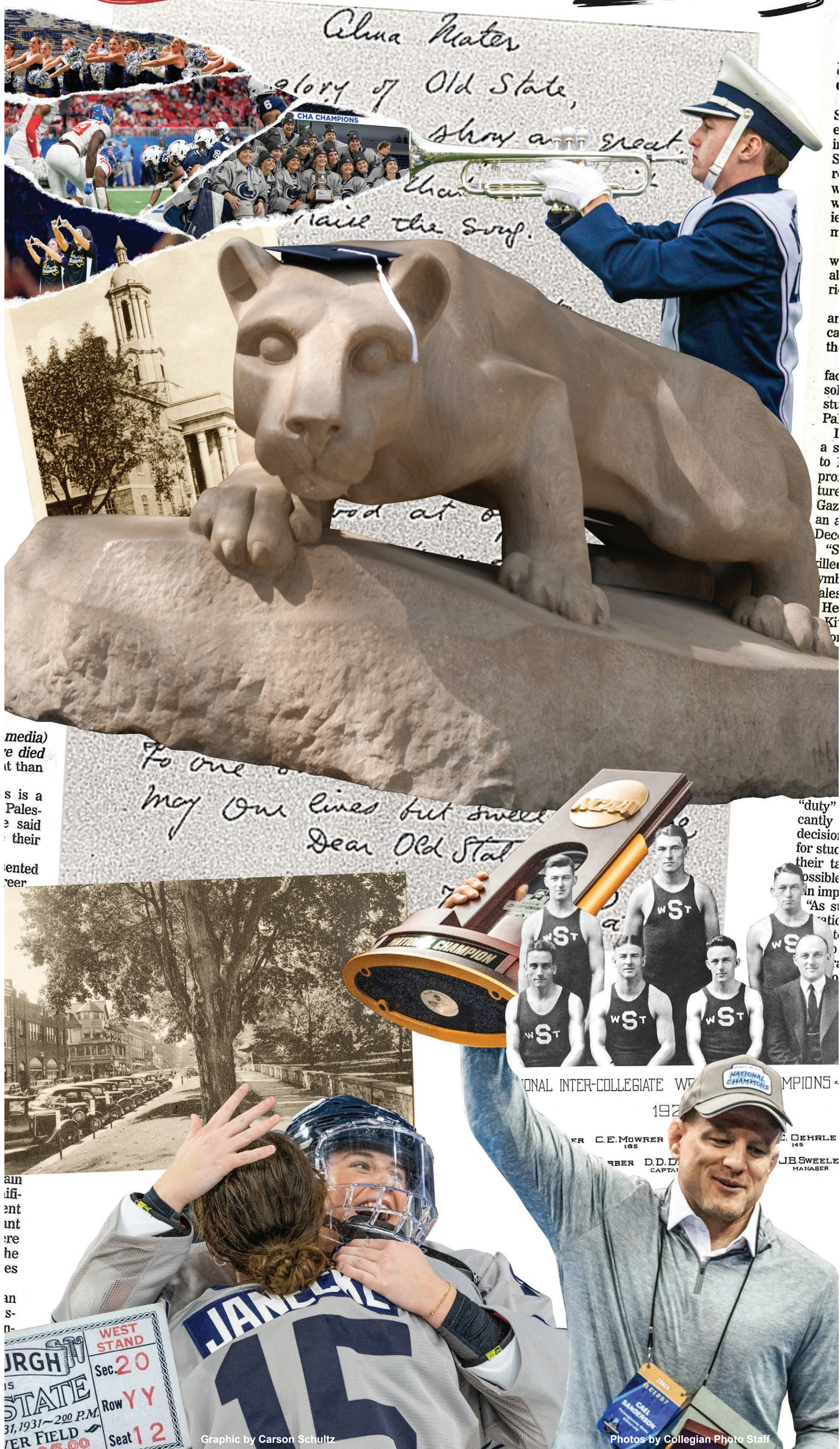


# A YEAR FOR THE BOOKS





# Pursuing degrees and funds

By Kate Hildebrand and Sienna Pinney

THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State students do a lot to earn their education. Plasma donation, waitressing, surveys and studies are just a few of the ways these Penn Staters afford living in Happy Valley while pursuing their degrees. The following stories are first-person accounts of Haley Parker, a third-year studying psychology and Spanish, and Macy Miskiewicz, a fourth-year studying public health. Their words have been collected and paraphrased by Collegian reporters. This story is part of a project entitled “Pockets empty, dreams full — at Penn State” in which The Daily Collegian and other student journalists explored how financial insecurity can reshape the Happy Valley experience in profound ways. This project is part of the student media News Consortium.



**Haley Parker, a third-year studying psychology and Spanish,** poses for a portrait in the Student Care and Advocacy Center.

### Haley Parker

I live alone this year, and I got myself into a tight financial situation. At the beginning of the school year, I was scrolling on TikTok, and I saw a lot about donating plasma. I wasn't sure if it was for me at first. I've donated blood once before, and it made me pass out.

The first time I went to donate plasma, in September, it took about two and a half hours. I had to get a physical before I donated for the first time, but now the appointments are much quicker. The plasma donation center, BioLife, has an app for donors that sends us deals every week. Usually, I try to keep two weeks between donations so I keep my veins healthy and don't bruise.

The nurses are great at what they do, and I haven't had any bad experiences. I've also gotten over my fear of needles. For first-time plasma donors, there are a lot of great deals. For my first eight sessions, I was paid \$900 in total.

Plasma donation doesn't take a whole lot of preparation. I eat one to two hours beforehand, and I make sure to drink a lot of water. I'm sitting there for about an hour and I can't fall asleep, so I bring a book to read or a podcast to listen to or I

scroll TikTok when I forget to bring something. I also bring a blanket — when they pump saline in after they've taken your plasma out, it gets pretty cold. Once the donation is over, I sometimes get tired, so I make sure I don't have anything to do right after and I go home to relax.

For me, there really aren't any negatives to donating plasma. It's super easy, and I get a lot of money out of it. It also allows me to do fun stuff that I wouldn't be able to do without the extra cash. I can go out for dinner with my friends without worrying; I can decorate my apartment the way I want it.

I work two jobs, too. I'm a case management intern at the Student Care and Advocacy Center, and I'm the first paid intern the center has ever had. I get to connect students to resources that help them succeed, and it's not a super demanding internship. I can do homework when there's not a lot to do, and it's really flexible.

My other job is at the Bryce Jordan Center, where I work as a ticket taker. It's also super flexible. I just sign up for whatever events I want to, and I only have to work once every 30 days, so I make my own schedule. It's a great source of supplemental income.



**Macy Miskiewicz, a fourth-year studying biobehavioral health,** poses with her ice cream at the Berkey Creamery.

### Macy Miskiewicz

It all started with an ice cream cone.

At my first job in high school, I worked at an ice cream shop that was licensed to sell Creamery ice cream. The owners were a married couple who met and fell in love at Penn State. I thought that it must be where dreams are made of.

I'm a first-generation college student, and I pay for my Penn State education with several different jobs. I'm in my fourth year of a five-year biobehavioral health program where I'll receive a master's degree in public health and minors in sustainability and English.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, I work at Penn State's SECURE Lab studying child obesity. I'm also the student program coordinator for EcoReps, an organization that promotes sustainability. On Sundays and Mondays, I waitress at Olive Garden. I work 30-40 hours every week.

To earn extra money, I do taste tests at Berkey Creamery and participate in other surveys and research studies at the university.

Not having to work as much during my time in college is not worth the 10% interest rate that I'd be paying off for the rest of my life.

I wish I didn't have to worry about my finances the way I do. Once I got to my ju-

nior year of college, I realized that the cost of college wasn't feasible with my income at the time. I needed another job. Since then, I've only taken classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays to give myself as much time as possible to make money. My graduate classes are online, which also helps with flexibility.

I've been very stressed all the time. I'm not an outwardly stressed person, but internally I'm always worried about money, I'm always worried about school, I'm always worried about something. It's never-ending.

I've gotten much more comfortable with asking people for help. My tuition increased by 2% last year, and it's been really tough to afford my education. So, I trick-or-treat for funds. For the past two years, that's been the method to my madness. Asking and simply being vulnerable with people has helped me out a lot.

I often feel like I could do better in school, that I'm not living up to my academic potential. Funnily enough, academics come second for me a lot of the time because I need the money to pay for the academics. But I know that my degree will be something that I earned. I'm working for my degree in every capacity, and it's going to mean much more to me than someone whose parents paid for their college. This is my gig, my degree — not my parents'.

## Commencement times, dates

By Maggie Day  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State spring 2024 commencement ceremonies for University Park and World Campus undergraduate students will take place on May 3, 4 and 5 in the Bryce Jordan Center, according to a release.

There will be two spring 2024 commencement ceremonies for graduate students which will both take place at 4:30 p.m. on May 5 in the BJC for master's candidates and in the Pegula Ice Arena for doctoral candidates.

The ceremonies will be divided by time and college for undergraduate candidates:

**Friday, May 3**

**4 p.m.** — Schreyer Honors College Medals Ceremony

**7 p.m.** — College of Engineering

**Saturday, May 4**

**9 a.m.** — Smeal College of Business

**1 p.m.** — Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications

**4:30 p.m.** — College of Liberal Arts

**Sunday, May 5**

**9 a.m.** — College of Health and Human Development

**1 p.m.** — Eberly College of Science

**4:30 p.m.** — The Graduate School, master's candidates

**4:30 p.m.** — Graduate ceremony, doctoral candidates in Pegula Ice Arena

Gates will open 90 minutes before each ceremony begins, according to the release.

Guests attending the College of Engineering and Smeal College of Business spring commencement ceremonies are required to have a ticket.

General parking will be available in the Stadium West and Jordan East parking lots next to the Bryce Jordan Center and Pegula Ice Arena, according to the release.

ADA parking will also be available in certain sections of the Stadium West, Jordan East and Orange L parking lots.

The Bryce Jordan Center will be following its regular bag policy during commencement ceremonies. More information is available on its website.

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Follow her on X at [@maggie\\_day](https://twitter.com/maggie_day).



**Students** watch a performance by Neon Trees during the Movin' On music festivals on April 28, 2023 in University Park.

## Who's performing at Movin' On?

By Teresa Phelan  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With Movin' On 2024 approaching, let's meet the performers who are going to grace the stage on April 26.

### Dayglow

Dayglow is a solo indie project led by Sloan Struble, who performs live with Peyton Harrington, Brady Knippa, Norrie Swofford and Colin Crawford.

In 2017, Struble released an album titled “Kindred” under the same name before starting Dayglow later that year. Although Struble is the only member, he compares the relationship to the one of Tame Impala and Kevin Parker.

With over 5 million listeners on Spotify, Dayglow has 10 singles and three studio albums, each with a feel-good take on classic pop music.

**Sexy Red**

American rapper Janae Wherry, known as Sexy Red, has established herself as a force in the rap scene after collaborations with NLE Choppa, DaBaby, Drake, SZA and Nicki Minaj.

With metaphors and literary devices hidden deep within her lyrics, Wherry has branched out from the typical rap music that focuses on the sexualization of women — drawing inspiration from the intricacies of daily life.

Her trademark red hair will make another appearance in State College, after stopping by the 2023 White Out game earlier this year.

### Freddie Gibbs

Fredrick Tipton is a Grammy-nominated rapper under the stage name, Freddie Gibbs. After launching his record label, ESGN, in 2013, Gibbs has released nine total albums — five independently and four collaborative.

His music has been featured in NBA 2K12 and Grand Theft Auto, and in 2022, he found himself acting on the TV series “Power Book IV: Force.”

**The 502's**

In 2016, Ed Isola and his cousins won the chance to perform at the Okeechobee Music & Arts Festival, with Mumford and Sons and Kendrick Lamar.

Its chart-topping hit “Just A Little While” gathered 10 million streams in one month due to its exposure on social media, and with a successful career already established, the band was able to launch their first tour and perform at festivals around the country.

**Hot Fudge Yacht Club**

After winning “Battle” on April 9, Hot Fudge Yacht Club earned its spot to open Penn State's annual semester-ending music festival.

Based in State College, its “basement funk” sound and infectious energy during performances have contributed to the band's local success.

In 2024, the band debuted its first EP, “Vol 1.” with fan favorites “Mr. Mayor” and “Colosus” rounding out the five-track release.

## Downtown building catches fire

By Kate Hildebrand  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

At 6:08 p.m., Alpha Fire Company received a report of a fire at the Smith Building. Firefighters were able to put out the fire within 15 minutes.

The call was initially reported as a house fire, according to Centre Region Fire Director Shawn Kauffman.

The Smith Building is a university-owned property on Coal Alley. It's currently used as a storage space.

There were no injuries and traffic was not affected. Kauffman said the cause of the fire was unknown.

No further information was available. The investigation is ongoing.



Jackson Ranger/Collegian

**The side of a building** is destroyed after an explosion on April 24 in State College, Pa. The Smith Building is a university-owned property on Coal Alley that is currently used as a storage space.



# Budget changes impact graduate TAs

By Samantha Verrelli  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

*Editor’s note: Some of the sources in this story are anonymous to protect their identities. The Daily Collegian has verified through fact-checking that these individuals are members of the search committee.*

It’s no secret that graduate students often have minimal leeway in their budgets. But some Penn State graduate students feel their salaries have gotten too low, with many of them on government benefits and food stamps to make ends meet.

Brittney Hauke, a Ph.D. student in the department of materials science and engineering, said she’s “barely” making enough as a graduate employee.

At Penn State, graduate employees can be teaching assistants or research assistants, which is done alongside their classwork.

“They do not provide you a lot of wiggle room to think about anything else, like car maintenance or taking my cat to the vet, or other things besides getting food,” Hauke said.

Making the situation worse at Penn State are recent rent increases. According to RentHub, median rent in State College increased over 35% between February 2022 and 2023.

On the Coalition of Graduate Employees’ Facebook page, information was shared in a recent post regarding students’ eligibility for SNAP benefits and food stamps. Graduate student employees on a lower salary grade have reported relying on these benefits.

Susie, a graduate employee within the physics department who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, was living with her partner last year. Both were reliant on food stamps.

After one year, their rent went up 20%.

“I ran out of money and had to literally beg my parents for help,” Susie said.

In regard to speaking anonymously, Susie said via email, “In the physics department, a noninsignificant portion of the faculty meets criticism with defensiveness, and there is a per-



Regan Gross/Collegian file photo

**Trees** cover the walkway to the Kern Graduate Building. Some graduate teaching assistants shared how they struggle to keep up with rising State College rent and increased class sizes amid Penn State budget changes.

vasive culture of suffering in silence amongst the students for a reason.”

“If I attach my name to what I’ve said, I just don’t trust that there won’t be any negative consequences.”

After reaching out to the university for comment on graduate students who require government assistance, Penn State News reported that the Graduate School has convened a task force to assess the graduate school funding model.

Through the initiative, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Levon Esters is looking for ways to align graduate education support with President Neeli Bendapudi’s vision and goals for the university, including fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, as well as interdisciplinary research.

“It’s concerning to hear that some graduate students are discussing supplementary financial assistance,” Esters said via email. “In my role as dean, I plan to do everything I can to improve the overall graduate student experience across the university. That’s one reason I’ve decided to form a university-wide task force

to explore and identify new ways to improve funding possibilities for graduate students, who serve a central role in the university’s teaching, research and outreach mission.”

Esters said in addition to the monthly stipend, assistantships provide several types of financial support, including tuition remission; subsidized medical, dental and vision care; and payment of the student-initiated fee.

According to MATSE faculty members John Mauro and Josh Robinson, “All teaching and research assistants are paid through stipends commensurate with the type and grade level of assistantships. Stipends are determined by the department providing the assistantship. Stipend amounts for each grade are set annually by the University and increased by 3.5% for the 2023-24 academic year. Stipends will increase again by 3.5% in the 2024-25 academic year, as approved by the Penn State Board of Trustees.”

Teaching assistants take on more work due to university-wide budgetary restrictions.

Braden, a graduate student who wishes to remain anony-

mous, said for graduate students within the department of materials science and engineering, teaching assistants don’t get paid.

Whether graduate students get paid to teach depends on the department and the funding it receives, including external grants.

Braden said he values teaching and opted to go to graduate school not for research, but to become a better educator.

“I really care about teaching. I want to give my students a good experience,” Braden said. “But I should also be paid for all that effort ... I teach them well, but that takes a lot of time.”

According to multiple individuals The Daily Collegian spoke with, teaching assistants are discouraged from having side jobs. They’re asked to participate in 20 hours of teaching weekly.

“Twenty hours a week doesn’t sound like that much, but considering that we’re doing classwork and research as well, it’s a lot of time to be spent,” Susie said.

The expectation that all graduate students complete research negatively affects her class performance, Susie said.

When asked, she couldn’t name any benefits that she’s experi-

enced from being a TA.

“I like being a good TA. If I’m doing that role, I like to do a good job with it,” Susie said. “I don’t want to make the poor undergraduates suffer just because of the messiness that is in the physics department.”

Many STEM students are required to take lower-level physics classes as part of their general education requirements — physics classes are the “backbone” of so many branches of science, she said. Supporting this many students requires a lot of TAs. Because of this, Susie said the effects of the new budget model could “completely screw over” the physics department.

“This problem isn’t a one-dimensional issue,” Susie said. “I think that this is something that’s going to require a lot of planning on someone’s part to fix it.”

One of the expected implications of the new budget model was larger class sizes — a fear for some undergraduate students, Ashley said. She said she worries there will be a push for more asynchronous classes online.

“That devalues education and devalues the work of faculty and graduate students who teach,” she said.

Ashley said she doesn’t have the “bandwidth” to teach any more students or classes without a raise.

According to Ashley, it’s hard to get an “RAship,” a research assistant position, to avoid being a TA. When a student is a TA, they are still expected to complete research, but they don’t get paid for it — it’s just part of their expectations as a graduate student.

“I didn’t go to grad school to be rich,” she said, noting that graduate students using food stamps shouldn’t be a “talking point.”

These issues bring about conversations relating to the university’s values and if they’re changing to become more undergraduate-focused.

“I think the juice isn’t gonna be worth the squeeze,” Ashley said. “I think most universities will start becoming undergraduate degree farms.”

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## Lion’s Paw Alumni Association



We proudly congratulate the Class of 2024 for an outstanding year of service to Penn State!

Alaina Johnston  
April Komal  
Ava Starks  
Cade Miller  
Cory Lindey  
De’jah Coates  
Dylan Benson  
Evan Linkimer  
Zeina Delgado

Marieme Dia  
Mary Lefever  
Maryanna Diallo  
Minju Michelle Lee  
Nick Dawkins  
Nora O’Toole  
Sofia Moussan  
Will Vincent

We warmly welcome the Class of 2025 in anticipation of an exceptional year!

## Alumnus writes book about post-Sandusky era

By Rachael Keller  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

*Editor’s Note: Chris Raymond was a former editor-in-chief of The Daily Collegian.*

Chris Raymond’s “Men in White,” which comes out Aug. 13, tells the story of the Penn State athletes who mended the football program and its reputation following the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse case in 2011.

Raymond got his start at Penn State in the 1980s at The Daily Collegian covering football for two seasons then moving on to be the editor in chief. He said he covered football in the “heyday of Paterno’s program,” recounting attending the 1987 Fiesta Bowl National Championship.

“I saw those players on the team when they were freshman and sophomores and saw the end result when they were juniors and seniors and the impact of that program,” Raymond said. “What it meant to be a Penn State football player was not just excellence on the field, but it was excellence in the classroom.”

Penn State was such a “large part of his identity” during this time, and the Sandusky news was “crushing” to hear, he said.

“We were always the good guys, and now because of the actions of this one monster all of that is sort of cast into doubt,” Raymond said. “There was just a huge firestorm around it.”

During his time at Penn State, Raymond began to fall in love with magazines and worked at Esquire, ESPN Magazine and GQ Magazine. He currently works for Consumer Reports.

“When the pandemic hit, and we were no longer commuting, working remotely and everything seemed ugly and scary, I was kinda looking for something inspiring,” Raymond said.

He then became inspired to write his book.

He recounted when NCAA sanctions came out, and the university had to pay a \$60-million fine, which resulted in a reduced number of scholarships available and a five-year program suspension.

After this decision was announced in 2012, the team held an informal conference where players Michael Zordich and Michael Mauti told the nation they were committed to Penn State and will work to rebuild the program’s reputation.

“At a time when the whole thing could have been crumbling, for them to say, ‘No, we’re staying and we’re going to rescue (the program).’ I just understood what a heroic thing that was to do. ... That just really struck me,” Raymond said.

Five years later, Penn State went on to win a Big Ten Championship.

Starting in August 2021, Raymond spent over a year interviewing around 60 people for the book, including players, coaches, writers and alumni. He also said he spent hours looking through press conferences, locker room interviews and gameplay videos to really understand the dynamic at that time.

“It’s a hard story to tell as a fly on the wall,” Raymond said. “I felt like it really needed to come from the players themselves, it really needed to be told in their voices. That’s the only way we’re going to get the truth of it.”

Christian Hackenberg, Saquon Barkley, Trace McSorley, John Urschel and Sam Ficken are just some of the players Raymond recounts playing a large role within this overall story.

Marc Resnick, vice president and editorial director at St. Martin’s Press, became the editor for Raymond’s book after receiving the submission.

“I love oral history,” Resnick said. “As long as the author is able to get a wide range of subjects to interview they can create this mosaic — this tapestry, when constructed properly, can tell a story through the experiences and voices of people who lived it.”

According to Raymond, the press didn’t treat the subject of his book fairly in its early days. Therefore, it was important for him to gain their trust.

He said the only way this book would ever work was if they were willing to talk to him in an “unguarded way.” In the end, Raymond said it was them who made the “leap of faith” to be a part of the project.

Mark Brennan, editor and publisher at Lions247, covered Penn State football alongside Raymond at the Collegian. He said many people have generated ideas about similar concepts, but he felt Raymond was the kind of person who could bring “justice” to the story.

“Knowing Chris and knowing a lot of the people who he interviewed, I’m confident in saying that you’re going to read things that you never knew about what was going on at that time in the history of Penn State football,” Brennan said.

Raymond said his time writing this book was “remarkable.”

Despite a few setbacks, he knew this story needed to be told and that pushed him to keep going.

“In a lot of ways this was a very personal book for me,” Raymond said. “It almost felt like I was meant to write it.”

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Why everyone should get punched

By Nick Stonesifer  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

I've been punched in the face a lot. I've felt cartilage in my nose shift, noticed bruises on my lip and somehow avoided a black eye.

It's an uncomfortable experience and demands resilience.

For some context, I'm a boxer. A little out of practice, but nonetheless a slugger. I've thrown and received punches from all sorts of people.

People above my weight who should have scared the piss out of me, people who seemed smaller in stature but were fierce as they came and people who just came to bang it out.

And while I don't bleed too much, that acrid and metallic taste is a reminder of so much in life. It's a reminder of the good, the bad and the unforgiving.

But what I've noticed after taking a few wallops on the jaw is that life gets less scary. The pain becomes subjective and what you make of it.

In many ways, it mirrors my time spent at The Daily Collegian and chronically reminds me of all the hurdles we overcome all the time.

Each day we come into this office, we're not afraid to punch above our weight, we never underestimate anyone and sometimes, we just get in a scrappy fist fight.

This time was sure to come, but now that I'm here, I don't know what to make of it. My final words for the Collegian and parting wisdom that maybe five or six people will actually read.

Collegian grandpa on his rocking chair with a shotgun and his laptop.

I'll start with a healthy dose of honesty.

This was a rough year. It feels upsetting to start that way, but this year took it out of me. This position stress-tested me more than anything else I've ever done. And I feel like I did a lot during my time at Penn State.

I was a Collegian staffer all four years I spent here, a member of the Penn State competitive boxing team and just a guy trying to enjoy college.

A lot of what is needed to succeed in this position stripped me of those parts of myself. It was all consuming during a year when the Collegian needed it the most.

This year dragged me to



Jackson Ranger/Collegian

Sophia Montanye, left, and Olivia Estright, right, pretend to punch Nick Stonesifer, middle, on the steps of the Willard Building on April 24 in University Park, Pa.

depths of myself I never really want to see again. It's a position that doesn't care if you're having a bad day, or if things aren't how they should be at home, or if you want a minute of respite.

In short, it's a punch in the teeth. This is a good thing.

There's another version of this column that exists where I could go on for pages about the negative — and I did. It'll stay in my Google Drive for the time being.

But after taking a lot of good metaphorical punches this year, I'm left with perspective.

For all of the rough of this year, there were equal parts good. First, I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to lead a newsroom of so many young and hungry journalists.

I loved it here and would consider many of the people on staff to be some of my closest friends. We saw a lot together, and I hope we see so much more together.

To my wonderful family — I actually wouldn't be here without you, and your support through all of these years has meant the world. I love you all and thank you.

Anna — Somehow you continue to put up with me, which I am incredibly grateful for. This was a long and rough year, but you always supported me when I needed you. I love you very much and can't wait to support you on your master's journey.

Maddie, Shane, Lindsey, Jade,

Becky, Andrew, Megan, Courtney and Will — Thank you, thank you, thank you.

To my first top three, you all gave me a chance to really find myself within the Collegian. You weren't afraid to give me a challenge and let me run with it. For that, I'm eternally grateful.

To my second top three, I will forever be inspired by you guys and so grateful for all you did. At no point did I ever not believe in myself when I was around you. You were never afraid to push me to my limits and make me the best version of myself.

To my last top three, you guys are the reason I'm where I am today, and without you all, I wouldn't have had what it takes to see this year through. You are all truly a blessing, and I miss you.

Amy, Sam and Alex — I'm wishing you all the best this year. You guys continue to impress me more and more each day. You guys are the future of our home, and I expect you'll treat it well.

You guys are the next generation, usher it in with pride.

Sammy V. — Just know anytime I see a train from here on out, I'll be thinking of you. You've become one of my best friends this year, and I know you're going to do great things out in Virginia.

I am so blessed to have worked alongside someone who pushed me to be great. You are incredible, and let nobody ever tell you otherwise.

Braden — My pookie, my sweetheart. We sure did a lot together. And through all of the infidelity, fighting and conflict, I can say I'd do it all over again. The Wrap Around will live in eternity, we are immortal. Love you, brother. Thanks for being an awesome friend.

James — This dude was for real my first friend at the Collegian. I won't forget those early memories in the Foster Street building. Keep it up with RMH, it will take you far. I'm going to miss you, and I'm so blessed to have met you.

Luke — Thank you so much for always challenging me to be better. Things weren't always pretty between us, but that's not a bad thing. Neither of us were perfect, and when things got dicey, I know we had the best intentions for the Collegian.

Phoebe — To my favorite hater in recovery, thank you so much for being someone I could always lean on. I'm glad to see I've infected you with the Kendrick bug, and in the wise words of the GOAT, "It's time to heal."

I miss you very much and need to come see you out in Vermont soon.

Sophia — I don't know how they make people this nice, but you need to slow it down. You're making the rest of us look bad. In all honesty, never lose your compassion. You are so kind to everyone you come across, even when you

shouldn't be.

It's been a highlight of my year bugging you and slowly building up your roast list. You are among some of the most graceful people I have met. I can't wait to see what you do in Maine.

Olivia — Well, well, well. Look at what we have here. Where do I start with this one? Well for starters, you're dumb and I hate you. You've somehow managed to send my blood pressure through the roof everyday since sophomore year. You waste my time and consistently bug me with stuff I don't care about, and somehow you manage to drag me into all of your drama and bullshit.

But other than that, I guess you're alright. And who knows, maybe I'll miss you a little bit. Just because you're special, you get three grafs. Consider yourself lucky. It's been a wild ride being attached at the hip for three years. You are among my best friends, and while I'm not going to praise you for long, you're an incredible person.

I've cherished the good and bad days we've shared together and could always count on you to be there for me. The separation anxiety about to go crazy. Don't freeze to death in Minnesota, or do.

Much of what I've written today feels like a gut punch and the wind's been knocked out of me. I'm really struggling to catch my breath and come to terms with the fact that this is it.

But now that the page is turning, it's time for me to turn with it. Soon I'll be a blip in Collegian history, but I'll always love the Collegian and all of you.

I always liked to joke I've got 120 children, and it does feel like that sometimes. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you all, no matter who you are on staff.

When the world starts throwing punches at you, and it will, it won't be the worst thing in the world to take one on the chin.

You'll find some pain in life brings you the most joy later in life. And if life ever leaves you stumbling, know I'll forever be in your corner.

Nick Stonesifer is a senior majoring in telecommunications and media industries and was The Daily Collegian's 2023-24 editor-in-chief until 6:15 a.m. Wednesday.

After four years, maybe it is that deep

By Olivia Estright  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Thank God this is over.

Not words you'd expect to hear from the outgoing managing editor. While I hate to start my final words for The Daily Collegian with such a pessimistic tone, this year was hard. The last four years have been hard.

That's why it's time to heal.

Before we let the healing process begin, I think it's worth sharing how I got to this exhaustive (yet fulfilled) state.

It all started back in my unrenovated Stone Hall dorm, crying to my mom about how alone I was, about how I wanted to leave. Everything in my life felt out of place, from my priestly Danny Devito tapestry to my roommate's nun dolls. It was all off.

One night, I thought if my undiagnosed anxiety was going to keep me awake, I might as well look aimlessly for reasons to stay.

And then I found one.

In 2017, former managing editor Hannah Sarisohn published her senior column titled "It's only four years." She wrote about her first-year struggles, her need to escape and how she opted to just "suck it up." It seems like coming across that article was fate.

If Hannah found her way, so could I.

That's when I applied to join The Daily Collegian. Beginning as a clueless lifestyle candi-

date under Becky and Jade, I finally found my place — and my passion for yapping with people.

Despite my first-year fears of trekking downtown to the old Collegian office, I went into the Willard Building for my first in-person budget meeting sophomore year. After a year of intense COVID-19 restrictions, it was like a clean slate. I was restarting my first year, determined to cling to potential friends in the Collegian.

And cling I did.

My obsession with the Willard Building began. I started to go for hours every day, searching for the familiar smell of Jerry's stinky salads or the chaotic energy radiating from my cops beat partner.

The always-sticky table surrounded by the mysteriously stained chairs will forever be home. It's the place where I met the people who would change my life — even if it meant I had to help get them fired for harassment.

I was taught at a young age that I'm responsible for carving a path for my future. In my mind, life is supposed to be some isolating journey, and I was the only person I could rely on.

The people within the Collegian convinced me otherwise.

I couldn't have made it through college if it wasn't for Joe Tuman's constant reassurance, Teagan Mayr's check-ins, Sienna Pinney's hugs, Maggie Day's presence and Braden

Dyreson's humor.

People like Noah Aberegg and Kate Hildebrand remind me what passion looks like.

Cearra O'Hern and Ritamarie Montagna have revived me every Wednesday night while making the paper. Anjelica Rubin taught me how to navigate a different country. Andrew Buckman showed me what it would be like to have a sibling who was an iPad kid. Ella Castronuovo invited the word "stinky" back into my vocabulary. Olivia Woodring showed me what true drip looks like.

Lyle Alenstein and A.J. Piazza helped me improve my bickering abilities. Cady Barcac showed me how to emote. Abby Shanley made my days better with her foster dogs. Carson Schultz showed me what a humble king with effortless talent looks like.

If I had the time or energy to list every person on the Collegian who has impacted me, we would be here for days.

Ultimately, I can't take any credit for getting here because I wouldn't even be here without the people on the Collegian.

Last year, I co-hosted the superior Collegian podcast with Phoebe Cykosky, who isn't even a real journalist! The podcast was called "It's Not That Deep" because at the time, it wasn't — and maybe it's still not. But having just over a week until graduation and a month until I move halfway across the country, everything is feeling pretty deep — and I'm so grateful for that.

This place has aged me 30 years, given me crippling anxiety, made me lose brain cells and destroyed my sleep schedule. There's no denying that some days were hell over the last four years.

But I wouldn't do anything differently. At the end of the day, this organization provided me with a safe haven from reality, a reason to get out of bed and a voice. I'm so incredibly grateful to have found a place and group of people to love this much.

This journey has always been about the people, so some thank yous are in order.

To Mom, Dad, Alex and Ava, I'm finally free from the "breaking news desk." Thank you for putting up with my Collegian-related mental instability over the last four years and for always being in my corner. Your support has always meant the world to me, even if you still don't know what I did here. Love you guys!

To Jade, Becky and Andrew, your validation literally got us through the year. Two years ago, you guys made the Collegian feel like home for the first time. This year, you were our role models to make others feel that way. Forever grateful for you three.

To Laurie, Wayne, Rick, Dave and all of the adults working behind the scenes of the Collegian, thank you for all that you do, and thank you for putting up with our shenanigans. We don't say it enough, but we truly appreciate your guidance.

Amy Schafer, Sam Woloson and Alex Osman, your turn! The Collegian is in the best hands — you three are bound to succeed. If you ever run into a problem, know that Nick, Sophia and I are in your corner. Always. Stick together, and you guys can conquer anything that comes your way. I know you'll do great things, and I'm so excited to see all that you accomplish.

Sam Verrelli, words can't express how grateful I am to have you in my life. Your friendship has meant the world to me over the last three years. Your future is unbelievably bright, and I'm so proud of how far you've come. It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside someone as empathetic, caring, hilarious and talented as you are.

Sophia Montanye, gosh, this one's going to hurt. You were my first friend at the Collegian and one of my first friends at Penn State. It feels like it was just yesterday when a random Penn State student whisked us off to Harrisburg in his plane with a training license. From Stone Hall to the managing editors' office, I'm so grateful to have gotten the chance to know you.

You've been the greatest friend

and role model I could ever wish for. You were the reason I was excited to head to the office every day. It has been an honor to share an office with someone as amazing as you. Love you forever.

Nick Stonesifer, if anyone has earned time to heal, it's you. Before I say anything more, let's put it on the record that this is the last time I'll ever be nice to you. After three years of daily yapping, I genuinely don't know what we're going to do. We've struggled on cops together, grown mentally ill together and trudged through a year of news editing together. Don't let this go to your head, but you were the best partner I could ask for.

Thank you for pushing me to be better every day. It was exhausting and draining but so worth it. Neither of us may have wanted to be cops reporters, but I think things worked out for the best. Although you might not know where to put commas, you were the leader the Collegian needed — and the one bitter moms with no lives needed. Thank you for being my forever Collegian brother.

And lastly, Phoebe Cykosky, you told me so many times last year that senior year flies by. Once again, you were right. This year lowkey sucked because you weren't here, but like your thumb, I'll heal.

If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have made it through the last three years. Your encouragement and willingness to stand up for what you believe in still motivates me to this day.

To end this godforsaken senior column, I hope anyone who has gotten this far remembers: It's not that deep — until it is.

Olivia Estright is a senior studying digital and print journalism and was The Daily Collegian's 2023-24 managing editor until 6:15 a.m. Wednesday.



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# Embracing the chaos of it all

By Anjelica Rubin  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

I never thought The Daily Collegian would change my life.

As a third-generation Penn Stater, my grandfather was the sports editor at the Collegian in the late 1940s, and I'd grown up hearing about his glory days on the football bench interviewing players and writing his weekly column "Between the Lions" in the print edition we still have to this day.

But I never thought it would be the path for me. Don't get me wrong, I knew journalism was — I had internships at the local paper, NPR station, attended Penn State journalism camps and was the editor-in-chief of my high school newspaper. But I was convinced I needed to learn all mediums when I got to school.

So when I accepted my offer to join Bellisario, I strategically chose the broadcast journalism specialization.

While looking back, I am so grateful I chose that route, I soon realized at the core of any good storytelling is good writing.

But entering your first year of college during a global pandemic isn't ideal. I was really doubting where I could fit at such a big school and was lacking a community. After a lonely fall, I caved after a phone call with my grandfather and joined the Collegian during the spring semester of my freshman year as a news candidate.

It's the best decision I made. Thank you Papa Ted, I miss you so much.

I began MOTS-ing in the HUB, writing articles and attending — the highlight of my week — our weekly budget meetings on Zoom from my dorm in East Halls. Electric, I know. But to me, it was.

I'll never forget my first front during my candidacy semester. It was a feature on a local campaign slate that I pitched myself. Seeing it published and then make the front of our weekly print edition was a feeling I will never be able to describe.

Of all eight of my stories that made it to the front over my time as a reporter, I am most proud of this one because of what it signified to me: purpose.



Jackson Ranger/Collegian

The Daily Collegian staff sits on the stars in the Media Center during the fall 2023 semester. The news division consists of nearly 120 staffers.

I constantly am thinking about purpose. It's incredibly important for me to feel I am making an impact on the world around me somehow.

Over the past four years at Penn State, that feeling hasn't left me. And for that, I have the Collegian to thank.

Besides the experience, a huge source of consistent joy in my life throughout college stems from my time spent in the office. I remember feeling so scared to go as a freshman, building the courage to do so as a sophomore, then going there every day as a junior and thinking of it as my second home now, as a senior.

From first getting acclimated to the space as part of news staff, to meeting so many of my friends, then moving from news to features and investigations to now being part of BOE, I think back on my 18-year-old self a lot these days. She had no idea what support and community was coming for her.

I went through a really difficult time during my sophomore spring semester. But even in my lowest of lows, the Collegian was there to support and lift me up.

I'll never forget my girls (more on them later) checking in on me, Jade Campos telling me how bright she sees my future, Jerry Hassel telling me how great a writer I am or Alina Lebedeva making jokes to make me laugh at print night. I will forever be

grateful.

I guess this is all to say, there truly is no better group of people than those sitting at the office on the second floor of Willard. Whether you are at the highest of highs or feeling so alone and afraid, the Collegian has got your back — which leads me back to the present.

As many close to me know, I live my life in perpetual chaos. While chaos finds me, I too find it. But despite my complaining, I really enjoy living my life chaotically. It's the pride I feel now, knowing I was able to accomplish so much in college because of that chaos that makes me smile.

Outside of the office, the Collegian has provided me with my fair share of chaotic moments. From the iconic Joe Eckstein parties that will live in infamy (shoutout to my roomies who I dragged to too many Collegian outings including these) to field days, bar crawls, Taylor Swift listening parties, all-staff bondings, snipe tournaments, formals, skip days, Collegian class bonding experiences (403 crew you know what's up) and so many other examples of, as Joe Tuman would say, "culture building," it's been such a joy being part of this organization.

But the reality of it all is that I am leaving.

After four years, I will no longer be able to escape to the office and procrastinate my work to be with my friends. And while I feel

ready for the next chapter, especially after the difficult but also incredible past year I have had, I know I haven't begun to truly process the magnitude of a loss being a part of the Collegian will have on me.

There are many people I want to especially thank. And because this is my senior column, and I know whoever is reading this right now is going to read the whole way through, I want to thank them all.

My former editors Jade, Megan and Phoebe for always believing in my writing.

Olivia Estright, my first friend at the Collegian. I remember thinking "I want to be friends with her" over the Zoom screen during our budget meetings in 2021. Catey Ackerman, my second friend at TDC and prison partner! I'll never forget being in the front row for COIN together as it poured. I think we peaked.

Thank you to Teagan "don't even worry about it" Mayr for always being in my corner and Gymshark legend Dan Perez for making me laugh harder than anyone ever. Thank you to "Brayshay" Dyreson, Ayden Herold and Leo Frepoli. Your friendship has been such a privilege in my life.

Thank you Joe Tuman, I wouldn't have wanted to talk Ms. Swift, math or sports with anyone else — me and Milo will miss you very much. Finally Mr. Bridger-



Jackson Ranger/Collegian

Ella Castronuovo and Anjelica Rubin hug Amy Schafer after she was named the Collegian's next editor-in-chief.

## Saying goodbye to my first home at Penn State

By Ella Castronuovo  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

In exactly 12 days, I'll be putting on my cap and gown, walking across the stage in the Bryce Jordan Center and closing my Penn State chapter.

And in 12 days, I'll be in the exact same spot of not knowing what I'm going to do with the rest of my life.

Nearly everyone I've talked to in the past month has asked me, "Are you excited to graduate?" alongside the more dreaded question of, "What are your post-graduation plans?"

To answer the first one, yes and no. I'm beyond excited to start this new chapter in my life while simultaneously being terrified of change and what's to come next.

But the scariest thing of all is leaving behind the place that means the most to me: The Daily Collegian.

It's a place that's stuck by me all four years of my college experience and the only place that's truly felt like home at Penn State.

I remember the first time I heard about the Collegian. It was in my freshman seminar course taught by Steve Sampsell. Maddie Aiken, editor-in-chief at the time, came in to talk to my class about joining the student-run news outlet.

Coming into Penn State, I had no prior journalism experience. I had zero clue what journalists did, what a nutgraf was and why lede was spelled like that (I still don't know why it's spelled that way.)

But next thing I knew, I was a

news candidate. Later, I became a culture and identity reporter, a photographer, a page designer, a digital team member, a columnist and now news editor — I've been able to do it all, thanks to the Collegian.

It's hard to put into words how much something means to you, especially when it's been your world for the past four years. It's even harder to say goodbye.

The Daily Collegian taught me how to be a journalist. It showed me the importance of storytelling, the impact local journalism has on communities and the impact one person's story can have on anyone.

It's taught me how to cultivate source relationships, how to listen, dig deeper and sympathize with others' experiences. It's shown me how to think on my feet, how to write under deadline and how to ask the questions no one thinks to ask.

It's given me everything and more. It's provided me with a space to learn, fail, make mistakes and grow. And it's gotten me through some of the toughest times in my college career.

It'll always be the place where I learned how to become a journalist, but more importantly, it's the place I've been able to meet some of my best friends.

Throughout my time at the Collegian, I've been surrounded by some of the most talented people.

Continue reading here:



## Fall in love, stay in love

By Luke Vargas  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State was not my first choice school, and looking back, I will never be happier to be so wrong.

Before I committed to Penn State, I sat down with Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion Gary Abdullah, and he asked me: "What is your dream?"

I responded: "I want to cover soccer at the highest level."

"If you come to Penn State," Gary said, "We'll get you there."

Sure enough, three years later I covered the 2023 Women's World Cup in New Zealand for the Associated Press. My dream came true before I started my senior year, and Gary played a crucial role in putting me in that position.

But it was working for The Daily Collegian over the last four years that got me there.

I've been a writer, an editor and now the business manager for the Collegian, and any who have worked here know it comes at a cost.

There were countless late nights, often on weekends, spent hunched over my desk editing stories and crafting tweets. I left Penn State football games, parties and class early, or skipped them entirely, for the Collegian.

That's all I ever want in this life. We all want something worthy of committing our whole selves to. We just want to fall in love and know the feeling of being truly alive because of it. This is best explained with a quote:

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything."

"It will decide what will get

you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

"Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything." — Fr. Pedro Arrupe S.J.

I'm so proud to say I fell in love with working for the Collegian, and it decided everything. It led me to excellence in my field and blessed me with some of my most treasured friendships.

Anyone reading this should be reminded: This life is not our own. And the greatest fulfillment comes from giving ourselves away.

Every time I give myself away, every time I commit my time and energy, and every time I take a chance on someone/something — I'm left far richer and more whole than before.

Giving myself away to the Collegian has left me much wealthier than I could have imagined.

Gratitude  
If you've made it this far, Thank you. You can stop reading now if you want, but here are 10 people or groups of people I'm grateful for:

1. *Gary Abdullah and Emily Clevenger* — You rolled the dice on me, and it has changed the course of my life. I'm in your debt forever.

2. *My first editors (To Maddie, Shane, Lindsay, Jake and Andrew [Destin])* — You were the perfect leaders and mentors. You encouraged, inspired and affirmed me when I needed it most.

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Letters should be about 200 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include graduation year.

All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their groups. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters. The Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters. Letters chosen also run on The Daily Collegian Online and may be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian. All letters become property of Collegian Inc.

ton (Sam Woloson), I'll never forget eavesdropping on your conversation with Luke two years ago when you asked him what it would take to become a sports editor. It makes me smile to see where you are now and to know we became friends along the way.

To Dina Nygard, thank you for introducing me to Planos and The Phyrst but also for giving me confidence and instilling in me courage when I needed it most. Never did I realize my first beat partner covering the State College Borough Council in 2022 would be one of my best friends in college. I am so glad I decided to DM you. I love and miss you.

To my girl Kate Irwin, I'll always remember us driving to Philly to see Del Water Gap, being die-hard Mt. Joy fans together and our conversations every week after news budget meetings. It's not often I meet someone that thinks so similarly about time. No one else is going to get that but you, and I will always be so appreciative.

Lastly I want to thank my best friends Ella Castronuovo and Amy Schafer. I've always been drawn to quality over quantity when it comes to friendship, and you two have been some of the truest and best examples of friendship in my life.

I met Amy at one of the iconic Arthur Laban parties at the Graduate, and it was truly friends at first sight. No one else I'd rather talk for hours into the night with and who just gets me as I am. I'm so excited to see where you lead the Collegian. I'll never forget the months of prep and discussions and am so excited to see your vision come to life. I can't wait to keep traveling through life together — next stop: Brno.

And Ella, there's absolutely no one else I love talking with more. Your zoomies are infectious, and I smile harder and laugh longer when you are around. Thank you for coining "Jelly."

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## DAILY COLLEGIAN

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# I'm not afraid of heights

**By Seth Engle**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

I was out of breath and exhausted after climbing down from the press box and up through the section north of the Beaver Stadium end zone. The crowd roared as I stood, looking down from the highest point I could've reached to watch Penn State's team entrance in the third and final White Out game of my Daily Collegian career.

My fingers trembled. Overwhelmed and outmatched, I was merely a speck in a sea of 110,830. But I was there and I was alive, more alive than I'd ever been before.

I returned to the press box, sat down and exhaled. My throat was choked up, my heart was pounding and I was fighting back tears.

That's how beautiful a packed Beaver Stadium is from the very top row, the pinnacle of one of the great atmospheres in all of sports. But if it were up to me, I'd build another row and keep climbing.

That's what my story is all about. I'm not afraid of heights.

When I was a kid, I dreamed of being a rock star. I was obsessed with The Beatles and could list the tracks of each of their albums in order by heart. Despite teaching myself guitar and drums and developing a decent singing voice, that dream never truly picked up.

Then sports came along. I played baseball, basketball and ran track. I sucked at all three.

It wasn't until I began writing for my high school newspaper as



Courtesy of Seth Engle

Seth poses for a picture on the Rose Bowl sideline in Pasadena, California prior to Penn State's matchup with the Utah Utes on January 2, 2023. The Nittany Lions won 35-21.

a junior in high school that I actually felt confident doing something, anything.

Little did I know, this infatuation with words would lead me to covering the Super Bowl, Rose Bowl, Peach Bowl, Outback Bowl, NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, Little League World Series and MLB by the end of my college career.

None of it would've been made possible without The Daily Collegian.

As a native of Chicago, I knew no one when I arrived at Penn State. I eventually met many people — lifelong friends — but it wasn't necessarily made easy with the pandemic basically locking up the dorm rooms and prohibiting indoor social gatherings.

Writing was my way around

the restrictions. I specifically loved features, which allowed me to connect with people over the phone and internalize their stories and craft them into something publishable.

I kept it going into my first beat assignment, covering Penn State men's lacrosse alongside future Super Bowl partner Spencer Ripchik and my then-sports editor Andrew Porterfield. I guess I did well enough with lacrosse because I was assigned to football later that spring, then in the second semester of my freshman year.

Since then, Penn State football has been the first thing on my mind when I wake up in the morning and the last thing when I go to sleep at night.

This past Saturday's Blue-

White scrimmage was the first football "game day" I ever spent outside of the Beaver Stadium press box over the past four years.

It was strange and not nearly as enjoyable.

As I tailgated among friends, hoping to savor our last few weeks before graduation, I couldn't help but look back at the stadium. So many lessons, so many memories, so many emotions learned within that building.

James Franklin taught me lessons.

The first question I ever asked him took place during my first post-practice availability. I asked who would start the season opener at left guard, then a competition between Eric Wilson and Anthony Whigan.

James didn't like it, and rightfully so. It wasn't a great question. I learned that day how to tailor words in a way to generate a response, not just ask something just to ask it.

And the memories. Where do I even begin?

Many were alongside Max Ralph, who taught me more than I can even put to words. He's one of the best writers I've come across and was always the standard I hoped to live up to. There may not be a single person as important to my development as a writer and reporter than him.

Max and I joined the football beat together as freshmen and basically learned it all on the fly. We went everywhere together from Los Angeles to Jib Jab Hot Dog Shoppe. I can't wait to see what he does with his career.

And, lastly, the emotions.

Even now, as I sit here in my messy, State College apartment, trying desperately to find an end to this column, I find myself fighting back subtle tears. I'm excited by the future, but oh, so unsure.

The uncertainty of life can be so scary, yet so energizing.

To put it plainly, I don't know what comes next.

All I know is that I've lived a dream over the past four years, and I hope I never wake up from it.

I'm gonna keep climbing no matter how high or low this dream takes me.

To email reporter: [sre5190@psu.edu](mailto:sre5190@psu.edu)  
Follow him on X @bigse tweets

# Never too late to try something new

**By Daniel Mader**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It was just around 20 months ago that I joined The Daily Collegian.

At the time, I didn't have any actual beat writing experience, despite being more interested in sports writing than broadcasting.

Looking back on it, I barely knew how to write a gamer, sider or good story in general. I knew I had some writing skills, but I didn't feel like I had the platform or experience to develop them.

I felt stuck.

But that one decision, joining the Collegian, changed everything for me — my skills, relationships, opportunities, aspirations — even in just two years.

Compared to most candidates in the Collegian (and in most collegiate organizations in general), I was late to the party by joining

as a junior. Knowing there were a ton of people my age, both in and outside of the newspaper, that were far more advanced than me was a terrible feeling.

But instead of remaining content with where I was, that was exactly the time I decided I wanted to start working as hard as I could and saying yes to as many things as I could.

That was likely the best decision I've made over the past four years of my life.

It's not just the many experiences I've gotten covering sports, or the skills I've developed along the way — my decision to join the Collegian helped me break out of my shell way more and opened doors for me I didn't think were possible.

Since that Fall 2022 semester when I was a candidate, I've written hundreds of sports stories between the Collegian, LNP,

NBC Sports and the Centre Daily Times — and I wouldn't have had the chance to write any of them without joining this newspaper first.

Most recently, I led the Collegian's sports staff as an editor this spring semester, an experience I wouldn't trade for anything. The entire TDC sports staff is immensely talented in so many different ways, and every single person on it is destined for great things. It was really an honor to read their work.

I've always been someone that probably doesn't give himself enough credit for accomplishments. But now, for one of the first times in my life, I'm looking back on the past four years at Penn State with pride in who I've become as a journalist and person.

And really, I owe a lot of that to the Collegian.

In a very biased way, I believe this is the best student-run newspaper in the nation. The work the Collegian produces on a daily basis is unrivaled, and I can't wait to see the new heights it continues to reach in upcoming years.

I owe a lot of appreciation to others for where I am today, from family that's supported my dream of working in sports, editors that have helped me consistently improve my work, to lifelong friends I've made over the last four years who I now have countless memories with.

Instead of throwing together a list of people, I'll use this senior column opportunity to thank just one specific person, Madison. I can't love and appreciate you enough for the support you provide me every single day. I wouldn't want anyone else by my side moving forward.

Outside of way too many Philly

sports disappointments, these past four years have been a blast. But, I'm really excited to start another chapter in my life.

Change is always kinda scary. But one thing that joining the Collegian taught me is to be comfortable with the uncomfortable — and that's what makes me excited for whatever comes next.

I'm not usually one to have regrets, but I reminisce on my time at Penn State with just one: not joining this newspaper sooner than I did. To current and future Collegian members, it's never too late to try something new, no matter how late of a start you think you might have.

Sometimes, one decision can impact you in ways you could have never imagined.

To email reporter: [dbm5725@psu.edu](mailto:dbm5725@psu.edu)  
Follow him on X @DanielMader



Sienna Pinney/Collegian

Brenanne poses with a camera in SECU Stadium in College Park, Maryland during Penn State football's game against Maryland

# Smile out of fear

**By Brenanne Axelson**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

I take Lorde's 2013 album "Pure Heroine" very seriously.

Never in my time at the Collegian did I think I would write an article, yet here I am, less than three weeks away from graduation, writing my first column.

I'm not really sure where to begin with this. I'm typically filming and editing, not writing. Nevertheless, she persisted, so let's get into it.

I joined the Collegian in January 2022, the spring semester of my sophomore year with very little experience. After a COVID-affected freshman year, I needed to find a way to get involved on campus (thanks to the constant nagging from my dad). I had taken one (1) intro to filmmaking class and liked to make videos with my GoPro during high school.

Joining the Collegian was so far out of my comfort zone; it was unlike anything I had ever done. I knew no one, had very little experience and would break into sweats when it was my turn to answer the icebreaker question during candidate class.

Even when we're scared, we must keep smiling. It's that "fake

it 'til you make it," "keep moving forward" mentality that gets us through the terrifying moments.

I had no idea what I was getting myself into; I did not think this would last. But I acted confident and kept smiling through the fear.

My junior year is when I got the hang of things and saw so much improvement in my work and my social skills (talking to strangers can be scary!) To my editors, Sophia and Carson Schultz, you have taught me more than you know. Thank you for believing in me and trusting me to take over your jobs.

Senior year. Multimedia Editor. Me? In charge?

If you told this to sophomore year Brenanne, she would have laughed in your face.

I was terrified to start as editor. How could I live up to those before me? Smile through the fear.

It took a lot of getting used to, but I couldn't have done it without my kick-ass co-editor Alex Osman by my side.

**Continue reading here:**

# Thank you, wrestling

**By Zach Allen**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Life is full of surprises, and the Daily Collegian hasn't been any different.

I joined the Daily Collegian during the spring semester of my freshman year; all the way back in 2021. Although I was watching and covering men's volleyball as a candidate, I had my sights set on joining the Daily Collegian football beat.

To me, that was the crown jewel of sports journalism at Penn State. But I was far from the only one that thought that.

There were only three spots to cover football out of a massive sports staff that normally lingers around 30 people. The beat is so sought after that it even has its own separate application.

After a year on the Collegian, I finally got the email — I was going to cover Penn State football for the 2022 season.

I went on to cover the Nittany Lions for two seasons and made so many memories alongside my fellow beat writers Max Ralph, Seth Engle, Spencer Ripchik, Joel Haas and Sam Woloson.

I covered a Rose Bowl and a Peach Bowl. I got to travel to some of the most iconic college football stadiums with those same beat writers that quickly became my friends. I got to feast every Saturday in Beaver Stadium's press box. I was able to talk to James Franklin and other high-profile athletes on a weekly basis.

It's been a dream, but that wasn't the surprise as I reflected on my journalism career at Penn State.

I've never been one to hope for something. When I joined the Collegian, I knew I was going to cover the football team at some point.

If you asked anybody I was close with early on in my Daily

Collegian tenure, they'd echo that statement.

The surprise was the love I formed for another beat — wrestling.

After that first semester covering men's volleyball from the comfort of the Findlay Commons computer lab, I joined Penn State's summer staff to write even more because I knew it would strengthen my case to cover football.

However, the Collegian and Jake Aferiat, a veteran wrestling writer for the Collegian at the time, approached me about covering wrestling in the fall.

I didn't know anything about wrestling outside of the professional living room takedowns I'd performed on my little brother my entire life. But after some practice and a couple Zoom calls, I agreed.

It took a couple weeks, but I learned the sport quickly enough to write about it. Most of that was thanks to my fellow beat writers Ben Serfass and Tanyon Loose for showing me the ropes.

At the same time, my interest in wrestling grew just as rapidly.

The atmosphere and ambiance of Rec Hall drew me in. The constant shouts of "two" (at the time) from the crowd gave me goosebumps. And seeing two athletes try to defeat each other through pure athleticism and physicality was entertaining.

It all culminated with a trip to Detroit to cover the 2022 NCAA Championships, which Penn State won. It was my first time traveling to cover an event, and covering a national-championship winning team was entertaining and good for my development as a journalist.

When it came time to apply again for next season, it was a no-brainer. I didn't want to apply for basketball or any other sport. I was all-in on wrestling.

If someone had told me I didn't

apply for a Penn State basketball beat position without a thought, I'd have called them crazy.

By the time I applied, I had already fallen in love with covering the sport. It was fun, developed my writing skills and got my name more exposure. I was tuning in every weekend to watch the UFC and was watching YouTube videos on wrestling moves to improve my writing.

I did that for two more seasons, and after each one, my interest continued to grow. I'd message the Collegian's GroupMe telling people to apply because it was so great.

I became the wrestling guy.

This past season, I was privileged to become the Collegian's first-ever wrestling editor, which was a great experience for me. Kaleb Boyer and I co-founded the Collegian's first wrestling podcast, titled "The Mat Return," that aired weekly.

Seeing the development from my first season on the beat has been a source of pride for me.

So when I left the T-Mobile Center in Kansas City for the last time after covering the 2024 NCAA Championships, I walked away with tears in my eyes and taking deep breaths.

It was over.

Looking back, everything I've accomplished has been owed to wrestling. I got on football staff because of my work on the wrestling beat, which led to internships and other opportunities for myself.

And honestly, I can confidently say I enjoyed covering wrestling more than football at times. That's coming from a guy whose first word was touchdown.

So thank you wrestling, for surprising me by capturing a part of my heart when I least expected it.

To email reporter: [zma5142@psu.edu](mailto:zma5142@psu.edu)  
Follow him on X @zachallen0



# The value of being seen

Sophia Montanye  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

I can't believe this is it. To even begin to attempt to summarize my four years here at the Collegian in any reasonable manner seems impossible. But I'm beyond grateful for this opportunity to thank all those I've had the absolute pleasure of working with in my time here.

Now, I guess the best place to start is the beginning. How did a broadcast kid end up at the newspaper? Great question.

Coming into Penn State all the way back in 2020, I knew I wanted to get involved with as much as I could as soon as I could. Before I even got to campus, I was emailing orgs to see when I could join them and how. In the midst of COVID, I needed a light to look toward for the beginning of my college career.

However, in that search there was one I couldn't quite sell myself on at first. The Daily Collegian. As someone who loved filming videos, what could I do at the newspaper? Well, it turns out, a lot.

I first learned about it in my first year seminar with Steve Sampsell. Then editor-in-chief Maddie Aiken came in to tell us more about all the paper did and what they planned to do. This included developing multimedia staff, which included videography and podcasting. That could be my in. So, I considered it.

But that decision wasn't finalized until one fateful night in the Pollock dining hall. I invited a girl from my floor freshman year to go to dinner with me and my roommate. What started as a basic conversation about general interests, high school careers and shared questions about campus, turned into a mutual deal.

I'll apply to the Collegian, but only if you do it too.

I made that deal with Olivia Estright. Now, I'm sitting here writing this in our office in Willard that we've spent too many hours to count in. You've become not only one of my best friends at the Collegian, but in life in the process. Without a doubt, that was the best deal I have ever made.

The start to my Collegian career was far from typical, between Zoom candidate class and a lack of in-person events happening on campus. But I made sure to make the most of it by getting involved as much as possible, specifically with the Collegian.



Courtesy of Sophia Montanye

**Sophia** poses in front of the Daily Collegian sign on Pollock Road. She made a deal with managing editor Olivia Estright to join the Collegian during their freshman years, which she believes is the best deal she ever made.

Thankfully, Collegian did its best to invite reporters to the office to do as much as they could. I made sure to take advantage. You'd easily find me making the half-hour trek from East Halls to Midtown three to four times a week to film podcasts and edit videos. I even went in to do my d-team shifts, which looking back was very unnecessary. I no doubt bothered then-DME Shane Connelly incessantly with all my little questions. But the staff's conversations and music swirling around the office is what got me back into Taylor Swift, who I'm ironically listening to right now. For that alone, I'm forever grateful.

I can't talk about my freshman year either without mentioning my first Top 3, Maddie, Lindsey and Shane. You guys made the Collegian such a welcoming environment for me that I couldn't keep myself from coming back. Without a doubt, you kind would make an effort to say hi to me if I was in the office. You were always an encouraging light that made me feel seen, and I can't thank you enough for that. I never ever thought I could do what you all did, so it was such a full circle moment to receive your kind words after stepping in as DME. I love and miss you all!

My freshman year as a videographer brought me some of the fondest memories of college. From filming shelter cats to aerial shots of State College in a plane, it really was the most fun I've had here. I still frequently look back on it fondly. It wouldn't have been possible without my

stellar editors that year, Jess Cook and Ben McClary. You two made me want to continue pursuing videography and never made me doubt my capability to do so. You even encouraged me to apply to be a multimedia editor, another thing I never even thought to do. But it proved to be the most influential position I had here.

I even had the opportunity to edit with Ben for a full year my sophomore year. I never thought I could do what you do, Ben, and in most ways I still can't. You are among the most talented and humble human beings I have ever met in my life. Every time I work with you I'm in awe of your abilities and the ease in which you do them. I have so much fun just watching what you create and having my jaw drop at it every time, without fail. I had the best time working with you and learning from you. You're going to have the most impressive career, and I can't wait to cheer you on.

Having the opportunity to work as a multimedia editor my sophomore year wouldn't have been possible without the 2021-22 Top 3, Jade, Becky and Porterfield. I need to let you guys know how much I look up to you all. Truly never in my life had I had people believe in me as much as you all did. You trusted some nervous and quiet 19-year-old to co-lead a staff whose future was still unknown. But you always made me feel welcome and like I had a place and a voice that was worth sharing. When I think of strong leaders, I will always think of you guys. Your ability to confidently make decisions is something I

still admire and look up to today. I miss and love you all so much, but you best believe we'll be keeping our group chat active.

When mentioning multimedia editing, I can't fail to mention Carson Schultz. Carson, you easily became one of my closest friends here at the Collegian. Your insane talent matched with your immense humility made working with you one of my favorite things to ever do at the Collegian. Everything from mid-semester meetings to late night editing sessions were fun with you. I never have a bad time with you, and you always push me to be a better version of myself. You never fail to make me laugh, and if I am ever a fraction of who you are as a person one day, I should consider myself lucky. We have to keep in touch post-grad. That's not a request, it's a requirement.

Now it seems we're on a trend here talking about multimedia, and I can't describe my time here at the Collegian without it. This staff has shaped who I am as a journalist, as well as an individual. I cannot thank enough everyone who I've ever had the pleasure of working with on that staff. I've seen multi grow from a handful of individuals to upwards of 30 talented staffers at a time. I love each and every one of you, and multi will always have a huge place in my heart. My life was genuinely changed through my experiences with multi. But I know what great hands this staff is in and the talent working within it. I can't wait to see more of the industry-changing work you will all continue to do.

And a quick note to Brenanne and Alex, it was so hard for me to step away from the multimedia editor role this year, but you two assured me it was the right decision to make. You two grew immensely in your skills and leadership capabilities this year. I've been so impressed by the work that you continue to do. Despite us all being the same age, I felt like a proud mom looking at what you two have done for multi. You should be so proud of the milestones you made for the Collegian this year, and I'm forever grateful for all you two have done.

I've also seen the Collegian make the transition to digital first in my time here, and it has been such an honor to even play a small role within that. I know at first for me, becoming DME was never in the cards. But now, I can't ever imagine not doing it. When looking at my former DMEs, I didn't think I was anywhere near qualified to step into that type of responsibility. But after further consideration and time in the role, I've seen how this position is so much more than me. It's about serving others and being there for them. Aiding others to be the reporters they can be. Seeing them for who they are.

I need to give a huge thank you to last year's Top 3 as well. Megan, Courtney and Will, you all prepared me for this position and believed in me to do it. All you guys' constant words of support, and time dedicated to aid me in this role, is immeasurable. I missed seeing you all in the office so much this year. I'm grateful that I can call you all friends and I get to support you all along your professional journeys.

In my time here, I also stepped in when the financials of the Collegian weren't as secure as we once thought. This required extensive work and collaboration with our business division, who I've been so grateful to work alongside more this year. To our Business Manager, Luke, this year would not be the same without you. Your ability to build group morale and encourage others to be the best versions of themselves is something unlike anything I've ever seen before.

Continue reading here:



## PSU Graduation Celebration

### Celebrating your accomplishments



#### APPETIZERS

Charcuterie Board  
Shrimp Cocktail  
Spinach Artichoke Dip  
Caprese Skewers

#### SALAD

Salad Bar  
Strawberry Spinach Salad  
Assortment of cold pre-made salads

#### MAIN COURSES

Chicken Saltimboca  
Honey Mustard Pork Loin  
Beef Brisket w/ Peppercorn Gravy  
Flame Finished BBQ Ribs  
Stuffed Peppers (vegan)  
Teriyaki Beef Stir Fry

Carving Station:  
Honey Ham  
Prime Rib

#### SIDES

Honey Glazed Carrots  
Bacon Green Beans  
Flame Roasted Corn  
Roasted Fingerling Potatoes  
Mashed Potatoes w/ Gravy  
Rice

Pasta Bar:  
Assorted Pasta  
Sauces  
Proteins  
Grilled Vegetables

#### DESSERTS

Assorted Desserts to include local favorites;  
Grilled Stickies,  
Variety of Berky Creamery Ice Cream

#### DRINKS

Assorted non-alcoholic beverages  
Bring your own champagne or wine



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make a reservation



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