

# The Daily Collegian

*For the students. For the glory. Since 1887.*

Vol. 125, No. 25

Friday, March 28, 2025

[psucollegian.com](http://psucollegian.com)

## WOMEN'S History Month



Graphic by Isabella Viteri



# Notable Penn State alumnae

By Ava Krysko  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

From a co-anchor of Good Morning America to a U.S. representative, a plethora of influential women in a variety of fields have called Penn State home throughout the years. Since it’s Women’s History Month, it’s the perfect time to learn more about and recognize some of these accomplished women.

### Lisa Salters

Originally, Lisa Salters played for the Penn State women’s basketball team from 1986-87. After graduating, Salters’ career transitioned from playing on the court to documenting what was happening from the sidelines. In 2000, Salters started her career as a broadcast journalist working for ESPN. In 2005, she began working on NBA coverage on ESPN and ABC, and in 2012, began as a sideline reporter for the NFL’s “Monday Night Football.” Since then, she has become the longest-tenured “Monday Night Football” sideline reporter ever. Salters won a Sports Emmy in 2023 for “Outstanding Personality/Reporter.” Additionally, she helped cover the O.J. Simpson trials, the 1998 Winter Olympics and the Oklahoma City bombing trials during her time with ABC News.

### Lindsey Broad

If you’re constantly binge-watching “The Office,” then it’s possible that Lindsey Broad is familiar to you — Broad played Cathy Simms in the NBC series. Simms is a recurring character who fills in for Jenna Fischer’s Pam Beesly while she’s on maternity leave in season eight of the show. Broad plays somewhat of a villain, as her character tries to flirt with Pam’s husband, Jim. Broad graduated from Penn State in 2006 with a degree in



Courtesy of ESPN

**Lisa Salters** smiles on the sideline for ESPN. Salter played for the Penn State women’s basketball team from 1986-87.

theatre, and has been in other acclaimed TV shows and movies such as “Ghosts,” “21 Jump Street” and “American Crime Story.”

### Summer Lee

Summer Lee is a United States Representative for Pennsylvania’s 12th District. Lee attended Penn State from 2005-09 and earned her degree in journalism. She also minored in French and international studies. After graduating from Penn State, Lee went on to graduate from Howard University School of Law. In 2018, Lee ran for State House and won, becoming the first Black woman from Western Pennsylvania to do so. Similarly, in 2022, Lee was elected to the House of Representatives, becoming the first Black woman from Pennsylvania to be in Congress. Lee advocates for issues such as environmental justice, reproductive rights, gender and racial equality and immigration rights.

### Valerie Plame Wilson

Ever wondered what it would be like to be a spy? For Valerie Plame Wilson, that was her reality. Wilson is a writer, spy and former CIA officer. She graduated from Penn State with a degree in advertising/public relations in 1985. Wilson speaks out a lot about the barriers that female CIA agents face every day and advocates for diversity in the field. In 2003, she was outed as a secret agent by Washington Post writer Robert Novak in an event known as the Plame Affair. In 2007, Wilson released a memoir titled “Fair Game: My Life as a Spy, My Betrayal by the White House,” explaining her feelings on the situation.

### Barbara Hackman Franklin

Barbara Hackman Franklin is an American government official, business executive and corporate director. She served as 29th U.S. Secretary of Commerce from 1992 to 1993 under President George

H.W. Bush’s administration. However, that was not Franklin’s only government job — she has served under the administrations of five U.S. presidents. Hackman graduated from Penn State in 1962 and received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Penn State. She went on to graduate from Harvard Business School. Franklin was inducted into the Government Executive Hall of Fame in 2023, named one of the “50 Women who Made American Political History” by TIME Magazine in 2017 and won the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service in 2006.

### Julia Gregg Brill

Although this name may not be too familiar today, Julia Gregg Brill was certainly exceptional for her time and helped pave the way for women at Penn State. Brill was born in 1891 in Tyronne, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Penn State in 1921 and became the first female professor in the English Department at Penn State. Continuing her pattern of pio-

neering, Brill became the first Penn State Woman of the Year in 1958.

### Lara Spencer

Lara Spencer is the face that many people wake up to each day while watching “Good Morning America.” What a lot of people don’t know, though, is that she graduated from Penn State in 1991. Another interesting fact is that Spencer was a nationally ranked springboard and platform diver at Penn State. She majored in journalism, as well. Spencer won a Daytime Emmy Award for “Outstanding Lifestyle Program” for her HGTV series “Flea Market Flip” in 2017.

### Rebecca Hannah Ewing

Rebecca Hannah Ewing may not be a name that is often thrown around today. After all, she was born in the 1800s. Nonetheless, Ewing made her mark on history. In 1873, Ewing became the first female graduate of the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania (back when Penn State was still called that), leading the way for other women who aspired to attend college.

### Ali Krieger

Ali Krieger is a former American soccer player who played as right back and center back during her career. Krieger played for the Nittany Lions during her time at Penn State and graduated with a degree in advertising/public relations in 2007. Krieger went on to play for FFC Frankfurt after graduating, helping it to win the UEFA Women’s Cup. She has played with the United States national team as well and has contributed to winning two FIFA Women’s World Cups.

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## Triota fosters community

By Ashlyn Kafer  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Iota Iota Iota, known as Triota, is the Penn State honor society for women’s, gender and sexuality studies. Triota centers around feminist activism and promoting campus-wide events and activities that bring awareness to issues regarding women’s rights, gender identity and sexuality. Triota’s president, Julia Hollowell, always had an interest in educating herself on various injustices, specifically the ways that women face oppression, which inspired her to join Triota. “The mission of Triota is to educate all Penn State community members, especially students, about issues relating to equal rights, reproductive justice and the history of feminism,” Hollowell, a fourth-year studying human development and family studies, said. “It’s not just about women’s rights, it’s about equality for everyone.” Held weekly in the Boucke Building, the meetings include presentations about upcoming events, activities to engage with and fundraisers to support. The club also has activities or guest speakers to break up its traditional informational sessions. Informational presentations range from discussions about the queer community to misogyny in rap culture. Activities have included zine making, feminist picnary and condom bingo. The club looks to engage a wide variety of individuals, encouraging students of all majors,



Megan Miller / Collegian

**Members of Triota** meet in the Boucke Building on Wednesday, March 19, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

genders and sexualities to participate in meetings, events and activities. Triota’s vice president, Olivia Podskoch, found that the club garners interest across disciplines, creating an inclusive and diverse environment that cultivates a feeling of security among its members. “We are major and minor inclusive, so if you have any interest in feminism or any of our values relating to that, then that’s usually who’s here,” Podskoch, a third-year studying criminology and women’s, gender and sexuality studies, said. “We’re open to anyone who just wants to have a safe space.” Triota’s events and activities range from women’s, gender and sexuality studies lectures, annual book sales and passing out condoms in front of the Willard Preacher. Events like the condom hand-out or tabling events in the HUB-Robeson Center bring visibility to the mission of the club and induces engagement from people who may be unfamiliar with feminist ideas. Triota’s treasurer, Akshata Shastry enjoys the events that bring the organization to light and found it breeds a common ground between differing individuals. “We get to interact with people that would normally be scared off by the word ‘feminist,’” Shastry, a fourth-year studying biology, said. “They want a condom, so then it’s like we agree on something here. We all want condoms.” The club also is heavily involved with the women’s, gender and sexuality studies department at Penn State, allowing them to often have professors talk to members and educate on a more personal level. Podskoch has found that professors not only provide beneficial education from their research, but support connections with students that can be valuable professionally. “I really like doing stuff with the WGSS department as well. It’s great to build that kind of connection with professors,” Podskoch said. “We have a lot of guest speakers come in from the department to talk about their research while making connections, and I think that’s huge, just as students.” A large part of Triota is making sure that its internal community is as strong as the community it supports through its activism. Shastry reflected on how the diverse and inclusive environment of Triota has allowed for vulner-

ability and openness within the club. “Getting to know other people’s experiences does, in a certain way, have to be earned by proving that you’re there to learn and not judge them,” Shastry said. “So I think hearing people open up and getting to hear all this information is a privilege.” Hollowell has also found that the community allows for better discussion and engagement, which can make learning easier for members of the club. “The most rewarding part is getting to have discussions with the other members of our organization, learn about their different thoughts or perspectives on topics and hear from members when they actually do learn something from our meetings,” Hollowell said. While the idea of joining an activist club may seem intimidating, Triota encourages anyone in the Penn State community to stop by a meeting to learn something new or make strong connections with students who may share similar identities. Podskoch touched on the nature of the club and that it’s not as daunting as it may seem. “It’s a great place to meet people and have that space to learn, to teach, to find a community, find friends,” Podskoch said. “Don’t be intimidated by the fact that we’re an honor society. We’re inclusive, and we’re open to anyone who wants to learn.” Hollowell encouraged anyone who is interested to stop by a meeting to experience the culture and education that they offer. “We’re super cool and funky,” Hollowell said. “We have meeting topics ranging from hip-hop to literature, and anyone can join. It’s the most interesting club I’ve ever been involved in.” Shastry implored anyone who may be considering joining Triota or trying something new to engage with the organization and make a difference. “You’re going to learn a lot, and it’s necessary. Feminism is everywhere, and it affects everyone,” Shastry said. “That’s why we’re major-inclusive. We’re mostly women at this point, but we are gender-inclusive because it affects everyone. The more we talk about it, the more we see these effects.”

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## Students host Women in Politics panel

By Maya Ross  
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA) and Days for Girls co-hosted the Women in Politics Panel for students to celebrate Women’s History Month. CEA is a group of at-large representatives and commonwealth student leaders with a mission to promote leadership, non-partisan voter education and service to the Penn State community. Sophia Montany, a member of the CEA, co-chaired the event. Montany, a fourth-year studying psychology, said the purpose of CEA is to “uplift and create sensible belonging in the community.” Their co-chair organization Days for Girls is a student-led club that advocates for menstrual equity in the campus, local and global community. The group incorporates sustainable and inclusive initiatives and services, including sewing reusable menstrual products. “It’s a very important time to focus on issues that affect women,” Emily Cotrufello, a fourth-year studying English and international politics and a member of the Days for Girls, said. The event featured free food and took place in the HUB-Robeson Center’s Lion Lair, as students listened to three women speak about their work in politics. The speakers included Amanda Wintersteen, Penn State’s assistant vice president for federal relations, Julia Rater, a Centre County Court of Common Pleas judge and Centre County Commissioner Amber Concepcion. The speakers spoke about their jobs and how their roles have changed their perspective and impact within their community, as well as discussed their journey within the political sphere. Wintersteen, Rater and Concepcion also gave words of wisdom to the audience when stepping into leadership roles.

Wintersteen touched on her role and passion as an advocate for the Pell Grant. She encouraged attendees to challenge themselves in order to grow and to push against imposter syndrome. Speaking on the importance of getting involved in local government and nonprofits within small communities, Rater advised people to attend board meetings or to sign up for local government email lists. Concepcion also expressed that the small actions matter when it comes to getting involved, elaborating on how she had learned to balance her roles as a professional, a spouse and mother. From working with PSU Votes throughout 2024, Concepcion said one of the organization’s goals at the county level was to make sure the election ran smoothly and that students on campus knew how to register and vote. “I feel like it’s a great place to see a role model and see yourself as well,” Montany said. The evening concluded with a Q-and-A discussion, and attendees were able to donate menstrual products to Days for Girls. Adeline Weitknecht, a member of CEA and the voter education committee co-chair, said she hopes people have takeaways from the event. “I really hope that people walk away feeling like they have the ability to make an impact,” Weitknecht, a fifth-year studying engineering, said. Another member of the CEA, Alexandra Walker, discussed the value of such events. “It’s very important to have these discussions with women in politics, because there’s so much that we just don’t know, and when you open up your mind and you can learn more about other people and our differences, we can all come together instead of being so divided and society,” Walker, a fourth-year studying security and risk analysis, said.

**Emily Cotrufello**  
Days for Girls member

“It’s a very important time to focus on issues that affect women.”

member of CEA and the voter education committee co-chair, said she hopes people have takeaways from the event.

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## Cheers for 'clipping'

Over spring break, I went to my younger sister's volleyball tournament.



**Frederick** It was the first time I've seen her play in a while, since her tournaments always occur while I'm away at school. I was excited to go all "proud big sister." Immediately upon walking in, the sound of cheering parents, screaming coaches and squeaking sneakers greeted us. My dad, sister and I navigated the crowd, set up camp with our folding chairs along with the rest of her team and started chatting. While sitting next to my sister and sipping smoothies for break-

fast, out of the corner of my eye I saw someone walk behind us. Not thinking too much about it, we continued our conversation. It wasn't until she turned her head that I noticed. "Maggie, you have something in your hair."

Reaching behind her, she pulled out a clothespin with something scribbled in Sharpie out of her ponytail and absolutely beamed.

"That's the first time I've been clipped!"

"Clipping," as I've come to learn, is a phenomenon that has taken over the volleyball community. Girls decorate clothespins with encouraging messages and wander around tournaments with them.

The goal is to "clip" other play-

ers without them noticing.

As Maggie explained to me, the whole point is "girls supporting girls."

Between games, my sister and her teammates sat on the floor with stickers, rhinestones and markers and decorated clothespins. Together, they laughed and admired each other's work.

Her proudest product was a red clothespin with gold gems that said "Ka-chow:" Lightning McQueen's signature colors and catchphrase.

Then they walked around, and as inconspicuously as possible, clipped ponytails, backpacks and jerseys. The best part was watching the faces of the clipped people as they realized. Instantly, moods were boosted.

As I've gathered from my room-

mate watching hours upon hours of "Dance Moms," club sports can often be a toxic environment. I thought the tournament would feel far more competitive and cutthroat.

I was never happier to be wrong. I was in awe of this community of young women dedicated to lifting each other up. It was amazing to see complete strangers take the time out of their day to bring a smile to someone's face. Everyone was in on it, and everyone loved it.

Over the course of the tournament, Maggie received quite the collection of clothespins. At one point, my dad even got one.

The clips serve as a physical reminder that we're all in it together, and we're all rooting for each other. Having witnessed

this outpouring of kindness and seeing my little sister thrive and succeed in her sport was the perfect end to my spring break.

In honor of Women's History Month, I want to share this res-toration of faith in humanity brought to you by young women. I encourage everyone to adapt this practice to your daily life.

Even something as simple and silly as a clothespin can make a difference.

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Cartoon by Nate Campbell

## Grappling with girlhood

There are very few things in this world that are universal.



**Phelan** Everybody is born and everybody dies, and every girl knows the look. I didn't even say what the look was, but we all just knew. The look you give your friends in a bar, frat or any public space when you fall victim to unsuspecting attention from men. The hitch in your step when someone's too close for comfort, or having to be polite in order to leave the situation.

These aren't unique experiences for me, for women at Penn State or for women globally.

We've all been with a group of friends having a good time until a five-second interaction immediately kills the mood, and the next plan of action is to get out.

The "Red Zone" suggests the first four months of school are the time when students are most susceptible to sexual violence. The threat of sexual violence doesn't follow a timeline, but rather, a cloud that constantly hovers.

Girlhood isn't always sunshine and rainbows; it's banding together to make sure everyone gets home safe, shared locations and keeping an eye out for some girl you've never met before.

We share the same fear, sadness and frustration that encompasses living as a woman in a male-dominated world. From unwarranted name-calling to double standards, it's not a hidden secret we witness things that others could never comprehend.

As scary as it can be, there's so much to be proud of. The minute you start feeling like girlhood is a burden is the moment where it starts feeling like one.

Boys could never understand the pure joy of a pregame playlist or discovering a new coffee shop where a small latte is \$7.

Women are doing incredible things everywhere, and it's about time we start shouting it from the rooftops.

Just this past year, Katie Schumacher-Cawley led her women's volleyball team to a na-

tional championship while battling breast cancer — there's nothing more badass. Kamala Harris was the first female vice president, and there are currently four sitting female Supreme Court justices.

In 2021, 58% of college undergraduate enrollment was female students.

I touched on this in an earlier column, but women's accomplishments are swept under the rug, often viewed as "expected," while we continue to praise the ground their male counterparts walk on.

I'm going to bring up Taylor Swift again, but this time for good reason. Every time she's on the Kansas City Chiefs' jumbotron, men act like the world is ending and their precious football time has been compromised.

Travis Kelce was a guest during Swift's Eras Tour and was mercifully celebrated. They could've easily booed Kelce for ruining the concert, because why would a man be there?

People will say it's never that serious, but it truly is. The constant undercutting of women in all fields and spaces is a systemic issue with no end in sight.

Being in an environment where there's still bias and stigma attached to the sex of an individual warrants change.

Change is slow, and even at some points seems still, but you'll never regret advocating for yourself and those around you. Remaining complicit is part of the problem, and it feeds into the already-established misogynistic standards.

This is your sign to appreciate all the beauty and goodness that comes with having strong, confident, empowering women in your life. Practice self-love, and recognize the kindness that exists within girlhood, even when it feels like the odds are stacked against you.

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## STRENGTH, SALADS & SHANIA

*How it feels to be a woman*

"Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" And how great does that feel, right?



**Golden** A wise woman once said, "The best thing about being a woman is the prerogative to have a little fun." And truly, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun."

It might seem obvious what being a woman entails, but I can assure you there's so much more behind a hot girl lunch or a \$10 coffee.

Being a woman means a constant support system around you. It means lifting other women or complimenting someone on the outfit they were nervous to wear that morning.

It's putting other women onto your favorite products and brands and letting everyone feel like the best version of themselves. It's about creating a strong community of powerful minds that will never fail to help you succeed.

Being a woman means speaking up and making sure your ideas are heard. It means being confident in your opinions and abilities and making sure everyone listens to your voice.

It's not letting anyone undermine your capabilities, no matter their power or status. It's showing that you are where you are for a reason, and no one can tell you it isn't meant to be.

Being a woman means not always having your best day. It means prioritizing self-care and taking a minute, hour or day to regroup and get yourself back on track. It's showing yourself grace and honoring when it's time to take a break.

Being a woman is coffee dates

with the girls, planning your next trip that will hopefully make it out of the group chat once again. It's debating today's most pressing topics and issues over a lunch of caesar salad, fries and a Diet Coke.

It's about being unapologetically yourself and following your passions. It's about believing you will succeed and working to achieve your goals.

It's about teaching other women to enjoy life, showing them that they can have fun in everything they do. It's about knowing when to be serious and knowing when to let go.

Being a woman means whatever you want it to mean and not letting anyone else tell you who you should be. It's loving the women who came before us and acknowledging the incredible people who got us to where we are today.

Maya Angelou once said, "Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women."

We don't need a specific time of year to be recognized or to prove ourselves. Women's History Month is a time to celebrate women — it's a message to everyone around the world about how badass we are.

It's breaking barriers in the political sphere, creating world-changing ideas and never thinking anything you do is too small or doesn't matter.

The best thing about being a woman ... is being a woman.

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and solicit advertising for them.

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

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### Who we are

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its



# 60 years of women's sports

By Noah Aberegg  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Sixty years ago, Penn State elevated its field hockey program to “extramural athletics,” marking the start of a long history of women’s sports in Happy Valley.

“Penn State, 60 years of women’s sports, is phenomenal,” women’s basketball coach Carolyn Kieger said on National Women’s in Sports Day. “The fact that Penn State began before Title IX was a thing and really bought into female athletics, it’s amazing.”

Penn State has 14 NCAA Division I women’s sports teams, with the women’s volleyball team winning a national championship last season. However, the Nittany Lions haven’t always had opportunities like this one.

“It was certainly harder back in the day when people had to fight for equal facilities for women’s sports,” women’s lacrosse coach Missy Doherty said. “The men’s teams were given the fields, and the women’s teams just had to figure something out.”

In the mid-1960s, Penn State had nine teams ready to compete in intercollegiate sports, according to Martha Adams, the former chairperson of women’s education at Penn State. However, there weren’t enough other schools to play full seasons, so the Nittany Lions only participated in a few matches each year.

In addition to not having enough competition, many female athletes didn’t have proper facilities, limiting their ability to participate in collegiate sports.

“There used to be a time when women couldn’t play (golf) before noon,” women’s golf coach Kristen Simpson said. “Now, most of those clubs and rules are gone. For us, we are welcomed at all of the courses in town and have equal access to everything.”

In the 1970s, Penn State was a leader in women’s sports. When the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare released a draft of regulations enforcing Title IX in 1975, Penn State was there every step of the way.

Penn State employees Joan Nessler, Lucille Magnusson and Mary Jo Haverbeck worked to elevate women’s sports during the fight for equal rights and helped bring them to where they are today.

“There are a lot of women who have come before in the world of sport and pioneers that have helped me, helped all coaches and female coaches and our student athletes,” softball coach Clarisa Crowell said. “There are so many opportunities that our kids have these days that female athletes didn’t have a long time ago.”

One of these new opportunities is increased media recognition, which allows women’s sports to be broadcast all over the world.

“When I was a young player, there was no softball on TV,” Crowell said. “So for younger athletes to be able to grow up and be role models in our sport, I think it’s so important.”

Even when they’re not on TV, athletes have taken social media by storm, sharing their stories and elevating athletes of all levels.

“You see the Caitlin Clark’s of the world that are advocating for women, and the Jordan Chiles or Olivia Dunne’s,” women’s gymnastics coach Sarah Brown said. “It’s inspiring to see them give back and advocating for their teammates. It’s really impressive that young people are truly pulling other women up with them rather than tearing them down.”

Because of athletes like Clark, as well as Penn State’s Tessa Ja-

necke and Jess Mruzik, there’s been more desire to watch women’s sports.

Over the past several years, women’s postseason games have been watched at record rates, whether in person or on TV. Often, the women’s games have seen greater success than the men’s equivalent, such as the 2024 NCAA women’s basketball national championship game.

“Back when I was in college, there was a lot of promotion on the men’s side for their Final Four, and you just kind of accepted that,” Doherty said. “(Men’s sports were more entertaining) was ingrained in your head, (and) that was just the case, so it’s been nice over the past five years-ish, this resurgence in women’s sports.”

Much of this success has been made possible by the coaches at Penn State who helped raise the bar for women’s sports. For Kieger, being a coach and inspiring her athletes was a result of her former coaches, and she’s now paying it back.

“I had amazing coaches who helped me become strong,” Kieger said. “That’s why I am a coach now, for the people that coached me. They’re some of the best people that I’ve ever had in my life.”

These coaches are motivated to push growth both inside the game and out, working with their players to build support for women’s sports in the community and support the young girls who one day want to play at the same level.

“It brings me so much joy as a coach to know the impact that not only I and my staff have, but most importantly, the impact that my kids have on younger kids,” Crowell said. “We might take that for granted, how special that is.”

Today, Penn State Vice Presi-

dent for Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft has made women’s sports a priority, helping elevate them to a position where they can succeed.

“It’s really inspiring to know how much Pat Kraft believes in his women’s sports,” Brown said. “I feel really honored to be under his leadership and have that opportunity to be supported like that.”

In order to reach that level of success, the Nittany Lions have received more training facilities, resources and support than ever before.

“Our girls are treated like queens. We’re given the resources we need to compete at a high level, and they just keep helping us elevate and take it to the next level and make the necessary changes to keep progressing,” Simpson said. “We’re very fortunate and just excited to be part of a school and athletic department that values high-level women’s athletics and helps us get there.”

Despite having more men’s varsity sports than women’s, Brown said the support for women’s teams at Penn State is “unmatched.”

“I’ve never felt that Penn State is a male-dominated space at all, because women are paving the way for us and continuing to pull along others with them.”

For many who have come through Penn State, sports haven’t just been fun competition or a way to earn scholarships. It’s taught them life lessons and helped them grow as people.

“Sport is who I am. It defines me,” Kieger said. “It’s what allowed me to turn into this strong, confident woman that I am today, and I’m very thankful.”

As a coach who’s endured several losing seasons in Happy Valley while being a role model for

her athletes, Kieger has learned from her mistakes and her losses just as much as she learned from her wins.

“The biggest thing is that (sports) taught me how to struggle, how to fight through pain and how to fail, because you’re going to lose way more than you’re going to succeed,” Kieger said. “When it’s all said and done, how you handle that and the moments of defeat is what really defines you.”

Through these struggles and successes at Penn State, the coaches want to inspire younger girls to keep pushing for their dreams in sports.

“My message to younger athletes is, ‘You can do anything when you set your mind to it, and really just follow your dreams,’” Crowell said. “To play at our level or just play collegiate sports, that’s inspiring.”

But even with these vast improvements since the 1960s, there’s still room for growth.

“In a world like today, it’s easy to be satisfied with what we have,” Simpson said. “We have to keep pushing the limits and pushing the boundaries to keep making things better.”

Men’s sports still have a larger fanbase than women’s, and that’s something the Penn State coaches want to change.

“We know the women’s support is not the same as the men’s support, and we know the revenue is not the same either,” Brown said. “But the investment has to be equal, and I think that’s why it’s important for us to recognize how far we’ve come, because that allows us to continue to realize the investment is going to take us even further.”

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# From walk-on to All-American

## Sprinter Zoey Goldstein’s path to fame at Penn State

By Noah Aberegg  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Not everyone starts out living their best life, celebrating success after success. Many have to work hard to reach the top, enduring struggles and difficulties along the way.

This was the case for Penn State sprinter Zoey Goldstein, who earned a full-ride scholarship her graduate year after four years as a walk-on.

Along the way, she’s inspired many young girls, helping motivate them to reach their goals, too. Goldstein’s main platform, TikTok, has nearly 30,000 followers and serves as a space to share successes, struggles and laughs with her followers.

Despite being an All-American and two-time Penn State record holder, Goldstein didn’t start running until the middle of high school after she played soccer for many years.

“Every single time I would get the ball, I could outrun anyone on the field,” Goldstein said. “I would dribble the ball all the way down the field, shoot and miss every single time. I had no foot skills whatsoever. I was just fast.”

Because of that, Goldstein joined her track and field team, and from there, the rest was history.

“I always wanted to go to a big school,” Goldstein said. “I took my official visit to Penn State during the 2019 White Out Game versus Michigan when we won. That experience single-handedly made me realize that this is the place for me.”

Despite not earning a scholarship, Goldstein had faith in the Penn State program and its coaching, knowing she could make an impact as a walk-on.

“I knew deep down, I felt like I truly had the potential to succeed here, even if it took me a couple years to get to that point,” Goldstein said. “So I just took a chance on myself, and the coaches took a chance on me, too.”

During her first year in Happy Valley, Goldstein was still coming off an injury she suffered late in her high school career. As a result, she redshirted her freshman season and took time to develop her skills.

“I was very timid and shy, and I wasn’t super confident in my abilities,” Goldstein said.



Courtesy of Matt Rudisill/Penn State Athletics

**Penn State track and field sprinter Zoey Goldstein** runs a relay at the 2025 Big Ten Championships in Indianapolis, Indiana.

“Coming off an injury as well takes a mental toll on you, but just building that confidence over the years that I’ve competed here and fully immersing myself into the experience of being a Division I athlete at the Power Five level, I know my times will reflect that.”

Entering Year 2, Penn State hired a new assistant coach to lead the sprinters. Goldstein and coach Brandon Rizzo instantly clicked, and her potential skyrocketed.

“Once I had the coaching change from Coach (Erin Tucker) to Coach Rizzo, his training just worked so well for me,” Goldstein said. “His motivation and positivity gave me so much confidence as an athlete.”

One of Rizzo’s biggest goals when he works with younger athletes is to refine their high school performance into a tougher and stronger collegiate level, and that’s just what he did with Goldstein.

“With her, I just had to show her who she is,” Rizzo said. “Zoey Goldstein, how good is she, how capable is she?” When she rediscovered what her talent is, she’s legit.”

During Goldstein’s sophomore season, Rizzo worked to add much more speed to her training regimen, leading to success in her first season competing.

Goldstein competed in the 2022 Big Ten Championships during both the indoor and outdoor seasons, placing seventh with the 4x400-meter squad and ninth with

the 4x100-meter team.

Over the next three years, the Fairfax, Virginia, native accumulated numerous successes while competing on many different relay teams.

“The best thing about Zoey is that she’s always willing to sacrifice any of her personal goals for the team,” Rizzo said. “(The distance medley relay) was the highest thing on her list rather than her own personal goals, because she understands that it’s more than just her. It’s about how much she can elevate others while elevating herself. She’s willing to put her body on the line for this team.”

In her senior year, Goldstein set the Penn State school record in the distance medley relay during the indoor season, earning All-American status with the seventh-best DMR in NCAA history.

Months later, Goldstein and her teammates broke the Penn State sprint medley relay record at the 2024 Penn Relays, capping a historic senior year.

“Being All-American at NCAA’s was just something that was a bigger accomplishment than I ever could have dreamed of when I showed up here as a little walk-on my freshman year,” Goldstein said. “When you accomplish something like that, there’s just nothing like it.”

Goldstein began to share her experience and success as a Division I runner to the world via TikTok, where she films and posts videos of her time at Penn State.

Through these videos, Goldstein hopes to inspire young runners and athletes around the world who hope to be in the same position as her.

“If I know that I have helped at least one girl in a similar position to myself, I’ll be satisfied and take that with me, and that’s something that I hold very dear to my heart,” Goldstein said.

Unlike some content creators who hide the negatives from social media, Goldstein puts it all out there and is open and transparent about everything.

“(Her success) is earned with all the recognition she gets and for all the hard work she puts into it and how much she loves inspiring others,” Rizzo said. “What really goes close to home for me is that she’s brutally honest about her experience as well. It’s not always sunshine and rainbows. She shows the reality of our team.”

For sophomore sprinter Ryleigh Hearn, Goldstein’s TikTok helped share the Penn State experience and helped her make her decision to come to Penn State.

“When I was in high school, I personally followed her TikTok,” Hearn said. “Being able to come here and see how great she was in person, she really matches who she is online versus real life.”

As Goldstein entered her graduate year after breaking two school records, she earned a full-ride scholarship.

“This is something I’ve always wanted for her, and I honestly

choked up,” Rizzo said. “Financial support also comes with the value of being part of the team, but also just the point of getting to the next step, just feeling even more appreciated for all the hard work you’re putting in. It was a beautiful moment.”

As the first sprinter to go from walk-on to full-ride status during Rizzo’s tenure, Goldstein’s work ethic and success have motivated many on the team who have started in a similar boat, including Hearn.

“I also came on as a walk-on, so it really shows me how much being a walk-on doesn’t mean (anything), and how you’re on the team,” Hearn said. “You’re on the team, whether you’re on scholarship or not, you’re there to work and you’re there to work hard, and she has done a great job at showing us that.”

With the current outdoor season serving as Goldstein’s last before graduating, she’s taken a moment to look back at everything she’s learned over the past years through triumphs and struggles.

“I wish I could have a conversation with my freshman self and tell her, ‘Just keep grinding, just keep working. You can accomplish more than you ever thought you could have,’” Goldstein said. “If I told my 18-year-old self, ‘Hey, you’re going to go from being a walk-on to a full-ride athlete and break school records and be an All-American,’ she would be like, ‘Yeah, right.’”

Since she can’t go back and change time, Goldstein hopes that she can install these hopes into some of the younger runners on the team that gave so much to her.

“I love every single one of the girls and the guys in the sprint squad,” Goldstein said. “We have a little ongoing joke that I’m the granny of the team. It feels strange to think that people see me in that (leadership) way now because I have always thought of the older girls in that way.”

Even after she graduates, Goldstein’s impact will not be forgotten, including by Rizzo.

“She will be someone I miss at practice every day,” Rizzo said. “I don’t really think I can imagine coaching without her.”

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# ‘For every girl at any fitness level’

## Girl Gains empowers women in weightlifting world

By Ava Krysko  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Whether just starting out or a long-time pro, Girl Gains PSU is dedicated to providing resources and a safe space for female weightlifters.

Club president Kate Lukens explained why she joined and why the club is so beneficial for women who are interested in weightlifting.

“I joined because I wanted a community I could relate to,” Lukens, a fourth-year studying biobehavioral health, said. “Being in the gym as a girl can be intimidating, and this club helps with that.”

Lukens has been in the club since her third year, when she started out as the event planner. As president, she has different responsibilities that help the club prosper.

“I’m responsible for sending out meeting info, leading meetings, helping come up with ideas and making sure everything runs smoothly,” Lukens said. Lukens also described what makes being part of the organization so worthwhile.

“I love being able to help others,” Lukens said. “We are all learning from each other and showing support.”

Lukens said she really enjoys sharing the joy that comes from weightlifting with other women and helping them feel more confident in the gym scene.

“Girl Gains is still new at PSU since we established in 2022, but we are always working to be better and add more support for girls,” Lukens said. “Even though I’m about to graduate, I cannot wait to hear how this club continues to flourish.”



Courtesy of Girl Gains PSU

**Members of Girl Gains PSU** pose together for a photo. Girl Gains is an all-female workout group that promotes resources for female weightlifters.

If she had to describe the club in three words, Lukens would say it’s “inclusive, supportive and uplifting.”

Abby Laurence, the vice president of the club, said it’s comforting to have support from other women who have a common interest. She recommends others join because it gives everyone an opportunity to meet new people and work out with women of different weightlifting levels.

“My favorite part about being involved in Girl Gains is getting to learn from the other girls in the gym, and the friends I’ve made that I get to share my favorite hobby with,” Laurence, a third-year studying psychology, said.

Laurence also gave a description about what meetings look

like in the club, noting there are various activities to be involved in.

“A normal meeting can look like several different things — structured group lifts led by some of the board members and mentors, including myself, informational sessions that talk about topics ranging from gym tips or meal guides, and fun social events like hikes, gatherings at someone’s home, friendship bracelet making, self-care nights, et cetera,” Laurence said.

Laurence said her roles in the club include leading some of the informational meetings and group lifts, attending daily meetings, planning events and making sure that the other members can rely on her.

“My most rewarding experience since joining the club has been building my confidence in my abilities to be a leader,” Laurence said. “My role as the vice president comes with many responsibilities, and it has been very rewarding to challenge myself and put time into something I love.”

Event planner Hailey Felice described her experience in Girl Gains as incredibly rewarding for multiple reasons.

“I joined Girl Gains in the hope of making friends, which was accomplished,” Felice, a fourth-year studying biobehavioral health, said. “I was able to find people who shared similar interests with me and have built lifelong friendships. If other girls are looking for

a group of supportive people, this is the group to join.”

Felice explained how Girl Gains decides what to do at meetings and other events.

“When coming up with ideas for meetings, the board gets together and brainstorms what we would want to learn if we joined this club,” Felice said. “We also do research on other clubs that can offer fun activities relevant to our community, and reach out to plan something fun.”

The group has a collaboration coming up with CHAARG and the Student Farm, where members will engage in a low-intensity workout and make nutritious snacks in the Student Farm’s outdoor kitchen.

As for her favorite part of the club, Felice said she loves watching girls grow confidence in the gym.

“The Girl Gains community is an uplifting and empowering group of women,” Felice said. “We come from all fitness levels and encourage each other to reach our goals and have fun while we are doing it.”

Felice outlined the importance of making members feel confident while working out.

“We emphasize to our members that you do not have to be a pro to go to the gym and to workout in ways that you are comfortable,” Felice said.

Felice also mentioned that it doesn’t matter if you have a background in weightlifting or not; any woman who is interested can join.

“Girl Gains is for every girl at any fitness level,” Felice said. “Everyone is welcome no matter your experience.”

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Lexie Linderman/Collegian

**Members of Penn State’s Association for Women in Sports Media** listen to Amanda Vogt present about beat writing during their meeting in the Willard Building on March 18, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

## AWSM supports women in sports

By Katie Herron  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM) supports the advancement of female Penn State students passionate about sports media.

President Kendall Skalicky believes that even though sports media is a male-dominated industry, it doesn’t mean that female students can’t make it as well.

“Our mission is to encourage girls to get involved in sports, to know they have a place in sports and to know that they can accomplish their goals,” Skalicky, a fourth-year studying broadcast journalism, said.

Since Skalicky joined AWSM her first year at Penn State, she has enjoyed seeing it grow each year.

“We have 400 girls on our email list, which is insane,” Skalicky said. “It’s literally doubled since my freshman year.”

At the organization’s weekly meetings, Penn State alumni and other guest speakers share their journey as women in sports media.

“We usually ask about their career path and how they got to where they are today, which is super helpful because in sports, it’s not as clean-cut as other lines of work are,” Skalicky said.

The success stories shared with AWSM members each week help drive the students to continue working hard to reach their goals.

“Hearing from so many successful women every time, it never gets old, and it’s just inspiring in itself,” Skalicky said. “Now as a senior, seeing younger girls come in so hungry to get involved and want to follow in people’s footsteps is really cool.”

Secretary Amanda Vogt chose to come to Penn State mainly because of AWSM.

“It’s definitely made me feel

more comfortable and more confident in myself that I am choosing the right path,” Vogt, a third-year studying broadcast journalism, said. “I think it’s really easy to get imposter syndrome — that you either aren’t good enough, or you’re not meant to be where you are.”

She appreciates the connections she has formed with not only the guest speakers, but also the other members.

“This is a place that helps each other grow, rather than try to beat someone down,” Vogt said. “It’s not ‘I got this role, and you didn’t.’ It’s ‘I got this role. Let me help you make those same connections with me and build each other up.’ That’s what I really love about it.”

Vogt believes AWSM is a great source for first-year students to get the most out of what Penn State has to offer. The organization recommends clubs and organizations to each member that align with their goals.

“This club, especially in the fall, tries to explain all the opportunities that Penn State has for you, and we really take pride in breaking all of that down and being a resource for people right away,” Vogt said.

AWSM gets its members involved by organizing bonding events, hosting a formal and attending sports games together. The organization was even invited to watch the FOX Big Noon Kickoff show last football season.

“As a member, you just come when you want, and you get as much out of it as you put in,” Vogt said.

Lauren Harth, the group’s treasurer, took advantage of the opportunities the organization and her fellow members showed her during her first year.

“I have found great lifelong connections in the club, but those connections have also guided me to different opportunities here on

campus that I might not have been able to find if there wasn’t somebody pointing me in that direction,” Harth, a second-year studying broadcast journalism, said.

Harth believes AWSM has helped her grow her networking skills and form genuine connections with professionals in the sports media industry.

“I’ve learned a lot about networking,” Harth said. “It’s kind of a daunting idea when you first get to college, and everybody’s like ‘network, network, network.’”

Harth encourages first-year students to get involved with everything right at the start. She’s currently working with Penn State football and recruiting, but she has also experimented with working in radio, podcasting and writing.

“You can learn so much about what you like, but also more importantly, what you don’t like,” Harth said.

Skalicky welcomes interested students to join AWSM. The organization and details about joining can be found on its website, Instagram and at the Penn State’s Involvement Fairs.

“The cool thing about AWSM is you don’t even have to be in the College of Communications. You can be any major,” Skalicky said. “If you want to learn about sports or think you might be interested, you are totally welcome.”

AWSM aims to lift up female students and give them every opportunity to succeed.

“Women deserve a chance to have their own spotlight, and especially in college, seeing women in the roles that you want, it helps you think that it’s attainable for yourself,” Vogt said.

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## PSRJP hosts SexEd panel

By Jonathon Chiu  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The Penn State Reproductive Justice Project held a Sex Education panel in collaboration with the department of women’s, gender and sexuality studies Tuesday evening in the Thomas Building as part of Reproductive Advocacy Week.

The speakers at the panel, which was titled “Asking For a Friend,” included Jill Wood, a professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies, Erica Smith, a sexuality educator and consultant and Carmelita Whitfield, the director of community health for University Health Services.

Panelists answered questions on various topics that were submitted anonymously prior to the event, as well as questions posed by audience members.

Wood said events such as Asking For a Friend offer the chance to debunk common myths about sex.

“I think sexuality education in the U.S. currently, based on how it’s offered and how kids and young adults get it, is primarily from friends and social media, and it is not from someone who has an education in sexuality education,” Wood said. “It’s not just uncomfortable but it’s controversial, even in terms of physiology and the language used around bodies.”

For Wood, speaking alongside Smith and Whitfield allowed for a healthy discussion of what sex can mean to different people.

“Someone’s understanding of their own sexuality in relationship to someone else is really about them being able to be more clear about their own values and beliefs and ideas and having the skills to communicate those to someone else or go seek additional resources or

support, and so I think having different perspectives can be really helpful,” Wood said.

Emma Martinson, one of the moderators and event organizers, said sex is a topic that is often very hard to speak about openly.

“Spaces like this where people can have their questions answered is very important, especially in a climate where these sorts of topics are becoming more and more taboo,” Martinson, a fourth-year studying women’s, gender and sexuality studies, said. “We want people to have the space to be able to talk about them safely and comfortably.”

Martinson, who is also the director of education for the Penn State Reproductive Justice Project, said she hopes that the events slated for Reproductive Advocacy Week are allowed to continue in the coming years.

Autumn Kroenung said she found the event to be very insightful into the nuances of sex.

“I was extremely informed and, as someone who didn’t go to a high school where sex ed was prioritized, I definitely got a lot of good information that I’m gonna use in my daily life, and I’m gonna share that information with others,” Kroenung, a third-year studying criminology, said.

Kroenung elaborated by referring to the discussion of consent during the panel and how it’s not as spoken in comparison to sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy.

She believes there should be more events like Asking For a Friend to inform Penn State students.

“I think a lot of people should come to these because it’s really informative, and I learned a lot today,” Kroenung said.

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Jacob DeLuca/Collegian

**Dr. Jill Wood (center)** speaks as a panelist at the “Asking for a Friend” Sex Education Panel on March 25, 2025 in University Park, Pa.





# A TALE OF TWO CHAMPIONS

**By Evan Smith**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Mitchell Mesenbrink and Carter Starocci.

Penn State's two 2025 NCAA Division I national champions are similar in their dominance on the mat and their love of wrestling. Both men ended the season undefeated and are finalists for the 2025 Dan Hodge Trophy, given annually to the nation's best wrestler.

They're also united by unusual mindsets that drive their success compared to the rest of the country. The difference is what their mindsets entail and how it shows on the mat.

The difference between the way Mesenbrink and Starocci view a wrestling match is the difference between a game of chess and going to war. When the two speak, you learn a lot about their scouting and preparation.

Mesenbrink has an analytical mind focused on learning, improving and out-gaming his opponent. The Hartland, Wisconsin, native views wrestling like a chess match in which his mental edge will carry him far.

"There's a lot of philosophical terms you can put in there," Mesenbrink said on his wrestling focus. "Cardinal virtues, stoicism ... courage and temperance and justice and discipline."

He isn't focused on direct results, but rather on getting better every time he's out there.

Mesenbrink said his father and coaches guided him to a mindset growing up where qualitative performance was the measuring stick over quantitative results. He would rather "bring it"

and lose than win a match where he didn't bring his all.

"I'm so lucky to have been brought up through that," Mesenbrink said. "It's not all about being a national champion, it's about your performance."

While Starocci said he's scouted everyone from 157 pounds to heavyweight, he focuses his discussion on simple domination and intimidation.

While Mesenbrink may not focus on results, Starocci's upbringing made him feel like dominating wasn't a goal, but a necessity.

"I don't come from much money, so whatever dad had, like food-wise, I had to roll with," Starocci said. "If you beat this guy Saturday night, you're living a completely different life."

Wrestling isn't just his passion, it was an opportunity that he needed to take advantage of. To Starocci, he's not playing a game against his opponent when on the mat. He's going to war.

"Some guys look at (wrestling) as just a sport," Starocci said. "But for me, it's much more than that. It's soul for soul out there. It's my 24 hours versus your 24 hours. It's my coaching staff versus yours. It's my training partners versus yours. It's my dad versus your dad. That's kind of how I look at it."

While neither wrestler likes to talk about specific opponents publicly, even the tone is different between them when they do.

After the Big Ten Championships, Mesenbrink was brimming to speak highly of his rival, Iowa's Mikey Caliendo.

"I told (Caliendo), 'You battle, most guys don't.' So I appreciate



Penn State's Mitchell Mesenbrink (left) and Carter Starocci (right) look on during the NCAA Wrestling Championships on March 22 in Philadelphia.

that," Mesenbrink said.

When Starocci brings up a specific name, it's usually not followed by a compliment. Just look at his past feuds with AJ Ferrari and Gabe Arnold.

While his words for Ferrari wouldn't be published in some papers, his exchange with Arnold went viral this season.

After the Iowa Hawkeye called out Starocci, the Nittany Lion brushed it off by saying, "The other guy's better," in regards to Arnold's 184-pound teammate — and brother of AJ Ferrari — Angelo Ferrari.

What's surprising is that once on the mat, these two voices switch places. Mesenbrink is known to talk constantly during matches, staying loose and frustrating his opponent on top of his skill.

"He annoyed me because he wouldn't shut up one day."

Mesenbrink's trainer and UFC legend Ben Askren told FloWrestling. "He just jabbers, and they can't do anything about it."

Starocci's matches are a different case. His massive personality quiets down as he focuses on what he preaches: domination.

The five-time national champion wins matches because he refuses to lose. After suffering a loss during his freshman year of high school, he decided that if he was going to wrestle, he was going to win.

"You hate to lose so much that you will do whatever it takes to win," Penn State coach Cael Sanderson said. "Most people don't have that. (Starocci) does."

Their varying perspectives create different approaches to matches. Mesenbrink radiates looseness, while Starocci radiates intensity.

They also share different views on how to grow the sport, which mirrors their wrestling personalities.

Mesenbrink said the way to make wrestling more popular is by having more guys go out on the mat willing to scrap. Starocci said the key to the sport is developing and featuring stars.

The two statements focus on opposite sides of the equation but go hand in hand. A star is born through success on the mat and from a unique personality off of it. Starocci and Mesenbrink each fill those requirements.

Both men will leave a mark on the Nittany Lions, not only on the record books, but on the underclassmen below them.

Freshmen Luke Lilledahl and Josh Barr have clearly learned from their teammates.

Lilledahl's recent uptick in confidence is reminiscent of his five-time national champion colleague's attitude, while Barr's focus on the "eternal principle" of improvement mimics the 165-pound champion's dialect.

While Mesenbrink and Starocci have different personalities, they stand together at the top of their weight classes.

Penn State took two guys from different backgrounds and united them in a room that made them mainstays of the national scene.

"Carter talked about having a target on his back," Mesenbrink said. "That has been so far removed from my wrestling. I just want to go get people. I don't care if I'm number one or last."

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# Meet the UPUA candidates

## Elwakil and Port

By Tyler Nolt  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

On March 3, Vice President Rasha Elwakil and Speaker of the Assembly Fletcher Port announced their executive ticket for the 20th Assembly on Instagram.

“Rasha and I are in a very unique situation that we’re very lucky to be in,” Port, a third-year studying mechanical engineering, said. “You have a speaker and a vice president who have time left in the UPUA. That is a very, very unique thing when you look at the history of the UPUA.”

Port, the vice presidential candidate, explained that students who’ve filled the positions of speaker and vice president in the past have typically been graduating seniors. Hence, having an executive ticket made up of UPUA leadership experience would serve as a hard-to-find benefit.

Presidential candidate Elwakil, a third-year studying geography, ran a successful campaign last year with UPUA President Zion Sykes. Elwakil described herself as Sykes’ right-hand woman, filling in for him when he’s unable to attend an event, as well as serving alongside him in responsibilities such as sitting on the Board of Trustees.

“I really was able to observe

the role of UPUA president in a first-hand lens, and through that, I realized this is something that I really want to do,” she said.

Along with being UPUA’s vice president, Elwakil holds positions in many organizations on campus, including vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion for the Panhellenic Council, DEI chair for Lion Ambassadors, a web writer for Valley Magazine, a millennium scholar and more.

While some may see such high involvement as a distraction, Elwakil sees it as helpful for extending UPUA’s reach throughout campus.

“My other organizations that I’m in really help bridge those gaps, such as within Greek life,” Elwakil said. “UPUA has never collaborated with Greek life as it has this year, and there’s been so many cool opportunities, engagements and collaborations with that, and it really just is because I’ve been reaching out to these organizations, but I’ve also been a part of these organizations.”

Port is also involved on campus outside of student government, serving as a Lion Ambassador and a member of 46 Live. He describes his involvements as revolving around bringing people together for a greater cause.

Elwakil and Port have described their focuses as fitting



Alexandra Antoniono/Collegian

**Rasha Elwakil (left) and Fletcher Port (right)** are running together for UPUA president and vice president, respectively.

into four pillars: affordability and financial accessibility, infrastructure and sustainability, student well-being and equitable support systems, and government relations and administrative transparency.

Through their campaign website, they’ve laid out why these pillars are important and the numerous ways they plan on fulfilling them. This includes initiatives like a \$15 minimum wage on campus, textbook price caps, free of charge period product dispensaries and increased student communication through UPUA blog posts and open office hours.

For issues that require more from university officials, such as the issue of sustainability, they also have plans to advocate for recycling in dorms and more conversations on the topic of carbon neutrality.

“Her and I both are absolutely connected, emotionally and personally to those pillars,” Port said. “It’s what we’ve heard from other students, but it’s also what her and I face. I think that really heightens our connection to it and our feelings of passion towards it.”

Both Elwakil and Port have expressed confidence in

completing these goals, frequently referencing their previous involvements in student government since their first year at Penn State, and Port for even longer, with experience from middle school and high school.

“My senior year will be my 10th year of student government, and this is the 25th election that I’ve run,” Port said.

Another aspect that adds to their confidence is their campaign team.

Yifan Bu, the Elwakil–Port campaign manager, got to know the two of them through her role as executive director of finance.

“Throughout my time working with them in the 19th Assembly, I definitely saw their passion as well as their drive in the UPUA,” Bu, a third-year studying finance, said. “Honestly, they are the perfect candidate in my opinion, given that not only have they had such a run in UPUA, but also their sheer knowledge.”

When Bu was approached by Elwakil and Port to be their campaign manager, she accepted the position because she believes in them as student leaders.

“We’re here for the students and what is in their best interest going forward,” Bu said. “Honestly, we wouldn’t be here if we didn’t hear feedback — if we didn’t see areas of the campus that we could improve.”

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## Fowler and Lindgren

By Claire Huss  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

At the beginning of the fall semester, Ben Lindgren approached his close friend Mike Fowler with a proposition: to run for president and vice president of the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA).

They officially announced their candidacy on March 3, and students will have the opportunity to vote on April 2.

“When he had come to me with this idea of coming together to run on an executive ticket, I couldn’t think of anybody I’d rather enter into this endeavor with,” Fowler, the presidential candidate, said.

Fowler described himself as “incredibly passionate,” through his commitments to Penn State. He serves as Lion Caucus president, is involved with THON, is the vice chair of the University Park Fee Board and a member of UPUA.

“Through all those involvements, I’ve gained a very strong understanding of how the university works, who is really able to make change... , as well as been able to form strong connections with each of those individuals,” Fowler, a third-year studying political science, said.

Lindgren, his running mate and vice presidential candidate, brings his dedication to a more sustainable future to the campaign.

Lindgren has experience as a resident assistant (RA), the UPUA sustainability summit and director of food justice, AmeriCorps — where he has over 300 hours of community service — the Lion’s Pantry, the Penn State Student Farm and the Office of Student Care and Advocacy.

“College continues to get more expensive, and students aren’t affording basic needs,” Lindgren, a third-year studying international politics and community, environment and development, said. “These are things I’ve seen firsthand, and as vice president, I can support Mike with implementing goals to alleviate those challenges.”

The Fowler-Lindgren campaign is held up by three pillars: the future of accessibility, empowerment and the campus.

Campaign Manager Litzy Sandoval said the pillar of empowerment and the campaign’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is shown through the diverse, all-female team.

“It goes to show that they’re very open-minded people and

very willing to educate themselves,” Sandoval, a third-year studying middle level education, said. “I don’t think the only thing that differentiates us is the fact that we’re all female, but the fact that we all come from different upbringings and backgrounds.”

In addition to the diverse perspectives brought to the campaign by the team, Sandoval believes the connections Fowler and Lindgren have at Penn State make them able to promote actionable improvement.

“Penn State students need someone who is going to not just give us empty promises, but give us actions that show improvement, and that is what Fowler-Lindgren is capable of doing,” Sandoval said.

Some key initiatives the campaign plans to accomplish are achieving carbon neutrality and zero-waste programs at Penn State, establishing free CATA bus rides to grocery stores, strengthening the Student Minority Advisory and Recruitment Team (SMART) and lowering tuition costs for in-state and out-of-state students.

“We are looking outside the university bubble and looking at how we can support the community,” Lindgren said. “Getting things done in actionable steps really sets us apart from some of the other tickets.”

Adding on to Lindgren’s point,



Alexandra Antoniono/Collegian

**Mike Fowler (left) and Ben Lindgren (right)** are running together for UPUA president and vice president, respectively.

Fowler emphasized how these initiatives are more than just ideas, but actually possible to achieve.

“It’s not just a concept of a route that we could potentially go in the future, but it’s an actionable item that Ben and I have the experience, the expertise, the connections and the knowledge to implement on this campus,” Fowler said. “(We) are passionate about each and every one of these actionable items and know exactly how to implement them as president and vice president.”

Although University Park has over 40,000 undergraduate students, Fowler said there isn’t a very large voter turnout for UPUA elections.

“This is an incredible opportunity for students to speak about where your student government will go in the future, and I encourage everyone to vote on April 2, regardless of who you vote for,” Fowler said.

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## Meert and Conway

By Rachael Keller  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Josh Meert and Sam Conway are one of three duos for voters to choose from in this year’s UPUA election on April 2.

Meert, a third-year studying political science, is running for president with Conway, a third-year studying English, philosophy and comparative literature, as his vice president pick.

When he got to Penn State, Meert knew he wanted to join UPUA.

“I feel like I can connect with a lot of different people over a broad range of things,” Meert said. “I thought this would give me the best opportunity to meet as many people as I could.”

In his freshman year, he ran for an at-large representative position, but lost. A year later, he ran again and won, which led him to work on the Justice and Equity Committee and the Student Life Committee.

During his time as an at-large representative, Meert said most of his efforts were spent on researching and constructing bills.

Meert said he decided to run for president because he had spent most of his time in UPUA looking up to current president Zion Sykes.

“I really want to kind of be like him, emulate him, because he’s done amazing work, and I want to make sure his legacy continues,” Meert said.

In the campaign, Conway said the pair champions affordability, accessibility and transparency.

Working toward creating more

scholarship opportunities, Meert said the pair wants to eradicate the 19 credit fee, which charges students for each additional credit after exceeding 19 credits in a semester.

Similarly, Conway said the team would like to continue fostering relationships with groups like Lion Caucus in order to advocate for equitable state funding. He also said Penn State could do more to ensure all buildings are ADA approved.

“I know for a fact that there are heavy doors, there are sidewalks that tend to ice over,” Conway said. “So partnering with the Office of Physical Plant to kind of determine what those problem areas are and solve them as best we can ... would be the goal.”

Conway emphasised the importance of transparency in student government, which he said is not just having open access, but promoting different resources to students like transcripts and documents of UPUA’s meetings.

Meert said he and Conway would focus on raising sustainability initiatives and ensuring students are more knowledgeable about their academics.

Another thing Meert wants to implement is a group of people who are knowledgeable about artificial intelligence (AI) and can consult with UPUA and students about what can be done with it.

After getting to know Conway better over the past year, Meert said he chose him as his VP candidate because he’s a “really level-headed guy.”

“He’s really smart, and he’s also so detail oriented, which kind



Alexandra Antoniono/Collegian

**Joshua Meert (right) and Sam Conway (left)** are running together for UPUA president and vice president, respectively.

of keeps me in check,” Meert said.

Conway said UPUA is his first student government experience, though he has done some local government work in Maryland.

In his first year, Conway was UPUA’s director of corporate communication in the executive branch, and in his second year, he was a member of the Department of Environmental Sustainability. He is now an at-large representative.

Throughout the year, Conway said he saw how passionate Meert was about students, education, making resources accessible and helping in any way possible.

“It was really inspiring, and I was actually flattered when he asked me to be his VP,” Conway said. “I, of course, accepted without hesitation because I really believe that we could make a change on this campus and that it is possible.”

Besides being in UPUA, Conway is vice president of Kalliope

Magazine, a member of Lion Caucus, University Park Allocation Committee (UPAC), advises in Nittany AI Alliance, founded Penn State Undergraduate Law Review and is working on starting a chapter at Penn State for the Remedy Project.

Between his upbringing with two parents in education, his experience in advocacy and his passion, Conway said he knows he’s in this election for the right reasons and will advocate for all of the people who need it.

Having moved around a lot due to his father being in the military, Meert said he grew up very shy, but said the experiences he had growing up made him have a better understanding of people now.

Something clicked during his second year of college, and he could talk to anyone about anything.

“If you’re always social, you kind of expect other people to al-

ways be social, always be open ... and you might get offended and put off if they’re kind of closed down,” Meert said. “I was like that for much of my life that I feel I can break through those barriers slowly overtime and get to know these people and hopefully become their friend.”

Meert said he tries his best to focus on individuals and make as many connections and friends as he can because “it’s the human thing to do.”

Outside of UPUA, Meert is in the Korean Learning Club, Club Dodgeball, MMA and Muay Thai.

Akito Hatch is serving as Meert and Conway’s campaign manager. Hatch, a second-year studying criminology and political science, said he agreed to be their campaign manager because they are people he supports 100%.

As their campaign manager, Hatch said he spends most of his time advising, working on exposure, photo ops and managing their social media presence.

“They’re very honest people, and I think they are very hard working,” Hatch said. “They get things done, and I would love to see them in the 20th Assembly.”

Conway said UPUA elections give students a voice and an opportunity to decide who represents and advocates for them.

“These are people who are doing work for students, elected and chosen by students, who will get to know them over the course of the election period,” Conway said. “There’s that space for conversation and collaboration that’s not necessarily present at higher levels or internally elected levels.”

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# ‘ALL ABOUT TONIGHT’

## Blake Shelton brings ‘Friends & Heroes’ 2025 Tour to BJC

By Jocelyn Bilker  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Blake Shelton’s “Friends & Heroes” 2025 Tour arrived at the Bryce Jordan Center Saturday evening. The sold-out concert’s closing night featured performances by Craig Morgan, Deana Carter, Trace Adkins and Emily Ann Roberts, each of whom are considered heroes of the country genre, as well as special guest Gwen Stefani, Shelton’s wife.

Shelton is best known for his decades-long country music career and his twelve-year span as a judge on “The Voice,” where contestants compete to gain a recording contract with feedback from a panel of four coaches.

Each artist was featured throughout the concert and performed various songs from their repertoire.

Roberts was the opener and began with “He Set Her Off.” This is her second time touring with Shelton after being on his team on “The Voice” nearly ten years ago.

“It has been such a crazy journey,” Roberts said as she launched into a cover of “9 to 5” by Dolly Parton.

Morgan played career hits “Redneck Yacht Club” and “That’s What I Love About Sunday,” while Carter covered “We Danced Anyway” and “How Do I Get There.” Adkins’ set included “Honky Tonk Badonkadonk” and “You’re Gonna Miss This” before performing two songs with Shelton, “Hell Right” and “Hill-billy Bone.” Each of these artists were mixed into Shelton’s set as the spotlight was passed between them for two to three songs.

Each of the artists came together to play “Who Are You When I’m Not Looking,” “Every Light In The House,” “Almost Home” and “You and Tequila” in what Shelton dubbed as a “friendly competition,” despite Shelton himself faking being angry when Adkins and Morgan garnered more applause than he did after their acoustic sets.

“Those are the people that write and sing the songs that



Megan Miller/Collegian

**Blake Shelton** performs at the Friends & Heroes Tour concert on Saturday, March 22, 2025 at the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park, Pa. Shelton was joined by Emily Ann Roberts, Craig Morgan, Deana Carter, Trace Adkins and his wife of three years, Gwen Stefani.

become the soundtracks to our lives,” Shelton said. “Country music, it’s the songs that we relate to and the songs that help us figure out who we are as people.”

Hannah Gampe described her lifelong passion for country music.

“I really like Blake’s music, so I thought it was the perfect event,” Gampe, a full time Research and Development Engineer at the Applied Research Laboratory and a part-time student at Penn State’s World Campus, said. “I remember watching the CMT videos in the morning before school.”

Shelton’s set opened with a video of a radio switching between various stations as he went into a rendition of “Pour Me A Drink,” a song he originally performed with Post Malone.

“This is the last night of the ‘Friends & Heroes Tour,’ so we plan on blowing it out for y’all,” Shelton said. “For some reason today I just don’t give a s—. All I want to do is sing country mu-

sic, drink and have some fun on a Saturday night.”

In the midst of his first set, Shelton took some time to read off fans’ signs to him. He even invited a fan onstage for a hug after reading her poster.

Jaime Weigand talked about her love for Shelton and his music, even bringing a sign with her that read “Blake, sign my boots.”

“He’s very much a people person... and he’s hot,” Weigand, a registered nurse from Altoona, PA, said. “He is my favorite singer.”

Weigand was a VIP and had the opportunity to sit on one of the barstools that surrounded the edge of the diamond-shaped stage.

Sue Severino of Jersey Shore, PA, has a personal connection to Emily Ann Roberts.

“I was most excited to see Torey Harding, who is the guitar player for Emily. I work with Torey’s mom at a dentist’s office,” Severino, a dental hygienist, said. “I saw Blake last year in Hershey

so I’m so excited.”

The highlight of Roberts’ performance was a song she released a few weeks ago called “Easy Does It.”

“The idea for this song came from my relationship with my husband. Before I met him, I dated some real losers,” Roberts said.

Tim Kokoskie, a Penn State alum of the class of 1984 had seats close to the stage.

“I saw Trace Adkins at the Charles Town Casino and it’s going to be an awesome concert,” Kokoskie said. “This concert was a birthday and Christmas present from my girlfriend.”

Nannette Vota, Kokoskie’s girlfriend, also a Penn State alum from the class of 1984, was also excited about the proximity of their seats to the stage.

“I’m just happy to be here at the BJC,” Vota said. “Just listening to Blake is amazing.”

Surprise guest Stefani made an appearance alongside Shel ton, singing duets of “Happy

Anywhere” and “Nobody But You.”

“I told you there would be surprises tonight,” Shelton said as his wife of three years strutted onstage.

Alyssa Dively, a promotions assistant, saw Shelton for the first time last year.

“He puts on a really good show and has a wide range of songs,” Dively said. “The surprise appearance by Gwen Stefani was my favorite part. I thought Blake was going to be the big pull, but I was surprised to see how much the energy shifted when each artist came on.”

Shelton continued his set by playing his oldest song, “Austin,” right before launching into his newest song, “Texas,” to close out the show.

“This has been the ‘Friends & Heroes Tour,’ I’m so glad you were here for it,” Shelton said.

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# ‘The climate can’t wait’

## Penn State students, State College community members rally in favor of climate action policies

By Mia Debelevich  
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The Climate Action Campaign (CAC) held a rally on the HUB-Robeson Center lawn Monday in protest of recent policy decisions by the Trump administration, calling for climate action amongst students and community members.

Recently, the Trump administration has made cuts to disaster relief and flood protections and intends to dismantle the Department of Education, leading 50 students and community members to hold signs in opposition.

Peter Buck, director of education for Penn State Sustainability, said the State College community wants its rights not only protected, but advanced. In his speech he referenced the Community Bill of Rights adopted in 2011 by State College voters as an example of success for environmental protections.

“Success begets success,” Buck said. “Pressure matters and consistency of action matters.”

Hilary Caldwell, national campus organizer for the CAC, high-

lighted recent environmental policy changes implemented by the Trump administration as the catalyst for the rally, including the appointment of Lee Zeldin as the new Environmental Protection Agency administrator, whose 31-point plan has raised the CAC’s concerns.

“His 31 new points would basically gut us of institutional public health and environmental protections,” Caldwell said. “That is simply unacceptable. The climate crisis is not a thing that is going to happen in the future. It’s here, it’s now.”

When addressing attendees, the CAC called for lawmakers to understand the impact of climate change on a larger scale.

Kaelyn Antolick, vice president of the CAC, said the impact of climate change is “threatening health, communities and economies.”

“We are telling the EPA that people care,” Antolick, a second-year studying psychology and child maltreatment and advocacy studies, said. “Why would you want to ruin the place you live? Keep it beautiful and don’t ruin it. Take action.”

State College Mayor Ezra Nanes said university funding, particularly research funding, is being “threatened” following administrative decisions.

“(Penn State) is a world-class research institution, the research that happens here benefits people around the world,” Nanes said. “That affects livelihoods here and the output of the university and so much more. I think it’s hard to overstate how big an impact that could have.”

Alongside calls for legislative action, the rally also highlighted the desire for campus sustainability programs and emphasized continued momentum leading up to local elections.

“I hope that our lawmakers, local and federal, take our actions here and just recognize that we do care about the climate and continue to push legislation that is mindful of our climate,” Gentry Doucette, a second-year studying political science, said.

Organizers urged students to stay involved beyond the rally and emphasized continued momentum leading up to the elections. Danielle Cahn, president of the CAC, said one of the goals of the rally was to encourage more students to take action in terms of climate change.

“The climate can’t wait,” Cahn, a second-year studying hospitality management, said. “This is our home. We all live here, there’s no excuse.”

Cahn said Trump’s mentions of dismantling the Department of Education will reduce education about climate change for upcoming generations of students. Cahn also said the CAC will continue to host events in response to administrative decisions about climate change.

“Make sure our future generations have a good home and a good place to live,” Cahn said. “Keep our earth healthy and thriving.”

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# Independent frats form council

By Julia Key  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Three independent fraternities — Pi Kappa Alpha, Tau Kappa Epsilon and Sigma Chi — announced the establishment of the State College Interfraternity Council (SCIFC) at a press conference last Friday.

The council was created to foster a more inclusive and connected Greek Life at Penn State, according to SCIFC President Sam Lanza.

“By focusing on governance and community involvement, we are setting the stage for the new era that prioritizes the values it needs of our members,” Lanza said.

Lanza said the idea for the SCIFC started two years ago and was quickly created throughout the 2024-25 school year.

The move to create an independent council follows similar steps taken by fraternities at the University of Michigan, the University of Colorado Boulder, West Virginia University and Duke University.

“The SCIFC is committed to creating a fraternity experience that is both personally enriching and socially responsible,” Lanza said.

According to Vice President of Risk Rafael Mendoza, fraternities within the SCIFC must adhere to the North American Interfraternity Council’s guidelines.

Additionally, it said Greek ID cards will be introduced to track attendance at events and promote accountability.

According to Lanza, the SCIFC is looking to move away from the Piazza Agreement, a settlement between Penn State University and the Piazza family following Timothy Piazza’s 2017 hazing-related death at Beta Theta Pi.

In an effort to combat hazing, the SCIFC will have a student judiciary board which will decide on any disciplinary action.

Prior to the creation of the

independent council, two of the organizations faced suspension from the university, and the remaining organization elected to remove itself from university recognition.

Now, these same organizations are purportedly providing their own oversight, heightening the risk of the members to undergo hazing and alcohol abuse without punishment, according to a statement from the university.

Penn State said this move was “deeply concerning” and said it “strongly discourages any student from affiliating with these unrecognized organizations and urges all students to avoid events hosted by these groups.”

The university warns students that joining any of the independent organizations puts them at danger with a “greater potential to threaten the well-being of those who participate in their events.”

Penn State simultaneously recognizes that it has seen a commitment by multiple students and recognized Greek-letter organizations to partner with the university to promote positive changes and continue to cultivate a healthy fraternity and sorority system.

“Together with students, alumni, legislators and other partners, there is the potential to continue combatting the pervasive harmful behaviors that occur on college campuses across the country,” the statement reads. “Penn State is committed to working with fraternities and sororities that share our goals to foster a community that is safe, responsible and enriching for future generations.”

The university’s statement said the positive aspects of Greek life are “well worth protecting,” and it will continue to collaborate with organizations that share the values of protecting students from documented harms associated with unaffiliated chapters.

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Brittain Banull/Collegian

**Attendees** hold signs while listening to Ezra Nanes, mayor of State College, at the Climate & Education Rally on HUB lawn.





**The Penn State wrestling team** celebrates after winning its 13th national title at the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships in the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. The Nittany Lions finished the team competition with 177 points and 10 All-Americans. It broke the team score record for the second year in a row.

# ‘THE GREATEST EVER’

*Cael Sanderson leads Penn State wrestling to 13th national title*



**Head coach Cael Sanderson** (center) watches 184-pound wrestler Carter Starocci during the title match of the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships.



**Tyler Kasak** celebrates after winning his first consolation match. Kasak finished third in the 157-pound weight class.



**Josh Barr** celebrates after his second round match during the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships.



**Mitchell Mesenbrink** celebrates after defeating Iowa’s Mike Caliendo in an 8-2 decision in the title match of the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships. Mesenbrink also won the award for most technical falls in the season.



**Mitchell Mesenbrink** wrestles in the second round of the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships.



**Beau Bartlett’s** hand is raised after his third place match at the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships. This was Bartlett’s 100th career win.



**Carter Starocci** wrestles NIU’s Parker Keckeisen in the title match of the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships.

*Carter Starocci takes home historic 5th NCAA title*



**Luke Lilledahl** celebrates after winning the consolation semifinals at the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships. Lilledahl was the only true freshman All-American.



**Carter Starocci** celebrates after defeating NIU’s Parker Keckeisen in a 4-3 decision in the title match of the 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championships. Starocci became the first and only NCAA Division I wrestler to win five individual national titles.