

The Daily Collegian

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‘A PLACE FOR EVERYBODY’

Blue and White Society connects students through alumni networking

By Fabiola González-Cruz
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Being at a large campus can make finding a community challenging, but a student organization is bridging that gap through campus events, professional development opportunities and connections with alumni.

The Blue and White Society, the student membership organization of the Penn State Alumni Association, has more than 8,000 members, making it one of the university's largest and most active student organizations, according to its website.

Blue and White Society President Gorja Yadav, 21, of Raleigh, North Carolina, said the university's size initially made adjusting to campus life intimidating. She became interested in the organization after seeing the events it hosted and the opportunities it provided for students to meet one another.

"The biggest mission is making sure we're connecting students to alumni constantly," Yadav said.

Yadav, a fourth-year studying supply chain and telecommunications and media industries, said she was particularly drawn to the organization's emphasis on "creating connections and making the school feel a lot smaller."

The organization offers several levels of involvement, including general membership, programming board and executive board positions.

Members can participate in general body meetings, professional development workshops and social events, Yadav said. Additional leadership opportunities include the programming board, which oversees initiatives for marketing, philanthropy and alumni relations.

One professional development opportunity, Quick Connect, pairs programming board members with alumni based on their career



Katie McKenney/Collegian

The Blue and White Society cheers during the 2026 Penn State Homecoming Parade on Sept. 25, 2026.

aspirations. Yadav said previous participants have secured internships and employment opportunities through connections established with alumni.

The organization also promotes campus involvement through seasonal activities, homecoming celebrations and participation in THON. Yadav said these activities are among the opportunities students may overlook when considering membership.

"It's a very student-run organization, it's very involved, and everyone wants the best for each other," Yadav said.

One of Yadav's priorities is increasing awareness of the organization through campus tabling, meeting prospective members and expanding its presence on social media platforms, including TikTok.

Director of Membership Recruitment Payton Brainerd, 19, of Medina, Ohio, said the organization attracts members through community service opportunities, social events and professional development programs.

Brainerd, a second-year studying mechanical engineering, said the organization promotes helping the community. It has many social activities and membership benefits.

"I think it's super easy to find people that have similar interests to you at our (general member meetings), our service credits, stuff like that, because you do what interests you, as do the people who show up," Brainerd said.

The organization allows members to choose their level of involvement according to their interests and availability, rather than requiring participation in every event.

"You get out whatever you put in, so nothing's required," Brainerd said.

However, maintaining consistent participation remains a challenge. Although the organization has approximately 8,000 registered members, Brainerd estimated only around 100 regularly participate in its activities.

The society promotes its

service opportunities, campus events and connections to Penn State alumni when recruiting students to try offsetting this challenge, she said.

Brainerd said the society's alumni connections and potential career opportunities distinguish it from other campus organizations. In addition to professional networking and membership opportunities offered by the Blue and White Society, its events also aim to create spaces in which students can interact and build friendships.

Recruitment efforts are also centered on different areas of involvement, including service opportunities and membership incentives such as football-related giveaways. Director of Events, Madison Asprelli, 20, of Boston, Massachusetts, said she prioritizes activities that appeal to the broader student body while reflecting Penn State's traditions and campus culture.

"The goal of all the events we plan is to enhance tradition and community at Penn State, and

to make everybody feel like they belong here," Asprelli, a second-year studying marketing, said.

Asprelli said she considers students' interests and experiences when planning activities. During the Blue and White Society Bash in August, students could customize different items, such as license plates for their dorm rooms and hats for football games.

"My main goal is not to have, like, a student walk through, you know, grab some popcorn and leave, but I want them to kind of stay, walk around, talk to the person next to them in line," Asprelli said.

She said her favorite event is "PS I (Heart) You Week." The event includes activities such as inflatable attractions, food and music, and concludes with a carnival-style gathering on the HUB-Robeson Center lawn.

"Everybody's so stressed out, but when they see Blue and White Society on the lawn, they have a place where they can go, kind of de-stress, get some food, jump in the bouncy house and just kind of have fun at the end of the year," Asprelli said.

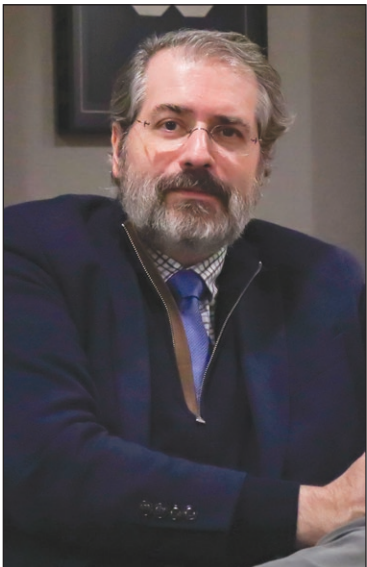
The organization also has activities like Homecoming celebrations, THON fundraising, alumni networking trips, LinkedIn workshops and clothing swaps.

Although certain membership benefits are exclusive to registered members, Asprelli said the organization's broader campus events are open to students regardless of membership status.

"There's almost like a place for everybody," Asprelli said.

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Penn State graduate Igor Jablovkov doesn't want to be 'a conformist' in the AI industry



Jonathon Chiu/Collegian

Igor Jablovkov, founder, chairman and CEO of the AI company Pryon, sits on a couch in the Nittany Lion Inn on Oct. 2, 2026.

By Jonathon Chiu
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Igor Jablovkov's name might not be easily recognizable to those unfamiliar with the artificial intelligence (AI) industry, but the impact and reach of his accomplishments can be traced back years before the 2022 release of ChatGPT.

Hailing from Poros, Greece, Jablovkov is best known for his decadeslong work with IBM and Yap, which is now a part of Amazon, where he played a piv-

otal role in the creation of AI programs which would go on to become IBM's Watson, Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa.

Jablovkov, 52, now serves as the chairman and CEO of his own AI company named, Pryon — a tribute to Amazon's codename for Alexa during its development. Pryon seeks to create "high-performing, resilient, and responsive organizations" through the aid of Pryon's AI tools, such as its ingestion, retrieval and generative engines, according to its site.

He founded the company in 2017 with the prediction of an AI-knowledge management "collision" in the near future. Jablovkov said he wants to use Pryon to explore how natural language experience interfaces can be applied to the work place — like people creating and modifying computer programs using the sound of their voice.

Jablovkov said Pryon also deviates from his previous work with Siri and Alexa in considering AI's applications in places like hospitals and power plants.

"When I started the company, nobody was really using AI at work. Siri existed in our iPhone and Alexa existed in our kitchens, but I didn't see natural language experiences existing at work and so I started looking at why that was," Jablovkov said. "Nobody really knew what we were working on until ChatGPT came out, so we were early in the field."

Jablovkov's past and present achievements in artificial intelligence, however,

almost didn't come to pass. He originally planned on pursuing nuclear engineering when he began at Penn State Abington in 1991 but later switched to computer engineering, a degree he graduated with in 1997.

Jablovkov said the decision came down to a lack of jobs for nuclear engineers at the time and computers being integrated into everyday life, signaling development in the information age.

"I realized that even if I had a latent interest in nuclear engineering, everything is going to have computers," Jablovkov said. "It doesn't matter if I'm interested in energy. It doesn't matter if I'm interested in biology. It doesn't matter if I'm interested in transportation, or anything else. Computers were the underlying fabric of everything."

Alongside his interest in computers, Jablovkov said he became fascinated with the potential of natural language processing and speech recognition as AI assistants. These developments can democratize access to computing resources by providing a "better" interaction method between AI and users, he added.

Jablovkov said allowing people to interact with AI through speech makes it a tool to solve problems, which is what attracted the "OGs of AI" in the first place. Some problems he mentioned included increasing accessibility resources for the youth, seniors and people who are disabled, and breaking down language barriers via machine translation.

During the summer of 2023, Jason O'Neill, 50, of Hilo, Hawaii, met Jablovkov to interview for the position of Pryon's chief people officer.

Having done research into Jablovkov's background prior to the interview, O'Neill said he felt nervous the conversation would become too technical and exceed his experience in the tech industry. Instead, O'Neill said he found the conversation with Jablovkov to be "a very human one."

"We talked more about the humanities and philosophies versus the technology itself, and I thought that was pretty cool," O'Neill said. "Every single word he said, I understood, despite not having a deep technical background. He'll take these very complex ideas, whether it's AI or other things, and he'll distill it into a very simple metaphor. And it leaves you with a good understanding of what he's trying to say."

Having now spent several years as Pryon's chief people officer, O'Neill said the position allowed him to better know Jablovkov and what kind of leader he is. He's found Jablovkov to be a man with "zero ego," despite his achievements.

"He just wants to make sure that the glory is shared by the team or by others, and he wants none of the credit," O'Neill said.

Sheridan Clemins, 41, of San Diego, California, works as Pryon's chief information security officer and has known Jablovkov since 2024.

Several tech industry leaders have become "narcissistic and self-absorbed," especially if they believe they're creating unique technologies, Clemins said, but Jablovkov is not one of those leaders.

"Part of what makes (Pryon) successful is that he finds people that he really connects with, that he trusts, and he gives them the latitude and the freedom to do what they need to do and listens to them when it's time to make some changes," Clemins said.

Jablovkov said his leadership style comes from wanting people to "embrace" their individuality.

When he was still a student, Jablovkov recalled, he did an interview in "rundown clothes" instead of a suit and challenged interviewers who rejected him for his appearance by asking them: "Are you hiring me for my mind or for my threads?" Jablovkov said this initiative ultimately got him offered many of the jobs he was being interviewed for.

"In some ways, if all they're seeing is the same product over and over again, your mind and heart aches for something completely different," Jablovkov said. "Don't be just a conformist. Find that thing that is a unique plot twist and stuff like that so that you show people that, 'hey, I'm one of a kind and this is what I can do for you.'"

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Courtesy of Mike Abrams and Rebecca Fishkin

Mike and Rebecca, both class of '94, met as candidates for the Daily Collegian as freshmen and began dating as juniors. They married two and a half years after graduation.



Courtesy of Jacob Oberle and Logan Hage

Jacob Oberle, '24, and Logan Hage, '26, met in Washington, D.C. while Logan was interning after junior year. That opened the door for a stronger relationship that continues to this day.



Courtesy of Roni Goldband

Jamison Jaffe and Roni Goldband, both members of the class of 1995, met on their first day of freshman year in Bio 101, began dating sophomore year and married two years after graduation. Despite the loss of Jamison in April 2026 to a battle with small intestinal cancer, Roni continues to live the life that they built together with their three boys.

LOVE ROARS ON



Courtesy of Loren Gizzi and Mike Lizzi

Mike Lizzi and Loren Gizzi, both class of 2022, met in fall 2019. After years of being together, Mike proposed to Loren in August 2025 at the Arboretum to which they celebrated with a tailgate and a Penn State football game. The two plan to get married in May 2027.



Courtesy of Michelle and Dan Ferretti

Michelle, graduating class of 1995, and Dan, graduating class of 1997, met in 1995 when Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Sigma Sigma did Homecoming together, in which Michelle painted the banner for the parade. The two began dating and in 1997, Dan proposed in front of the Nittany Lion Shrine. Getting married in 1998, the two have gone on to have two daughters and have been together for 31 years.



Courtesy of Mike and Jenna Mangano

Jenna, class of 2009, met Mike, class of 2006, when pledging Phi Gamma Nu business fraternity. They got engaged in 2013 and were married at Penn State in the summer of 2014, alongside a Creamery sundae bar, late-night Gumby's Pokey Stix, ending the night at the Indigo nightclub.



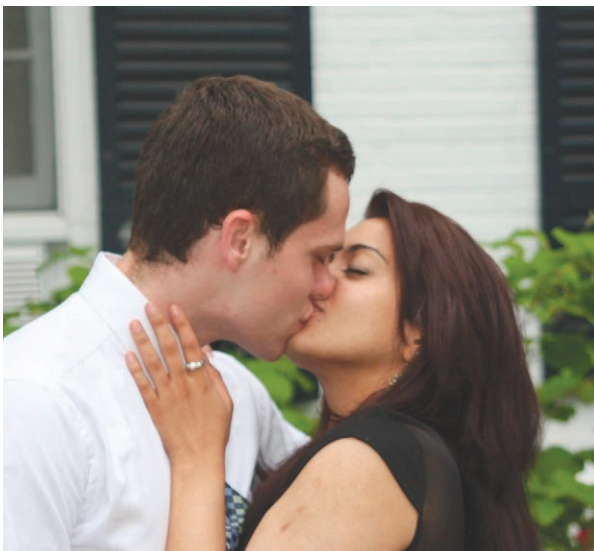
Courtesy of Kennedy Walsh and Kathryn Lathrop

Kennedy Walsh, graduating class of 2022, and Kathryn Lathrop, graduating class of 2024, met as teaching assistants in BiSci 3 in 2021, and the two have been together ever since.



Courtesy of Matthew and Lori Fein

Matthew and Lori were introduced to each other through a friend at an ice cream social sponsored by Hillel. After offering to give Lori a ride home, Matthew asked for her number. Not having a pen or paper, Matt committed to memorizing the number and called her back the next day.



Courtesy of Sean & Sheffy Minnick

Sean, graduating class of 2012, and Sheffy, graduating class of 2010, met in 2011 through World in Conversation. Sean proposed near West Atherton in May 2012 and the two married that year in Cincinnati. Fifteen years and three kids later, the two remain together.



Courtesy of Madhubi Debnath and Abhishek Das

Abhishek Das, class of 2026, and Madhubi Debnath, class of 2024, met at Penn State while Das was in his third year of his PhD and Debnath was a junior, and the two began dating later that school year. Two years later, Das proposed to Debnath at the Arboretum and after their religious wedding ceremony in 2026, the two have been together ever since.



Courtesy of Caitlyn Serafin and Nejmi Kara

Nejmi Kara and Caitlyn Serafin, both part of the 2021 graduating class, met on the first day of Math 140B in Osmond Laboratory in 2018 for an in-class assignment. Going from math partners to friends to dating, the two later moved to Philadelphia to pursue further education before getting engaged in September 2026.



Courtesy of Marie and Scott Eckerd

Marie put an ad in The Daily Collegian to find Scott after they forgot to exchange phone numbers at the party where they met. The two reconnected through the newspaper ad and graduated together in 1986. They married in 1987 and their 3 children are Penn State graduates.



Courtesy of Alex and Kira Pritchard

Alex, graduating class of 2020, and Kira, graduating class of 2019, initially met through a platonic coffee date with a classmate in history class. Four years later they got married and are currently celebrating 7 years together with two cats, one child with a second on the way.



Courtesy of Chance and Kayla Sorrell

Chance and Kayla Sorrell, both members of the Class of 2018, met three days into summer session. Chance, a former Penn State football athlete, proposed to Kayla on the field during their senior year Homecoming game. The pair currently lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, with their two children.



Courtesy of Heather and Frank Harper

Heather and Frank, both class of 1999, met during senior year. The two began dating, moved in together two years later, and married six years later.



Courtesy of Katie and Adam Poole

Katie, class of 2011 and Adam, class of 2009, met at Cafe 210 West. They have two daughters and, in October, will celebrate 10 years of marriage.



Courtesy of Maddy Schmitt and Isabel Wimer

Isabel and Maddy met their first week of freshman year in Mifflin Hall. They became friends as neighbors bonding over not having air conditioning. They made it an official relationship after about six weeks and have been together since.



Courtesy of Alissa Lintao and Jesse Kolb

Jesse Kolb, '25, and Alissa Lintao, '26, met through mutual friends. Following the 2025 Super Bowl, the two began dating. A year and a half later, the two are still together and now live together in Philadelphia.



Courtesy of Ronda and Salvatore Schiavone

Ronda, '94, and Salvatore, '02, met in 1992. Choosing to attend an apartment party instead of traveling home through a snowstorm, Ronda was introduced to Salvatore, and the two hit it off. They have been together since 1996.



Courtesy of Paige and Carter Walker

Paige and Carter Walker met taking journalism classes in 2015. They bonded through their time on The Daily Collegian, and became closer during their international reporting class trip to Panama in 2017. They got married in August and now reside in Lancaster with their two cats.



Courtesy of Jessica and Carl Nerthling

Carl Nerthling, a cheerleader, and Jessica Spellman, a Lionette, both class of 2016, met through their participation in THON. The two married in 2023 and now live in the Poconos with their dog and one-year old daughter.

EVERMORE



Courtesy of Nellie Cahinhinan Denicola and Brian Denicola

Nellie and Brian, both class of 2000, briefly met in spring 1998. They got engaged in 2002 under the tree in which they shared their first kiss.



Courtesy of Brianna Cimino and Marissa Scott

Brianna Cimino and Marissa Scott, both class of 2021, met on Hinge in 2020. Brianna proposed to Marissa at the Arboretum in May, and they are planning their wedding for next fall.



Courtesy of Colleen Doyle and Nicholas Quiroz

Colleen Doyle and Nicholas Quiroz, both class of 2018, first met in their EDSGN 100 class as freshmen. After bonding over THON, the two began dating. More than ten years later, they are celebrating their one-year wedding anniversary.



Courtesy of Ashlyn McClelland and Andrew Caspar

Andrew Caspar and Ashlyn McClelland, both class of 2024, met freshman year through a shared love of baseball and softball. Now two years post-graduation, they have continued to further their relationship.



Courtesy of Andrew and Amy Ryan

Amy, graduating class of 2013, and Andrew, graduating class of 2011, met through musical endeavors at Penn State. After graduation, with both living in the Philadelphia area, they decided to make the relationship official. The two have been married for four years, and together they have two children.

Collegian alumni reflect on opportunities, experiences



Collegian file photo

The Daily Collegian staff poses for a group photo in 2016.



Linsey Fagan/Collegian file photo

The Daily Collegian staff poses for a group photo in 2017.

Caitlin Concannon

My time at the Collegian was important to my growth, both personally and professionally. Early on in my TDC career as a reporter and a member of the digital and social team, I began to understand the importance of community and advocating for your peers. My experience communicating with students, faculty, and community members during my time on campus helped to shape the way I view advocacy and the responsibility to tell somebody's story. Today I'm a paralegal in capital mitigation and sentencing advocacy as I prepare for law school. On a daily basis, I draw on the skills I developed while at the TDC and am grateful for the tools it gave me in interviewing, research and giving a voice to those who don't always have one. I don't know where I would be today without my TDC family — they found me when I needed them most.

Daniella Carbone

My experience with The Daily Collegian had a big part in developing the skills that have shaped my career today. As a senior videographer from 2021-2024, I gained hands-on experience filming, editing, conducting interviews, and telling meaningful stories through video. The opportunities I had at TDC allowed me to build confidence as a storyteller, collaborate with a team, and learn how to bring stories to life from start to finish. Today, working in video production and corporate communications, I continue to draw on the technical skills and storytelling foundation I developed at The Collegian. I'm grateful for the experience and the role it played in preparing me for my career.

Samantha Ruland

The Daily Collegian gave me an education in journalism that went far beyond anything I could have learned in a classroom. As a student reporter, I covered the criminal cases involving Graham Spanier, Tim Curley, and Gary Schultz, and the death of Tim Piazza, competing with some of the biggest news organizations in the country and often beating them to stories. Those experiences prepared me for the difficult, sensitive reporting I would do early in my career with the USA Today Network, including covering the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, and gave me confidence well beyond my years. As editor-in-chief my senior year, I got an equally valuable, if sometimes sobering, education in the business of journalism, including navigating the decision to cut our print publication from five days a week to two our spring semester. Now, as the planning and coverage editor for features at The Philadelphia Inquirer, I find myself drawing on so many of the skills I developed at the Collegian, from leading a newsroom and planning ambitious coverage to navigating an ever-changing industry. I wouldn't be the journalist or editor I am today without the experiences, instincts, and confidence the Collegian gave me.

Darian Somers

The Collegian quickly became my home at Penn State and that isn't just because I spent several nights sleeping on the sports couch. No part of my college education was as valuable as the Collegian but that isn't as valuable as the memories and the lasting life lessons, not just journalism ones, that I learned there. I am forever grateful for my time at the Collegian because it taught me so much.

Mercedes Hamilton

My time at the Collegian has truly prepared me for anything. From juggling enterprise stories and breaking news to building a brand new beat about an under-represented community, my time at the Collegian has already shown up in so many ways at my first job — and I haven't even been here a month! I'm eternally grateful for the foundation the Collegian has given me and the friendships I've been lucky enough to carry with me.

Kailee Warner

I was with the Collegian from 2020-2024 where I wrote for the sports section covering women's volleyball and field hockey my freshman year, and then continued with field hockey the next three years. I learned so much during my time at the Collegian and it prepared me for my current side job where I run and write for the sports section of my three local newspapers: Perry County Times, the News Sun and Duncannon Record. I met so many people through the Collegian, including my alumni mentor whom I still communicate with and even some Olympians! I had many memorable experiences and I greatly appreciate everything I learned and gained during my time at the Collegian.

Emily Muniz

Before joining the Daily Collegian, I had no experience at all with journalism besides an undying passion for it. The Collegian fueled, nurtured, and raised that passion. Now, each time I edit an article for my freelancing job, I am reminded of reading my articles out loud with my editors at that long white desk in the Willard Building and I think about what changes they would make.

Emma Lessick

Being a member of the Collegian transformed my hobby of photography into a purpose. I was able to work on deadlines and see my photos in a print and on the website, which was incredibly rewarding. My experience at the TDC allowed me to travel for women's basketball and shoot a Penn State football game, all things I wouldn't have been able to do without the Collegian.

Ritamaria Montagna

During my time at the Collegian, I had the opportunity to be a part of lifestyle, news, multi, socials and BOE, which taught me countless journalistic skills that I've been able to carry with me even in my current career as a teacher. I currently work as a preschool teacher's assistant, and one of the biggest parts of that job is conversation. Every day, I thank the Collegian for the conversational skills that were instilled in me during my time as a reporter and an editor through communicating with my sources and my TDC colleagues. More than an educational resource for me, TDC was my home while I was at Penn State. I also thank the Collegian every day for the friends I made and the people I met during my time there, whom I still talk to nearly a year and a half after my graduation.

PSU ALUMNI THE SECOND
THEIR BABY IS BORN...



Cartoon by Josh Harper

Daily Collegian

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About the Collegian

The Daily Collegian is published by Collegian Inc., an independent, nonprofit corporation with a board of directors composed of students, faculty and professionals. Penn State students write and edit both papers

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Complaints

News and editorial complaints should be presented to the editor. Business and advertising complaints should be presented to the Business Manager.

‘Everything should be max effort’

Penn State alum Andrew Destin reflects on journalism journey

By Elliott Inscho
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

In 2018, Andrew Destin toured Penn State in the midst of a late-spring State College blizzard.

Battling the elements, he tucked into The Daily Collegian's office and, at the suggestion of his parents, chatted with some of the staffers inside.

“I remember walking outside the building, and I went back into that sh—ty weather, where it was snowy and cold and windy,” Destin said. “I turned to my parents, and I was like, ‘Damn it!’ And they’re like, ‘What? What is it?’ I was like, ‘I have to go here.’”

Destin has worked for several highly regarded sports journalism publications since graduating from Penn State in 2022.

“That visit to the Collegian of office, it told me that I wanted to be a sports reporter,” Destin said. “That’s what I wanted to do one day, and here I am, still doing it.”

Destin grew up in Saratoga, California, a suburb of San Jose, and as a die-hard college football fan, he’d wake up at 6 a.m. on autumn Saturdays to catch the beginning of College GameDay. Being the child of two parents who met in a Penn State MBA program, he made the five-hour drive to Pasadena for the Rose Bowl losses to USC in 2009 and 2017.

When a young Destin was stressed, avoiding homework or simply sitting at the dining table before school, he’d peruse a copy of the San Francisco Chronicle or San Jose Mercury News.

Thanksgiving football was a big deal for the Destin family, and after one year’s iteration, he recapped the action by writing a game story in a spiral notebook.

“That was the first inking of like, ‘Wow, he’s doing this,’” Maureen Destin, his mother, said.

Destin initially envisioned other careers, but his focus shifted toward journalism in high school. As a varsity baseball and basket-



Courtesy of Andrew Destin

Andrew Destin poses ahead of a FIFA World Cup match at Seattle Stadium in Seattle, Wash., July 6, 2026.

ball player, it was the best way to pursue his passion for athletics.

“It kind of dawned on me, after I got a B in freshman biology, that being a marine biologist maybe wasn’t in store,” Destin said. “I realized I am a good athlete; I am not a great athlete. If I am going to stick with sports, the best way to do it is to go to games.”

So Destin headed to Happy Valley and forfeited the Golden State’s picture-perfect sunshine for the meteorological patterns of Centre County.

At the Collegian, Destin held roles as a sports editor and men’s hockey reporter.

Destin interned with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette the summer before his senior year, then covered the Nittany Lions’ football team for the same outlet upon returning in the fall.

Toward the end of his time in college, he earned the opportunity to cover Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles.

“When you become a really professional journalist at a very young age, it can lose the luster of it a little bit,” Destin said. “Yes, it’s good to be professional. It’s good to be mature. It’s also really good to still be like, ‘Hey, this is really freaking cool. I’m covering

the Super Bowl.”

Noah Hiles was working for the Beaver County Times in 2022 when he heard rumors that a position on the Post-Gazette’s Penn State beat would soon be opening up. He expected to have a shot at the job, but was surprised to learn the paper already had a candidate in mind.

That candidate, of course, was Destin.

“It turned out (that) he ended up being probably the best young reporter that I’ve ever worked with, and also one of my best friends,” Hiles said.

Hiles still ended up at the Post-Gazette, covering Pitt instead, and would co-host a podcast with Destin as the duo wrote about the in-state rivals.

Eventually the paper decided it was no longer interested in having a full-time Penn State reporter, and Destin shifted into a role where he’d split time on its Pirates and Penguins beats. About a year later, Hiles got a similar job and began partnering with Destin at PNC Park.

In the year that Destin and Hiles shared on the Pirates beat, they combined their skill sets to break news that other outlets weren’t able to.

“We were both young and hun-

gry,” Hiles said.

In the process, Hiles also saw Destin further develop as a journalist. Ahead of writing a story on star Pirates pitcher Paul Skenes, Destin was careful to make a connection with the ace before proceeding, which Hiles pointed to as a moment that embodied his skill on the beat.

“Before reaching out to the family, he had the wherewithal to ask Paul for permission, and Paul appreciated that so much. I think Andrew was the first guy’s name on the beat that Paul took the time to learn,” Hiles said.

After spending years in Pennsylvania, Destin looked onward to opportunities back on the West Coast and broke the news to Hiles during a spring-training round of golf in Bradenton, Florida.

“He was telling me about his interviews that he had lined up,” Hiles said. “I just said, ‘This is really it, huh?’”

In April 2025, Destin moved to Seattle after accepting a role at the Associated Press, a new gig where he’d cover sports throughout Washington.

In the process, though, he started to struggle. Earlier in the year, he was diagnosed with men-

tal health conditions including anxiety, depression and insomnia.

“It was all very rapid onset,” Destin said. “I went from highly productive, highly functioning, mentally doing great and within like three, four or five months, go- ingly insane burnt out.”

Coupled with the many responsibilities that came with the new role, it made for a tough start to his time in the Emerald City. But he persevered.

After covering the Seattle Mariners’ ALCS appearance, he made his way to Levi’s Stadium and covered the Seahawks’ victory in Super Bowl LX, not far from his childhood home. Then, he worked the several World Cup games played in Seattle, including the United States’ 4-1 loss to Belgium in the Round of 16.

“When 2026 hit, it was in some ways the hardest thing I’ve ever done professionally,” Destin said. But I got myself into a place (where) I can not only handle all this, but I can thrive and show up and be the best version of me.”

Destin joined The Athletic, the New York Times’s sports department, in August 2026. He remains in Seattle as a Seahawks reporter and said he has been pleased with his time there so far.

“It’s forward-thinking, it’s progressive,” Destin said.

Covering the Super Bowl would be a career-defining assignment for any journalist. So would a byline from the World Cup. At just 27 years old, Destin has both.

“You should do things that make you happy as frequently as you possibly can, because at the end of the day, we’re not going to be here forever,” Destin said. “That means hug your parents when you see them ... Everything should be max effort. When you stop doing things (with) max effort in life, that’s when you know you need to reevaluate.”

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‘Wouldn’t trade it for the world’

Teammates to business partners, the Clifford brothers’ paths continue

By Noah Aberegg
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Growing up playing football, Liam Clifford never thought he’d follow his older brother, Sean, to Penn State. Sean had arrived in Happy Valley in 2017, and Liam wanted to carve out his own path in college football.

But when Clifford attended a camp at Penn State ahead of his junior year of high school and received a scholarship offer from then-coach James Franklin, his perspective changed.

“For some reason, it just felt way different after that moment,” Clifford told The Daily Collegian. “Why would you want to go anywhere else? You’ve got your brother here, you’ve got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It was just an opportunity I couldn’t pass up, and I’m glad I didn’t. I wouldn’t trade it for the world.”

While the two played football together growing up, they never shared the field in high school. So, their reunion at Penn State allowed them to compete with one another and hold themselves to a high standard together.

The two brothers ultimately spent two years together at Penn State from 2021-22. It was an opportunity for them to play collegiate football, but it was a way for them to grow closer on and off the field too.

“They had that relationship where if one person isn’t doing what the other person thinks is their full potential, they’re gonna get on each other,” Brandon Smith, a Penn State linebacker from 2019 to 2021, told the Collegian. “Just seeing that was very confident to know their dynamics and how much they really pushed each other and cared for success.”

Clifford redshirted his freshman year at Penn State in 2021, and Sean threw for a career-high 3,107 yards but led the Nittany Lions to just a 7-6 record.

Sean had one more year to hopefully bounce back from the lackluster season, but 2022 didn’t come without adversity, as the Nittany Lions lost to Michigan and Ohio State.

Against the Wolverines, Sean had just a 36.8% completion



Sienna Pinney/Collegian File Photo

Wide receiver Liam Clifford (2) poses with former Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford after the game against Northwestern on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023 at Ryan Field in Evanston, Ill. The Nittany Lions won 41-13.

percentage, while he threw three interceptions in the defeat to the Buckeyes.

“Shortcomings and disappointments are one of those things that life brings,” Smith said. “If (Sean) had a bad play, he’s going to come right back at you harder than he did before because that’s just who he is.”

But Sean ended up leading Penn State to its first Rose Bowl victory since 1995 that year, defeating Utah 35-21. While he didn’t find a connection with his little brother during the game, the two linked up twice for nine yards throughout the season.

“I always just wanted to play big time college football and Penn State gave me that platform to be able to do that at the highest level possible,” Sean told The Daily Collegian. “Some of the biggest things you could ever dream of when it comes to White Out (games), the Rose Bowl and all those different things, I got a chance to play in, and I wouldn’t change it for the world.”

After six seasons in Happy Valley and two years with his brother, Sean’s time putting on the Penn State jersey was over. But it was far from the last time he and Clifford would partner together.

During Sean’s final year in college, the two co-founded Limitless NIL, the first NIL agency founded by student-athletes. At a time where

NIL opportunities and collectives were becoming more prominent, Clifford said “it was just something that we were passionate about.”

“We saw an opportunity in the market, a new market really at the time in NIL, and being able to attack that while also helping student athletes, specifically starting at Penn State,” Clifford said. “Expanding beyond Penn State was just something that was a lot of fun and became a passion of ours.”

The opportunities continued to grow in the business world for the brothers. Clifford took over as CEO of Limitless NIL after Sean graduated and sold off the company after graduating.

From there, they veered into venture capital, investing in “anything that advances human health, human performance, or human potential,” Clifford said. They co-founded Clifford Capital and The New Era Fund, targeting smaller start-ups seeking validation from athletes and coaches that are trying to enter the sports world.

“(Limitless NIL) ignited that entrepreneurial flame,” Clifford said. “Now, being able to do that with the companies we invest in and the portfolio we’re building and continuing to build, venture capital is entrepreneurship on (steroids).”

While the business

opportunities gave the Cliffords an avenue outside of football, Sean compared the hustle and grind the founders have to what he experienced as an athlete. He referred to the Latin meaning of passion: to suffer.

“I’ve just always been drawn to the fact that these founders are no different than athletes, and bringing those both together has been really cool,” Sean said. “I think that’s going to be a hell of a story as we continue to write it.”

As their business ventures continued to grow, the brothers found themselves navigating a different kind of uncertainty, this time in professional football.

Sean was selected in the fifth round of the 2023 NFL Draft by the Green Bay Packers, while Clifford signed as an undrafted free agent with the Indianapolis Colts in 2026.

They faced significant adversity in the big leagues, as Sean bounced between the practice squad and active roster with the Packers before ending up with the Cincinnati Bengals, where he’s also seen up-and-down movement.

Clifford, meanwhile, worked out with the Colts for two weeks before he was cut, was signed by the Los Angeles Chargers then released again before the season began.

“You always have to reintroduce yourself each and every time and be able to show

this is the new and improved me every single time,” Smith said. “That’s one of the things I’ve been able to witness seeing Sean and different opportunities he’s been granted with, and also seeing Liam and the different things he’s been able to accomplish.”

New opportunities to prove himself haven’t always been available for Clifford, but he’s embraced the experience of being in the NFL and continues to work for another chance.

“I’m staying in shape, I’m staying ready,” Clifford said. “I’m going with the flow, but in the meantime, every other waking hour I have that I’m not working out and training, I’m putting into the business. The hard work and the busy days and the busy schedules is what continues to drive me.”

Whether the brothers are playing in the NFL or meeting with investors, the processes and interactions have been the same. Sean compared detecting the right markets and perfecting ad campaigns to finding his wide receivers on the football field.

“There is a bit of luck that comes at all of us,” Sean said. “Do everything in their power to make everything work, and then it completely and utterly flops. But at the end of the day, it’s getting shots on goal. It’s doing what you can beforehand to prepare.”

Much of that preparation came at Penn State — the place that set them on the right path for the NFL and their business ventures.

It’s been four years since Sean has suited up for the Nittany Lions and only one season since Clifford has worn the blue and white, but their love for Penn State stays strong.

“Penn State gave me everything,” Clifford said. “Coach Franklin gave me one of the coolest opportunities to play in front of 107,000 people every weekend. But beyond that, just the relationships, what the school had to offer and just being in a place like State College where the community is just so tight knit, it’s the most fun place to play in the entire world.”

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Penn State alumni who got real on reality TV



Ella Freda/Collegian

Wide receiver Cam Sullivan-Brown (6) poses for a fan photo after Penn State football's 2021 game against Villanova at Beaver Stadium.

By Sarah Price
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With a network of over 800,000 Penn State alumni, it's fairly common to run into or spot another Nittany Lion while traveling, and sometimes, they can even be in your own home.

When you're watching reality TV, of course.

As this genre of TV has become more popular over the past couple of decades, there are bound to be a few notable appearances from Penn State alumni — some of which have won their show, too.

Here are the most recent notable appearances from Penn State alumni in reality TV.

Love Island USA

Sincere Rhea, 25, of Cape May, New Jersey, and former Penn State track and field athlete, won the Big Ten 60-meter hurdles championship at Penn State in 2021. However, you probably don't know him as a former Division I athlete.

Instead, Rhea has found fame in the pursuit of love on Season 8 of "Love Island USA," a reality TV show in which a group of singles move to an island in hopes of finding a connection.

Rhea entered the villa on day one and was coupled with Melanie Moreno, 24, of Philadelphia. Rhea and Moreno stayed a couple throughout the entire season, until viewers coupled Rhea with the new bombshell, Sol Dean, 24, of Orange County, California, on day 10 in the villa.

Drama ensued when the letter recoupling occurred just a few days later, where Rhea and Moreno chose to re-couple after writing love letters to each other, leaving Dean to couple with another islander who also didn't receive a letter.

In a mid-season twist, Rhea, along with the other original males, were relocated to Casa Amor, where existing couples are separated and sent to different villas with new bombshells in order to test their loyalty.

Despite this twist, Rhea and Moreno remained a couple until their final date. Rhea came in third place alongside Moreno on the show.

Big Brother

Cam Sullivan-Brown, 27, of Bowie, Maryland, and former Penn State wide receiver, played under the lights of Beaver Stadium for five seasons from 2017 to 2021, before ultimately finishing his college career at the University of Massachusetts.

In 2024, Sullivan-Brown became a houseguest on "Big Brother" Season 26, a reality TV show in which a group of strangers are isolated in a house under constant camera surveillance, while competing in a series of social and physical challenges to avoid being evicted.

In a preseason interview for the show, Sullivan-Brown said he joined the "social experiment" because he knows how to talk to people, as the show is all about making friends. And it's a competition after all, which seemed like an easy task for the former wide receiver.

On the show, Sullivan-Brown made numerous alliances with other houseguests, most notably with "The Pentagon" which included the winner of Season 26, Chelsie Baham, 29, of Rancho Cucamonga, California. However, Sullivan-Brown lost his key allies because of last-minute vote-flipping, which relegated him to the minority, which put Sullivan-Brown in a vulnerable position.

Despite this temporary setback, Sullivan-Brown made a connection with Makensy Manbeck, 24, from Houston, which allowed him to coast through until the finale, where he was ultimately evicted by Manbeck. He placed third in the show.

Next Level Chef

Gabrielle Chappel, 32, of Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, graduated from Penn State in 2016 with a degree in broadcast journalism and Spanish and has worked for companies like Fanatics as a digital producer and host. In 2021, Chappel experienced a career shift where she graduated from the Institute of Culinary Education's Health Supportive Culinary Arts program in New York City.

This shift led Chappel to appear on Season 3 of "Next Level Chef," a competitive reality cooking show with British celebrity chef, Gordan Ramsey as the creator and host. Nyesha Arrington and Richard Blais, American chefs and TV personalities, recruit contestants and serve as mentors alongside Ramsey.

In the first three episodes of the season, contestants auditioned to be picked by one of the mentors — Chappel was chosen by Ramsey, alongside four other contestants. Chappel was the only chef from Team Ramsey to make it into the top three and enter the finale episode.

In the finale, each chef had 90 minutes to prepare a three-course meal as they moved through three kitchens, with the judges tasting their dishes immediately after preparation. Appetizers were first in the basement kitchen with Blais, and Chappel prepared pork meatballs with 67 minutes left in the challenge.

Next was a seafood course in the middle kitchen with Arrington where Chappel cooked a pan-roasted sea bream with a corn emulsion, roasted grapes and a fennel and radish salad. Finally, Chappel headed to the top kitchen with Ramsey, with a two-minute advantage to select anything she wanted and chose to cook a New York strip steak as her entree.

Chappel's three-course meal won over the taste buds of the judges, which won her a grand prize of \$250,000 and a one-year mentorship from each of the judges.

Beast Games

Tyler Lucas, 33, of Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, and former Penn State wide receiver, graduated from Penn State in 2015 with a degree in criminology. A year later, Lucas joined the United States Air Force as a cryptologic analyst and reporter and became a pilot in 2023.

Lucas made his reality TV debut on Season 1 of "The Titan Games," an American sports competition series, hosted and created by Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Lucas lost before the finale.

Lucas later joined "Beast Games," a large competition series created by the famous YouTuber, Mr. Beast, as a contestant in Season 2: Strong vs. Smart.

The season began with 200 contestants. Lucas was No. 167, and he competed in numerous challenges such as rope climbing, a dodgeball-style game, an obstacle course. The show even collaborated with the famous reality TV show, "Survivor," for one of the challenges.

In the finale, Lucas competed against Cory Sims, 42, from Jamestown, New York, known as

No. 191.

In the final challenge, each contestant took turns hiding a \$5 million check in one of 10 briefcases, while the other was blindfolded. Then, the blindfolded player would remove their blindfold and try to guess which briefcase held the \$5 million check.

After several stressful rounds, Lucas ultimately picked the correct suitcase to win the ultimate prize.

The Amazing Race

Ali Krieger, 42, of Dumfries, Virginia played as both a midfielder and defender for Penn State women's soccer from 2003 to 2006, and graduated from Penn State in 2007 with a degree in advertising/public relations. She is the only Penn State player to be honored as All-American at two positions, midfielder and defender.

After Krieger left Happy Valley, she went on to play professional soccer across the world including FC Frankfurt in Germany, the Washington Spirit, Tyreso FF in Sweden and the Orlando Pride. She has made 108 appearances with the U.S. Women's National Team (US-WNT), and won two FIFA Women's World Cups. In 2023, Krieger retired from professional soccer after an 18-year long career.

Now, Krieger, alongside Joana Lohman, 44, of Silver Spring, Maryland, are a team of pro athletes on Season 39 of "The Amazing Race," where competing pairs race around the world. The first team to cross the final finish line wins \$1 million.

The season premiered on Sept. 30, where Krieger and Lohman, along with the other competitors, started the race in Vancouver, Canada. The next episode aired the following night, and the racers traveled to Madrid, Spain, where the pro athlete duo arrived first in Madrid and won the first leg.

The Traitors US

Mark Zgoda, 26, of Phillipsburg, New Jersey, graduated from Penn State in 2023 with a degree in civil engineering. He currently works in the New York City Metropolitan area as a business technology solutions analyst at Deloitte.

Zgoda joined "The Traitors," a reality game show where contestants play a game of deception, as a "Faithful," in Season 5: New Blood. The 22 contestants are split into "Faithfuls," who try to survive, and "traitors," who secretly eliminate players nightly, all competing to win the ultimate prize of \$250,000.

In a preseason interview for the show, Zgoda said, "If you start as a Faithful, you never have to put on an act. I can authentically try to help get the Traitors out, but Traitors have the advantage because they get to be in control of the game at the end."

Traitor's goal is to eliminate the Faithfuls in order to steal the prize for themselves, if they make it to the end. However, if the Faithfuls can eliminate the Traitors, they will share the prize instead.

The Traitors meet in secret to decide which Faithful they'll "murder." The other contestants don't know who the Traitors choose until the "murdered" person doesn't return the following day. There are various missions and challenges with potential to add more money to the final pot.

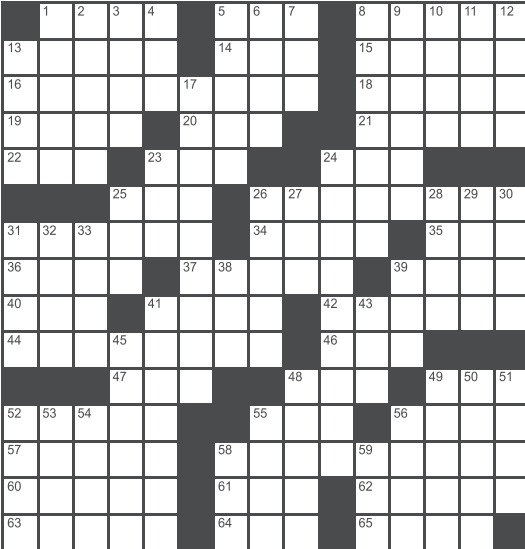
To email reporter: sep5831@psu.edu

CROSSWORD

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Across

- 1 Mediocre
- 5 Brazilian port
- 8 Capital of Ghana
- 13 Baseball's Hammerin' Hank
- 14 Carte start
- 15 *Charlie Chan* actor, Sidney
- 16 Adriatic port city
- 18 Sound from a nest
- 19 Mine entrance
- 20 Nabokov novel
- 21 Domicile
- 22 Hobby shop buy
- 23 Pesky insect
- 24 Prefix with system
- 25 Before, in verse
- 26 Brunnhilde, e.g.
- 31 Lemnos locale
- 34 Signs, as a contract



- 61 French friend
- 62 Worth
- 63 Speeder's bane
- 64 Embargo
- 65 Dill seed

Down

- 1 Riyadh resident
- 2 Comet's path member
- 3 Separate mail
- 4 A Beate bride
- 5 One of the Quuids
- 6 Pelvic parts
- 7 Durable wood
- 8 Strafes
- 9 Vaquero
- 10 Disney goldfish
- 11 Cattail, e.g.

- 12 Johnson of "Laugh-In"
- 13 One of the Aleutians
- 17 February sweetheart
- 23 Lobster *Diavolo*
- 24 Norwegian hunting dogs
- 25 Moray, e.g.
- 26 String quartet
- 27 Aardvark's tidbit
- 28 Iranian coin
- 29 Division word
- 30 Part of Maine's nickname
- 31 Ambience
- 32 Land o' blarney
- 33 She's a Lady
- 38 Antiquated
- 39 Female lobster
- 41 Gunfighter's accessory
- 43 French vineyard
- 45 Kind of oil
- 48 Waif
- 49 Big name in games
- 50 Native Alaskan
- 51 Nostalgic time
- 52 Egg on
- 53 Falafel bread
- 54 Gung-ho
- 55 Robin Cook thriller
- 56 Aquatic bird
- 58 Computer key
- 59 "Mogambo" star

WORD SEARCH

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Deserts

S Q H J D Z B U N G A K A U S S F Z
T S C O R P I O N S R N Q U A I L I
A L H H Z M G P V I A Q N N T S C H
C P R K O W H K U U H K D H A M M C
B A Z A N S O C G W A G F G S E A S
O G S L W N R I S S S O E R S M O E
B I T A R A N T U L A B F I E O L N
S S I H G W S S X S R I O L N J I U
E K B A J T H W R U F T S C E A Z D
R M B R M T E A S E R I P O Z V A N
U E A I I S E H S O N O R A N E R S
T E R N U N P A T O Q N C E Z X D A
L R K T C T M B A H R O U J A A S D
U K C V H A A R Q O Y Y N R G N E O
V A A C L T I O T O C I O V D S T L
C T J L S D Q D T G G F Q U E A J P
P S E K A N S E L T T A R R D Q O S
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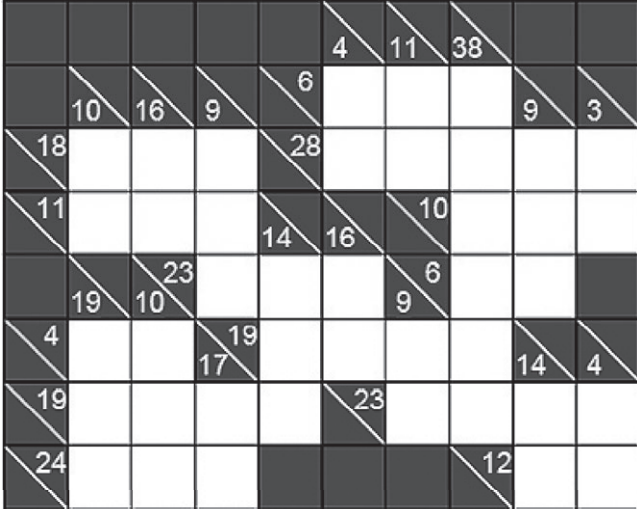
Arid
Bats
Bighorn Sheep
Bobcats
Cactus
Camels
Coyotes
Desert

Dunes
Fire Ant
Gobi
Iguana
Jackrabbit
Kalahari
Lizards
Llama

Meerkats
Mojave
Oasis
Quail
Rattlesnakes
Roadrunners
Sagebrush
Sahara

Sand
Scorpions
Sonoran
Tarantula
Tortoise
Vulture

KAKURO



How to play:

A number above the diagonal line in a black square is the sum of the white squares to the right of it.

A number below the diagonal line is the sum of the white squares in the sequence below it.

You may only use the digits 1 to 9, and a digit can only be used once in any sequence.

SUDOKU

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4	5			2			7	3	
	6		3	5		7	8	11	10
		11	10	3					4
12				11					7
7		1				12		10	
		8			3	5	7		
				8	1	9		12	
	12		8					5	1
6	4					12			9
	8					6	7	3	
		5	2	4	7	3	8		12
	3	6				8			1

How to play:

Only use digits 1 through 12. Digits can not repeat within a grid.