact. Maybe it's the English major in me, but I've saved nearly

every birthday card and thank you note I've ever received. My favorites are the ones my siblings made years ago with printer paper and Crayola markers. Every once in a while when I need a pick-me-up, I'll sift through my pile and read through them, instantly brightening my mood. There's something so special about knowing someone thought of you and took the time out of their day to take to pen and paper — a practice that's sadly becoming increasingly archaic. I'm not suggesting that you need to start writing cheesy love letters or passing folded notes during your lecture classes. However, don't underestimate the value of a thoughtful handwritten note, especially during the holiday season. If you're anything like me, it can be difficult to find the perfect gift for Christmas or birthdays. Nothing in the aisles of McLanahan's or knick-knacks from Target truly show the



Rohan Karunakaran/Collegian

appreciation I have for the people in my life. Writing a little something is a great supplement. Not only does it allow you to reflect on shared memories, but it's a reminder to the person you're writing to that

you care. While it's nice to send a text, having something physical goes a step further. It's nice to open up a card rather than scroll back through old messages. You don't have to be a "gifted writer" to do this. No one

will grade you on correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. As long as you're being genuine, it really is the thought that counts. We've all heard jokes about drunk "I love you" speeches, but there isn't anything wrong with expressing gratitude for friends and family. Our world could definitely use more of that compassion. So this year, when your parent claims they have everything they need and don't want anything, bust out the construction paper and glitter pens and take ten minutes to tell them how much they mean to you. I guarantee you it'll go a lot further than some random Amazon purchase.

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MY VIEW | JADZIA SANTIAGO

Don't forget your friends
over break

Well, it looks like we've finally done it: the last week of the semester is upon us. If you're anything like me, the moment you're done with finals, you'll also be muting all of your notifications and laying facedown on your bed to process everything (or scream into your pillow). I know that my phone will be completely off for at least 24 hours once I get home, during which I will read, journal, decorate my family's Christmas tree and generally get a grip. I encourage you all to also do that last thing, however that looks for you. By all means, shove Penn State as far away from your mind as you can bear for a bit. However, even in the absence of deadlines and campus activities, there's one thing that doesn't go away when break comes around — your Penn State friends.

I know, I know, that may seem obvious, but it's not as obvious as you think. Speaking from experience, I know it can be hard to keep up contact with people when you're both separated from them and dealing with other things. I mean, have you ever made a promise with someone to "grab coffee next semester" that neither of you follow through on? In your college career, how many plans have slipped into the gap between semesters like your phone into the crack between your bed and the wall? Now you see what I mean. It's easy to fall out of touch with people, including your friends. Sometimes, your brain can take "out of sight, out of mind" literally. This is especially true when you're traveling, reconnecting with loved ones, planning for the future, unwinding and generally not worrying about Penn State. However, that doesn't mean you should give in to your brain's forgetful impulses. Obviously, I don't mean that you need to contact your Penn State friends just as often as you contact them during the semester. When my roommate moved back to her home state, I certainly wasn't calling her at 9 a.m. every day to chat like we did when she was 5 feet from me. But winter break can be lonely. A lot of students travel back home to where they don't have as many friends, things to do or resources. Not only that, the Saturday that marks the end of finals

week is the winter solstice, which is the darkest day of the year. So on top of all that, there's less sunlight to go around — but that doesn't mean there needs to be less joy. Speaking from experience, it feels nice to know you've been remembered. Over breaks, I've both sent and received memes that were pick-me-ups, had fun text conversations and made plans for the next semester. Even just a one-hour phone call makes all the difference. When you're separated from your friends for so long, you might not realize how much you miss them. Additionally, keeping up with your friends can make the approaching semester seem less bleak, because you have them around to help make it better. OK, I acknowledge that I might be a bit biased, because my friends genuinely keep me grounded. No matter what happens, they're on this roller coaster of a life with me. We're all used to constantly sharing our new and old stories of chaos, reactions to the news and pictures of our dogs. Thus, it's possible that their constant presence makes their absence more notable for me. But regardless of how regularly you talk to your friends during the semester, letting them know that you think about them organically can make

them feel loved and appreciated. I promise, as long as you're not spamming them — unless you have that dynamic — you aren't bothering them. Personally, I love it when my friends take the time out of their day to send over a picture of their dog or a screenshot of a funny post they saw. Not only that, keeping up contact with your friends when you're not seeing them regularly helps set your relationships up to continue post-graduation. Think of break as a preview of what's to come, when you're all likely moved away from State College and focusing on day-to-day life. If absolutely nothing else applies, your friends will appreciate knowing that you're alive and haven't been eaten by a mountain lion or gotten lost in the wilderness — or both. All that to say, no matter what you get up to this winter break, make sure to keep your friends posted. Believe me, they'd definitely like to hear from you.

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Running from down under

Big Ten Champion Hayley Kitching leads large group of Australian runners at Penn State

By Noah Aberegg
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Nestled between the mountains, Happy Valley is a second home to many Penn State athletes.

For five athletes on the Penn State women's cross country team, it's over 10,000 miles from their home of Australia.

Growing up in Coffs Harbour, Australia, junior Hayley Kitching has taken the U.S. track and field scene by storm, emerging as a prominent 800-meter runner in her sophomore campaign.

Before that, however, Kitching grew up an 18.5-hour flight away from University Park, where she fell in love with the sport of running from a very young age.

"As soon as I started school, when we would have the little cross country meets and 100-meter sprints, I would always beat the boys," Kitching said. "I always knew from a young age that maybe it was something I was good at."

As Kitching continued to run through secondary school, she started exploring colleges to run at. Penn State stood out from the rest of them.

"I had a lot of family connections, like (assistant coach) Ryan Foster. He was good friends with the coach at Carlisle, and he's family friends with my dad," Kitching said. "So it was just like this huge, weird network of people."

Born and raised in Tasmania, Australia, Foster's path was very similar to Kitching's, winning four Big Ten titles with the blue and white along with two NCAA bronze medals. His background and story was a big reason why Kitching chose Penn State.

"Obviously, Foster being Australian was a big pull for me," Kitching said. "Also, the team culture and how supportive everyone is just kind of gravitated me to this school."

When Kitching arrived on campus, she was the eighth international student on Penn State's roster.

"I loved the international aspect, because we just have so many people from so many different places, which is good," Kitching said.

Being the primary recruiter in Kitching's commitment to Penn State, Foster knew that great things were in store for her. However, her performance exceeded his lofty expectations.

"I knew she'd be good. I don't know if I thought she'd be as good as she is," Foster said. "I think by the time she's done here, she'll go down as one of the best Penn State athletes in history."

In her first season as a Nittany Lion, Kitching finished with the third-fastest time in Penn State history in the distance medley relay along with teammates Zoey Goldstein, Maddie Ullom and Kileigh Kane. A few weeks later, they broke that record again, putting an even faster time into Penn State's record books.

As the outdoor season commenced, Kitching started with a bang, running the fifth-fastest 800 meter in Penn State history in her season opener.

From there, the then-freshman star finished third in the Big Ten Championship and earned her first NCAA Championship appearance.

"I have such a supportive team here," Kitching said. "Foster just always has my back and believes in everything I do."

While her championship appearance didn't garner the results she'd hoped, Kitching simply put it aside and moved onto the next practice and the next competition.

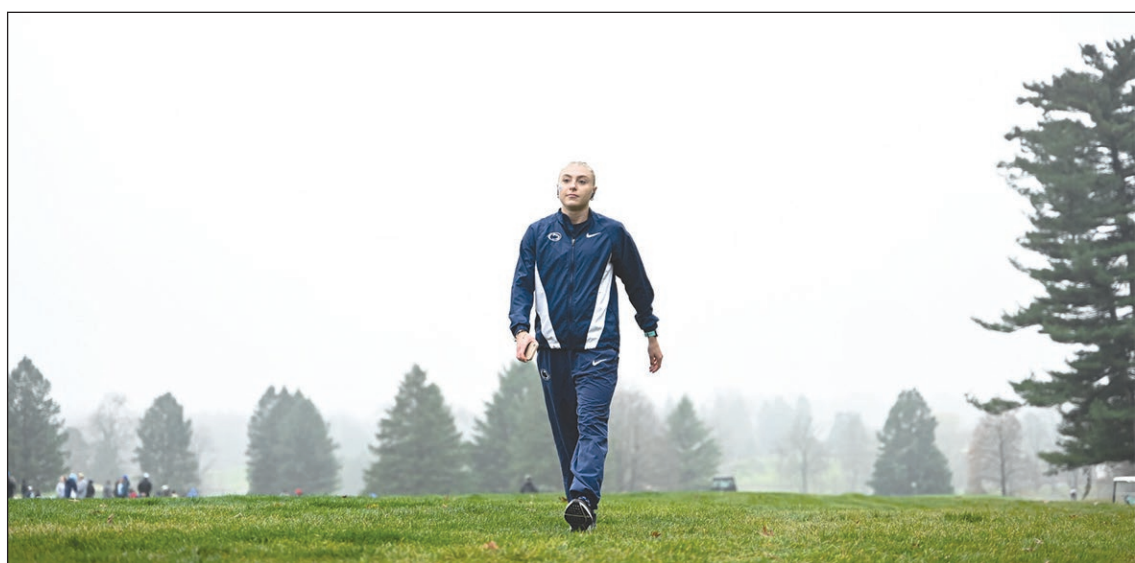
"She's got the memory of a goldfish. Ted Lasso would love her," Foster said. "If she has a bad one, she goes out on her cooldown, gets her emotions out, and by the time she's back from her cooldown, she's onto the next one."

Following nationals, Kitching moved into her first cross country season with the Nittany Lions, where she ran in six meets.

"Last year was her first year racing XC for us, and I think she'll be the first to admit it, it wasn't the best of years," coach John Gondak said. "It was just her first experience with college cross country, and it can be a little bit eye opening. She used the experiences she gained last year to become more successful at it this year."

Although her individual results didn't meet her goals, her personal-best performance in the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional Championships helped send the team to the NCAA Cross Country Championships.

"Obviously, she brings a great attitude, a great energy and is someone that works hard," Gondak said. "So when you can lead with your actions, that's a big help to everybody, and she wants to be



Matt Rudisill/Courtesy of Penn State Athletics

Hayley Kitching walks across the course in her uniform on a foggy day. Kitching set the Penn State school record in the 800 meters during the spring 2023 season.

her best, and that trickles down to everyone on the team."

Kitching's experience with cross country helped her as she prepared for her second track season, where she put the country on notice.

"I always tell people who can run hard for 20 minutes that they can run hard for two," Foster said. "The better she runs in cross, physically, I think that transfers over really well."

In her first race of the indoor season, Kitching ran the second-fastest time in school history in the 1000-meter, finishing in 2:42.94. In the next two races, she broke the 600-meter school record with a time of 1:28.18 and the indoor 800 record in 2:01.77 — the 21st-fastest time in NCAA history.

"Honestly, it was really, really exciting when I broke the first (record)," Kitching said. "Just breaking all the other ones have just been stepping stones with what I do here."

As the indoor postseason rolled around, Kitching bettered her 600 record twice in the Big Ten Championship, going on to win both the 600 and the 800. At the NCAA Championship, Kitching finished fourth, collecting first team All-American honors.

"It's always exciting when you get to put your name up on the record board," Gondak said. "I think when you can prove to yourself that you can run that fast, it builds a lot of confidence and helps snowball to doing even greater things down the road."

Snowballing down the road is exactly what Kitching did in the

spring season, breaking the Penn State women's 800 record in her opening meet, which she further broke at the Australia National Championships.

At the Big Ten Championships, Kitching finished nearly two seconds before the second place finisher in the 800, securing her first outdoor Big Ten Championship. She went on to become the highest-finishing woman in the 800 in Penn State history at the NCAA Championships, placing fifth after running a 2:01.05.

"Setting the school record is not her ultimate goal," Foster said. "That's just a checkpoint on the way to do what she wants to do in the sport. She can be world class, and she's on the brink of that."

As Kitching moved into her 2024 campaign, she became much more of a mentor on the team following her breakout season.

"She's done a great job being personal and being welcoming, making people feel at home," Foster said. "Not every moment has been easy for her here, but when it has been hard, she's handled it really, really well. I think that's a real skill, handling adversity."

Joining Kitching from Australia in 2024 was freshmen Tayissa Buchanan and Ada Rand, providing a continued sense of home with her and Foster.

"It's always nice to talk to someone that has the same accent as you do, knows the same things about your culture, and it just helps welcome them to the team," Gondak said. "It's great having (Foster) on staff, and he's

doing an amazing job coaching and recruiting."

When Kitching made her cross country season debut at Wisconsin, she showcased her offseason growth, running a personal-best 20:50.8 to finish 37th out of 190 finishers, and she's only improved from there.

"The stronger you can become aerobically, when the (800) comes to the anaerobic part by the end of things, you can be much stronger and fitter and finish your race," Gondak said. "I'm super pumped to see what she does on the track this year because of the success she's had in cross country."

As the indoor track season gets started and the outdoor season looms around the corner, Kitching isn't focused on more Penn State records.

"Everyone says this, but I'd like to win nationals in the 800m," Kitching said. "That's probably one of my top goals and to break a few Australian records as well along the way."

With the track season under way, Kitching's hard work and efforts are noticed by coaches and teammates alike as she prepares for her goals.

"She doesn't just rely on talent. She works as hard as anybody else," Foster said. "There's a difference between having success when you're talented and having success when you're working just as hard as everybody else, and that's Hayley."

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Reigniting the flame

Penn State assistant coach Lynnzee Brown makes history at Paris Olympics

By Caroline Riley
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Lynnzee Brown grew up with her mother's motto — "You can't quit on a bad day" — which helped her overcome countless days of rigorous rehab and moments of doubt.

Shortly before becoming the first Haitian gymnast to compete in the Olympics, Brown joined Penn State as an assistant women's gymnastics coach in 2023. However, her gymnastics journey, which was rooted in the midwest and crossed paths with Penn State head coach Sarah Brown, began much earlier.

Lynnzee and Sarah Brown both trained at GAGE gymnastics, a club renowned for producing elite athletes under founder Al Fong.

Sarah Brown, about a decade older than Lynnzee Brown, remembers watching her grow up at GAGE and recognizing her star potential.

"I remember her being a hot-shot at GAGE. I'm pretty sure she was a Level 4, a baby dragon is what we called them," Sarah Brown said. "She was good. She was talented. She was quick."

But for young gymnasts, recognizing their own talent isn't always easy.

"I kind of got into gymnastics by chance, and I just happened to be good at it and kind of stuck with it like every kid because I loved it," Lynnzee Brown said. "But I think throughout my Level 10 years, I was kind of suffering from thinking there's so much talent around me that I didn't realize my own potential."

The University of Denver saw what Brown couldn't and offered her a full athletic scholarship,



Brittany Evans/Courtesy of Denver Athletics

Lynzee Brown strikes a pose after completing her routine. Brown became an assistant coach for Penn State women's gymnastics following a successful collegiate career at Denver University.

which she later accepted. Her subsequent six years at Denver were filled with some of the brightest and dimmest moments of her career.

As a freshman, Brown made an immediate impact by contributing 35 routines, and by her sophomore year, she made history. On Feb. 10, 2019, she scored her first perfect 10.0 on the floor and later tied with four other gymnasts at the NCAA finals to claim an individual title.

Her junior year, however, was filled with tragedy. In 2019, she lost her mother, and the following year, she suffered her first Achilles' tendon tear.

Despite these challenges, Brown persevered. She made a triumphant return in 2021, earning multiple perfect 10s and setting a then-program-record all-around score en route to claiming several individual titles.

Brown started her fifth year strong, securing multiple individual titles in early meets. But adversity struck again.

The Raytown, Missouri, native tore her other Achilles in 2022, sidelining her for the final nine meets of the year. Even though the injury ended her season, she was determined to not let it end her career.

"I'm a visual learner, so the strength in watching myself and what I had done helped me remember what I was capable of," Brown said. "Staying dedicated to the rehab is something that goes unnoticed by many people on the outside, but athletes that live it really know how important and difficult that rehab process is."

In her final year at Denver, Brown added one more perfect 10.0 to her record and helped lead the team to a semifinal appearance.

After the season, Brown began loosely training for the Olympics while simultaneously preparing to step into her new role at Penn State. Brown knew going all-in for an Olympic spot — which meant dedicating herself to a goal that she might not even achieve — would be rather difficult.

Around her were two key influences — Sarah Brown and Denver gymnastics alumna Kristina Coccia — who pushed her to chase her dreams.

Coccia, who Lynnzee met at one of Denver's alumni meets, accompanied her on the road to Paris, where a stop in Chile at the Pan-American Games marked a turning point.

"(Lynnzee) had a phenomenal Pan-American Games," Coccia said. "She ultimately didn't get the spot there, but she had proven she belonged back on the stage competing. Getting so close

to that spot really reignited the flame"

Brown eventually earned Haiti's wild card nationality spot. Alongside Coccia, she traveled to Paris, where she delivered a career-best performance during qualifications.

"To see somebody who's overcome so much achieve their goal and have the best performance they ever had was magical," Coccia said. "Sticking her vault, smiling ear to ear ... it was magical, I really think that's the best word to describe it."

Now back from Paris, Brown has returned to her role as a coach, where she brings not only years of collegiate experience but also an unparalleled international perspective to the Nittany Lions.

"She's invaluable," Sarah Brown said. "And her contribution, I don't even know if she realizes how big it is, but it has really elevated our program."

Though Lynnzee once competed against some of the current gymnasts on Penn State's squad, she has fully embraced her role as a coach, sharing a wealth of knowledge gained through her experience.

"I know what it's like to be injured and come back right before the season, and what it's like to experience personal grief and how to still show up in the gym and do your best," Brown said.

Her message to the Penn State team is the same one that pushed her to build a lasting legacy.

"Just persistence," Brown said. "I never gave up."

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TRUSTEES: ‘We’re into hundreds of thousands of dollars in time spent and legal costs for basically BS,’ former trustee says

FROM PAGE 1

Fenchak’s motion for an injunction frames the remark as a “self-deprecating joke” made in reference to the 1992 film “A League of Their Own.” According to the OEC investigations reports, the staff member and two other employees stated Fenchak did not verbally reference the film and the interaction made them “uncomfortable because of the power dynamic.”

The board maintains the interaction was a direct violation of the Trustee Code of Conduct Section 2.03 (b): “Trustees shall conduct themselves with professionalism, embodying respect and courtesy for others.”

Fenchak’s counsel labeled the investigation as an “opportunity for (the board) to bootstrap their preconceived plan to remove (Fenchak) from the board (as punishment for his prior information requests.)”

His counsel stated the amended bylaws the board alleged Fenchak violated were adopted on July 30, which was after the interaction occurred and thus cannot be used to remove him. In turn, the board’s counsel argued Fenchak’s behavior was also in violation of the prior bylaws.

Ultimately, Judge Brian Marshall granted Fenchak the injunction on Oct. 9, a day before the board was to vote on Fenchak’s removal.

Marshall wrote in his memorandum, “refusing to grant the injunction will result in (Fenchak’s) removal from the board and will allow the defendants’ alleged retaliatory behavior to go unchecked.” Further, Marshall wrote the court does not condone Fenchak’s behavior; nor is he suggesting Fenchak shouldn’t face “repercussions,” but emphasized measures were already taken to sanction Fenchak, such as but not limited to his loss of “social privileges.”

In an opinion piece published on StateCollege.com, seven female trustees, Mary Lee Schneider, Christa Hasenkopf, Ali Krieger, Kelley Lynch, Julie Anna Potts, Karen Quintos and Tracy Riegel, wrote they found the injunction prevented the board “from holding Fenchak accountable.”

In the piece, the trustees commended the staff member’s “bravery” and stated they’re committed to protecting colleagues “from such outrageous behavior.”

Andrew Shaffer, a State College resident who attended Fenchak’s injunction hearing on Oct. 8, said he “was very encouraged” by the judge’s ruling.

“It very concisely and clearly sets forth what has been

happening and what’s at stake,” Shaffer said.

While Shaffer said he was impressed with how the court conducted the hearing, he said he was concerned by a testimony given by Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer Amber Grove.

Based on his understanding of Grove’s testimony, Shaffer alleged that the board began its proceedings to remove Fenchak “before the ethics office had officially released the findings of that investigation.”

A yearlong investigation conducted by Spotlight PA and The Centre Daily Times found the ethics office has faced allegations of misconduct in the past.

According to the article, beginning in the summer of 2019, internal complaints were made about then-Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer Kenya Mann Faulkner.

An investigation was conducted by a private law firm that reported it found no “new behavior.” However, the office continued to receive complaints about Faulkner’s misconduct, according to reports from Spotlight PA and the Centre Daily Times.

In 2022, former compliance specialist Denise Shivery alleged in a federal lawsuit she was fired for reporting Faulkner’s alleged behavior.

The case was settled outside of court in 2023, and the details of the settlement are confidential. Faulkner left Penn State in 2021.

Shaffer said he believes Fenchak should win his case, as he said the university is using the community’s money to “fight that lawsuit and preserve secrecy.”

“I think the senior leadership feels that they control Penn State and they can do what they want,” Shaffer said.

“They’re not accountable to anybody,” Shaffer is one of over 120 individuals who have donated to Fenchak’s legal fund, which has a goal of \$20,000.

“I would encourage anybody who cares about Penn State to also support that,” Shaffer said.

Alice Pope, trustee emerita, said she’s concerned there’s “a widespread effort to control the open exchange of information at Penn State.”

Pope said she’s not speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

“Any comments I make are only my opinions,” Pope said. “I am speaking to you in full knowledge that doing so is against the current bylaws of the board and could lead to my removal.”

The amended bylaws adopted on July 30 featured more than strictly a code of conduct. The revisions also included a change to how candidates are selected for alumni trustee positions and



Chair Matthew W. Schuyler presides over the Board of Trustees meeting on Feb. 16, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

instructions on how trustees should publicly react to board sanctioned decisions.

The new bylaw said, “negative or critical public statements about the board, the university or its students, alumni, community, faculty, staff and other stakeholders do not serve the university’s interests and are inconsistent with a trustee’s fiduciary obligation to act always in the best interests of the university.”

This, along with the board’s decision to create a subcommittee in charge of reviewing the eligibility of alumni trustee candidates, has fostered questions about the board’s commitment to transparency.

According to Pope, transparency is an “unquestionably long-standing issue, certainly going back as far as the 2011-2012 board, but even farther back than that.”

Pope first ran for election in 2014 in the wake of the Sandusky scandal. She served three successive terms before receiving the honorary title of trustee emerita in 2023.

Over the course of her service, Pope said she found the lack of transparency was “board culture.”

“It’s not imposed by anything on paper,” Pope said. “It’s not imposed by the bylaws with the way that the committees are set up. It’s just the board culture, and it’s not a good one.”

In 2015, Pope was one of seven alumni-elected trustees who filed a petition for access to Freeh Report documents, an independent investigation from FBI Director Louis Freeh concerning the child sexual abuse committed by Sandusky. The group argued they needed unrestricted access to the materials to properly fulfill their duties, and in November 2015, they won the lawsuit and gained access to the materials.

This action of what Pope said was “a good, strong minority” was one of many done to move the board in the direction of transparency, and during her tenure, she said she noticed

“most of the power” was concentrated “in the hands of the board chair.”

“The reason I say that is you can look and see how unusual it is for there to be any ‘No’ votes on any full board decision.” Pope said. “Very, very seldom does that happen, and when it happens, it’s really only a few people at the same time in the public meetings, you don’t see a lot of deliberation.”

A recent analysis conducted by Spotlight PA reported the board “spends 7.6% of their meetings deliberating university business.”

“Seeing the FIRE/ACLU matter addressing the suppression of political activities on campus; the defunding of the Collegian and the removal of the newsstands; and the lack of openness and transparency on the Board of Trustees, along with the bylaws changes that appear to be intended to discourage and punish dissent by trustees, especially those who have been democratically elected by the alumni —all this conveys to me, at best, a disregard for prevailing standards of free speech and accountability, and at worst, a deliberate pattern of disenfranchising open communication among university stakeholders,” Pope said.

Barbara Doran, one of the members of the trustee group that sued for the Freeh Report in 2015, said she sees no similarities between that lawsuit and the current pending ones from sitting trustees.

She said Fenchak is “making himself out to be a local sheriff who’s always finding all sorts of skulduggery.”

Doran, who was granted emeritus status in 2022 after serving three consecutive terms, is still heavily involved with the board. She currently serves on two board committees: the Committee on Finance and Investment and the Committee on Student Success.

Over the past few years, Doran has sat in on a few meetings, and she said Fenchak asks for “such

detailed information.”

“The role of a board member is oversight, being engaged and asking questions,” Doran said. “You are not micromanaging, that’s what you hire a president for, and you oversee that.”

According to Doran, Fenchak’s most recent request was for “in-depth information on every single manager” the Penn State Investment Council, which she serves on, uses. She said the council is home to many qualified professionals in investment management finance.

“There is no skulduggery here, so for him to ask for that ... he does not need that.” Doran said. “We’re into hundreds of thousands of dollars in time spent and legal costs for basically BS, and I think Fenchak is way out of line.”

Though Doran acknowledges there are times to push for certain information, referencing her own participation in a lawsuit seeking access to the Freeh Report, she said what Fenchak is doing is “petty harassment” and is taking away from the duties of the university.

She said it’s likely the “harassment and endless misbehavior” of Fenchak and Lubrano has led to the board’s decision to amend the process by which alumni are elected to the board.

While Doran said some former trustees are expressing disdain with the path the board is on, she said she does not align herself with that view. She also said she doesn’t believe the lawsuit for access to the Freeh Report documents should be compared to Fenchak and Lubrano’s pending lawsuits.

“We fought the good fight, but boy, the stakes were big, and it was for the reputation of the university, the lives that were destroyed, the reputations that were destroyed,” Doran said. “Those were battles worth going to the mat for — this stuff, come on.”

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School of Music hosts 2024 ‘Mosaic’ concert

By Nandini Sanghvi
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The Penn State School of Music held its annual “Mosaic” concert from 4-6 p.m. on Sunday evening at the Eisenhower Auditorium.

The show began with the concert’s surprise program unveiled. The first to perform was the Symphonic Wind Ensemble led by conductor Tonya Mitchell-Spradlin. The ensemble performed its rendition of “Moth” by composer Viet Cuong, accompanied by dynamic red lighting effects.

As the Symphonic Wind Ensemble’s performance came to a close, a higher-level box to the right of the auditorium lit in purple to reveal the second set of performers. Michael Holtzapple,

Tim McClure, Carla Mendoza Trejo and Isaac McNulty presented “Leyandas: An Andean Walkabout, VI. Coqueteos” by composer Gabriela Lena Frank.

Next on the program was choir Essence of Joy’s “Ave Maria” and the clarinet quartet “Whirlwind” with Michael Dews, Kevin Perez, Andrew Islas and Joshua Rubin. As one piece flowed seamlessly into the next, the positioning of the performers changed to a different part of the auditorium.

According to audience member Eliza Marcovitch, the performers’ changing positions gave the concert an “immersive” atmosphere.

The performances were followed up by Bach’s “Partita No. 3 in E Major for Solo Violin, BWV 1006, I. Preludio” played by Dor Amran. Amran’s tranquil

solo was succeeded by a more energetic rendition of “Feelin’ Good” by jazz ensemble Vocal Dimensions, directed by Kathryn Hylton.

The first half of the concert reached its final phase with the three next compositions. “Trois Pâtisseries de Paris, I. Pistachie Oranger” was performed by Abigail Alexander, Julia Leone and Mary Capilitan-Pulanco and was followed by the Concert Choir’s “Stars” by composer Eriks Ešēnavals, conducted by Christopher Kiver. The production featured lights that flickered across the auditorium, aligned with the song’s tune.

Audience members found these lighting effects added to the sentimentality of the production.

“I think the lighting added to the performances and helped with the mood and emotion of the piece,” Ani Goldman, a first-time audience member of the “Mosaic” concert, said.

Last before intermission was composer Bob Mintzer’s “Mr. Fone Bone” by jazz ensemble Centre Dimensions, who were directed by Joshua Davis. The ensemble received prolonged applause as Kiver called on all the performers of the first half to bow.

Launching the second half of the concert was the composition “Mood Swings” originally written by Michael Stern and arranged for the concert by Alex Mijangos. This performance was followed by the Oriana Singers’ choral rendition of a Philippine Folk Melody, “Salidummay.”

The folk song was replaced by more classical European compositions in the subsequent



A student plays the french horn at the School of Music Mosaic Concert in Eisenhower Auditorium on Dec. 8, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

performances. Some of these include Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach’s “Marcia für Die Arche H. 621, Wq. 133” performed by the Trumpet Ensemble and “Slavonic Dance No. 8 in G Minor, Op. 46” by the Philharmonic Orchestra.

Up next were more upbeat tunes, from the Glee Club’s performance of Indian composer A.R. Rahman’s “Wedding Qawali” to the Trombone Choir’s performance of “Excerpt from Reflection and Celebration.”

These group performances gave way to a series of instrumental solos by Annie Ziyao Huang on the piano and Paul Robeson on percussion.

Robeson’s textural performance was followed by the con-

cert finale, an exuberant choral production of “The heavens are telling the glory of God from The Creation” by the Philharmonic Orchestra and Combined Choirs.

The performance ended with a long standing ovation from the audience, as the performers walked on stage to take their final bows.

“I feel like this concert was the best way that Penn State shows its commitment to harmony and brotherhood,” Joan Bouchard, a former high school civics teacher and resident in The Village at Penn State, said. “I’ve never been to a concert as good as this.”

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A student plays the flute at the School of Music Mosaic Concert in Eisenhower Auditorium on Dec. 8, 2024 in University Park, Pa.