

# The Daily Collegian

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## 'I SHOULD HAVE SHOWN UP'

*UPUA president's attendance raises questions about bylaws, accountability*

By Mia Debelevich  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) enforces mandatory attendance rules for general assembly members, but its governing documents do not establish attendance requirements for executive board members.

In order to pass any legislation, the UPUA needs general assembly members to meet its quorum of one-half plus one. For example, a 58-member general assembly would need 30 in attendance to pass legislation.

However, attendance requirements are not applicable to members of UPUA's executive board, which comprises the president, vice president, chief of staff and deputy chief of staff, as they are not considered members of the general assembly.

"I'm not perfect, and I won't say I was a perfect president. But I do say that I am trying my best and I think I am showing up for the organization."

Rasha Elwakil  
UPUA President

According to Article VI in the UPUA's bylaws, "attendance of the General Assembly, Work Session, Committee of the Whole, and Committee Meetings is mandatory for all members of the Assembly." Any unexcused absences by general assembly members results in deficiency points.

Once at-large representatives reach three deficiency points, their membership is reviewed, according to UPUA Vice President Noah Youchess. He said if representatives attend tabling events, write extra legislation or engage in UPUA extracurricular work, they can bring their deficiency points down.

Hunter Steach, chief justice, said the expectation for executive attendance is an "unsung rule," typically passed down from preceding presidents. He said some of the problems the UPUA had this past semester can be "attributed to members of the executive branch not being there."

Steach said he "hardly remembers" any absences from the past three UPUA presidents. However, the same can not be said for Rasha Elwakil.

"I don't think it's the best reflection at all times, because we had a lot of attendance problems just across the board," Steach said. "I've been in UPUA for four years and been going to GA — pretty much every GA — for the last four years, and from my perspective, I don't think we've ever struggled with attendance across the board as much as last semester."

Steach said he would be open to reviewing rules regarding attendance or introducing a formal mechanism that clearly outlines the expectations of executive members.

Elwakil arrived to the following meetings after the halfway point: Oct. 8, Oct. 29, Nov. 5 and Dec. 3.

"I chose to be selfish and go to a (panhellenic) event because that was our last one of the year," Elwakil said at the Dec. 3 meeting.

"But, I think it's very hypocritical of me to not apologize when I've been asking you guys to show up and be in attendance every week, and so I just did want to give that apology real quick and say I'm truly sorry for that."

The Dec. 3 meeting was delayed due to an inability to meet quorum. Representatives were asked by Kat Hogan and Youchess to contact other representatives and ask if they could attend the meeting.

Elwakil did not give her report at this meeting, stating she didn't want to take up more time of those in attendance.

Elwakil said only one UPUA member came to her with con-

cerns about her absences following the Dec. 3 meeting. The conversation made her realize it was unnecessary to come late, she said.

"I should have shown up, and I did reflect on that, and moving forward this semester, I'm making sure that I show up to everything, hopefully," Elwakil said.

Youchess said attendance is a "big thing" for UPUA, as it's important to meet quorum, hence the attendance requirements for representatives. He said the steering committee — which includes the president, vice president, chief of staff, chief justice and the five legislative committee chairs — has possible plans to intensify attendance requirements this semester.

"I've always been very amenable to the argument for implementing attendance points, and I think that conversation is going to be pretty big this year when we go into these governing document reviews and talk about that," Youchess said.

Youchess said people have varying opinions on the pertinence of attendance to the executive and judicial branches.

"It kind of depends on what you view general assembly as," Youchess said. "If you see it as this meeting where the whole student government gets together once a week and kind of gets their business done, a lot of people think everyone should be there for that. Other people think that the executive, judicial roles in general assembly aren't as crucial."

The vice president has to chair the assembly per 6.2.3 clause 2 of Article VI of the UPUA Constitution — so he described his attendance as necessary.

The clause states: "The Vice President shall preside over the meetings of the Assembly, retain floor privileges, and vote solely in the cases that will influence the outcome of a tied vote, except on votes to override a veto of the President."

Despite this, attendance is not tracked nor explicitly constitutionally required for the vice president of the organization. He said he's held accountable by representatives.

In the fall semester, Youchess came to the beginning of the Oct. 29 meeting, but left due to a scheduled exam. It was the only meeting that occurred without his presence.

Youchess, Steach and Elwakil all said they had no concerns about the attendance patterns of other executive members.

Hogan, speaker of the assembly, said attendance has been the topic of a "multitude" of conversations within the UPUA's steering committee.

"Having leadership not be very active in attendance sets an example for the rest of the assembly," Hogan said. "It can be a bit difficult to try and encourage representatives to show up when they're seeing that."

Hogan said she's spoken with representatives who've expressed discontent with the disparity in attendance policies. She said many feel "disheartened" by the absence of their leaders.

"I do think that there should be more attendance standards that the executive, and even judicial members, should be held accountable for," Hogan said. "That will be up for significant discussion when we get into our constitution and bylaw amendments later (this) semester."

Maria Lopez, justice and equity chair, said she's also noticed a change in the enthusiasm of the general assembly.

"Though representatives look up usually to members of steering for guidance when it comes to initiatives or attendance or what projects to work on, I believe that this semester specifically some people have been a little unmotivated to continue on the work," Lopez said. "We've had our ups and downs this semester, but I'm grateful (representatives) have found that motivation to still come back."

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### Rasha Elwakil's Fall GA Meeting Attendance

Visit our website to interact with this calendar.

■ No issues ■ Elwakil missed more than half the meeting

September 2025

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |    |

\*The first two general assembly (GA) meetings of the 20th assembly occurred during the spring semester of 2025. The third and fourth meetings took place over the summer, during which Fletcher Port was the president of the assembly after Elwakil's April 2025 removal. She was reinstated before the fall semester began.

Visual by Tyler Nolt

### Rasha Elwakil's Fall GA Meeting

Visit our website to interact with this calendar.

■ No issues ■ Elwakil missed more than half the meeting

October 2025

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
|    |    |    | 1  | 2  |   |   |
| 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |   |   |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |   |   |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |   |   |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |   |   |

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Visual by Tyler Nolt

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November 2025

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |   |   |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |   |   |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |   |   |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |   |   |
| 30 |    |    |    |    |   |   |

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Visual by Tyler Nolt

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December 2025

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
|    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |   |   |
| 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |   |   |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |   |   |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |   |   |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |   |   |

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Visual by Tyler Nolt

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Geraldine Cruz-Hernandez/Collegian

**A protester** holds up a sign during the Student Committee for Defense and Solidarity's (SCDS) on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



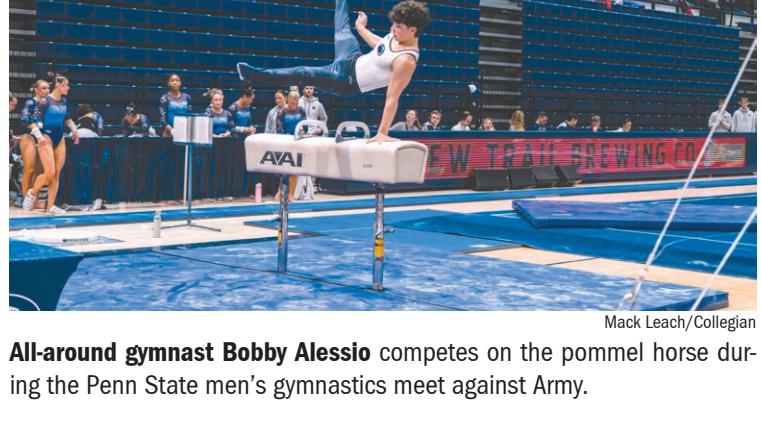
Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Students** walk around during the Penn State involvement fair on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026 in University Park, Pa.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Students** look through posters on the Penn State poster sale



Mack Leach/Collegian

**All-around gymnast Bobby Alessio** competes on the pommel horse during the Penn State men's gymnastics meet against Army.

# LET'S GET SYLLY

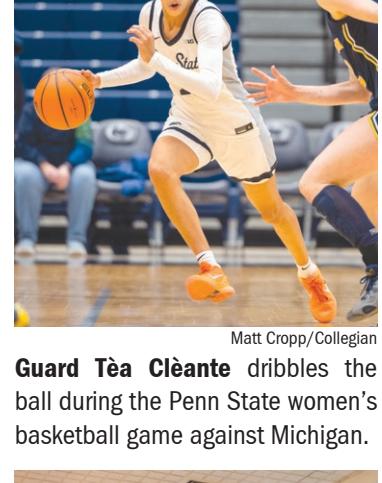


Ayan Hamdani/Collegian

**A protester** marches during the Student Committee for Defense and Solidarity's (SCDS) anti-ICE protest.



Mack Leach/Collegian



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Guard Tèa Clèante** dribbles the ball during the Penn State women's basketball game against Michigan.



Ayan Hamdani/Collegian

**Ari Steinfeld** high fives during a Robotics in 3 Days build event.



Mack Leach/Collegian



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Posters** hang on the wall during the Penn State involvement fair.



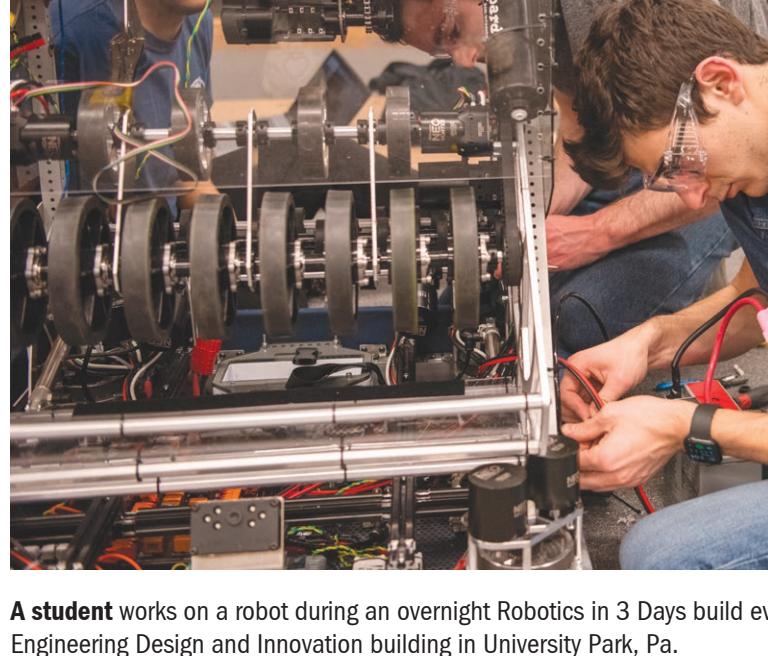
Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Students** look through posters during the Penn State poster sale on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026.



Matt Cropp/Collegian

**Players** stand on the court during the Penn State women's basketball game against Illinois in the Bryce Jordan Center.



Ayan Hamdani/Collegian

**A student** works on a robot during an overnight Robotics in 3 Days build event on Tuesday, Jan 12, 2025 at the Engineering and Innovation building in University Park, Pa.



Geraldine Cruz-Hernandez/Collegian

**A protester** holds up a sign during the Student Committee for Defense and Solidarity's (SCDS) anti-ICE protest.

# SANDERSON TALKS FUTURE

By Lyle Alenstein  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following a win against Rutgers to open up conference play, Penn State will hit the road this weekend for a pair of duals, facing Iowa on Friday and Northwestern on Sunday.

Ahead of wrestling a pair of conference foes, Cael Sanderson met with the media to discuss where the program sits heading into the new year as well as his business venture.

Here's what he had to say.

## Aaron Nagao's Injury

After suffering an injury in the Black Knight Invitational in November, Aaron Nagao returned to the mat in December in the Southern Scuffle, only for him to medically forfeit after winning his first match.

Sanderson provided a status update on Nagao, and it's one that won't have him suit up at 141 pounds for the remainder of the year. Sanderson said "he's definitely done for the season."

"Has had some setbacks, obviously, with that shoulder, and that's a tough one to come back from, but he's kind of got to restart that process," Sanderson said.

Nagao returned to the mat this year after having not wrestled for close to two years. He'll finish the season with a 5-2 record, with both of his losses coming on medical forfeits.

He will likely need surgery, as Sanderson mentioned postgame after the win over Rutgers. In place of Nagao, Braeden Davis will likely be the starter at 141 the rest of the way.



Sienna Pinney/Collegian File Photo

**Wrestling head coach Cael Sanderson** stands on the sidelines during the Penn State football game against Ohio State at Beaver Stadium on Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

"The reality of what Aaron was coming back from, just an uphill battle," Sanderson said. "Shoulders are really challenging in our sport. It's complicated, obviously, joint positions you get put in wrestling, but if anyone could do it, it was Aaron. So, we want to give him the best support and opportunity we could give him."

## Iowa

Just like Penn State, Iowa has historically been in the top tier of collegiate wrestling programs.

Come Friday night, in a battle between the No. 1 Nittany Lions and the No. 4 Hawkeyes, Sanderson knows his team will have to bring it, but still keep the main thing the main thing.

"Same mentality," Sanderson said. "Of course, Iowa is a great opponent. Great wrestlers, great coaches, great tradition and

history. We got to be ready to roll."

Carver Hawkeye Area notoriously is known for being a rauous environment and drawing great crowds. There's no doubt the Hawkeye faithful will bring the juice on Friday night.

Sanderson said Penn State will be ready for it, as the squad has wrestled in a handful of similar atmospheres, paired with having them in their own backyard.

"I think we're blessed. I mean, most of the places we go, we get a great crowd," Sanderson said. "We wrestle in front of a great crowd here at Penn State, whether it's in Rec Hall or the (Bryce) Jordan Center. So we're used to getting to compete in front of enthusiastic fans. That makes what we do more fun and worthwhile."

Iowa has a handful of talented wrestlers, notably No. 1 Angelo Ferrari at 184 pounds, No. 3

Michael Caliendo at 165 and No. 5 Ben Kueter at 285. At 174 pounds, Penn State could see Patrick Kennedy or even Ferrari, as Massoma Endene is no longer with the team.

Regardless of who is wrestling or how good the opponent may be, Penn State has heavy hitters of their own.

"Our guys are just gonna do what they do," Sanderson said. "It doesn't make a lot of sense to make any adjustments. Obviously, you're aware of your opponents, but at the same time, the long-term plan is let's get better at what we do, and keep improving and go compete to the best of our ability with some fire and enthusiasm."

## Masanosuke Ono

It was big news for Penn State

when it landed Japanese world champion Masanosuke Ono to its roster during the offseason.

During his preseason media availability, Sanderson said the plan for Ono would be for him to redshirt. Now, there's questions as to if he'll actually compete this year due to his health.

Ono sustained a kidney illness, according to a report from Wrestling Spirits. The news came out in light of him supposed to wrestle in Japan's Emperor's Cup in December, but he ended up withdrawing.

"I'm not sure," Sanderson said. "Obviously, we've been discussing that. But, I don't know if we'll see him this year or not. He's got to get back and get healthy."

## Cael's Cookie

Off the mat and into the kitchen, Sanderson was asked about his new business venture that has to do with cookies to wrap up the media session.

Sanderson, a self-proclaimed enjoyer of cookies, tried to start his own line close to 20 years ago but didn't find much triumph.

Now, he recently got back into the field as an enjoyable side quest and is finding more success, releasing "Cael's Cookie."

"I have a very small part in it, but it was something that's kind of fun and I really like them," Sanderson said. "Basically just got a group of killers to kind of take it and run with it and that's what they're doing."

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# Hawkeyes coming on the horizon

By Evan Smith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

This Friday, Penn State faces their marquee opponent of the season so far, traveling to Carver Hawkeye Arena to face off against the Iowa Hawkeyes.

The venue is the last place the Nittany Lions lost a dual, nearly six years ago. Iowa will look to shock the world by handing the Nittany Lions another loss. However, recent controversies and some underperforming upper-classmen leave Penn State as a heavy favorite in this top-five matchup.

## 125: No. 2 Luke Lilledahl

(PSU) vs. No. 6 Dean

Peterson (UI)

This serves as a revenge match for Luke Lilledahl after Dean Peterson upset him, 4-1, at Rutgers last season.

Peterson is 7-1 in his senior year, but has no marquee victories under his belt to this point. This will be Lilledahl's highest-ranked matchup of the season so far.

## 133: No. 4 Marcus Blaze

(PSU) vs. No. 8 Drake

Ayala (UI)

Drake Ayala is a two-time NCAA runner-up, but has taken a step back early this season with his record floating around the .500 line heading into a match with Blaze. For Blaze, this marks an opportunity to claim a victory over one of the most prestigious names in college wrestling, even during his down year.

Despite the record, Ayala is no cake walk. In the past two years, Ayala didn't drop more than five



Kate Hildebrand/Collegian File Photo

**Penn State's Josh Barr** wrestles Iowa's Stephen Buchanan, losing by 5-2 decision in the title match of the NCAA D1 Wrestling Championships in the Wells Fargo Center on Saturday, March 22, 2025 in Philadelphia, Pa.

matches in a season. Blaze will have to use pure skill to outmatch the experience of Ayala.

## 141: No. 7 Braeden Davis

(PSU) vs. No. 11 Nasir

Bailey (UI)

Braeden Davis faces another big name talent having a relatively down year for the Hawkeyes, wrestling against former All-American and Pac-12 champion Nasir Bailey. Bailey's 9-3 record isn't bad, but he is nearing his loss total for previous years earlier in the season than usual.

For Davis, this is his biggest match since moving up to 141. Davis jumped into the top 10 immediately after returning to the lineup and will try to earn that ranking on Friday.

Despite the record, Ayala is no

cake walk. In the past two years,

Ayala didn't drop more than five

## 165: No. 1 Mitchell

Mesenbrink (PSU) vs No.

3 Micheal Caliendo (UI)

This is a familiar matchup for both sides, as Michael Caliendo has faced Mitchell Mesenbrink six times over the last few years, with Mesenbrink winning each matchup. Each matchup has gotten closer, but it's clear Mesenbrink has Caliendo's number.

This is expected to be a low-scoring affair as both wrestlers are patient and familiar with each other's styles.

## 174: No. 1 Levi Haines

(PSU) vs No. 3 Patrick

Kennedy (UI)

Patrick Kennedy is in the midst of his most successful season in his senior year, starting out 9-1 and jumping into the top three.

He is 3-1 against top-15 opponents, but Levi Haines is on a different level.

Haines is 3-0 against Kennedy in his career, with each win being decisive. Nothing has shifted to suggest this match will end much differently than those ones.

## 184: No. 4 Rocco Welsh

(PSU) vs No. 1 Angelo

Ferrari (UI)

Angelo Ferrari was a highly touted prospect during his redshirt season last year. During one of his matches in the Bryce Jordan Center, Ferrari held former Nittany Lion Carter Starosci to one point.

This season, his defense has defined his success, as he hasn't been taken down in a match this season. This is one of two matches where the Nittany Lion won't be the favorite.

Rocco Welsh has been consis-

tent since joining the Nittany Lions, but hasn't been showing off the way Ferrari has this season. This will be a low-scoring match that may be decided by a single takedown or escape points.

## 197: No. 1 Josh Barr

(PSU) vs. Gabe Arnold/

Harvey Ludington (UI)

With the dismissal of No. 4 Massoma Endene, there is uncertainty around who Josh Barr will face on Friday night. Gabe Arnold is a familiar name to Penn State fans and he has wrestled up to the weight class multiple times.

Harvey Ludington is on the verge of burning his redshirt, so the decision must be made to start him for the season, or yield to Arnold.

Barr has been dominant since returning to action in December, either wrestler will be challenged to compete with No. 1.

## 285: No. 13 Cole Mirasola (PSU) vs No. 5 Ben Kueter (UI)

This is the second matchup in which the Hawkeye is favored. Kueter, a former Iowa football player, has continued to grow as Hawkeye heavyweight. He is 3-1 in limited action and viewed as a tier above Mirasola in terms of national championship contention.

This means Mirasola has an opportunity to move up a lot in the rankings with a victory over Kueter. However, Kueter has a clear size advantage over Mirasola, a consistent struggle for the undersized Nittany Lion.

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## SUPPORT STUDENT JOURNALISM

Student journalism is fundamental to our democracy as it serves as a proving ground for future generations of professional reporters. Without an independent, student-run news outlet, students are unable to grow and learn the skills needed in the field.

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## The Collegian's Board of Editors shares New Year's resolutions

As we enter 2026, members of the Daily Collegian's editorial board share what they hope to accomplish this year.

From saving money to working on interpersonal skills, the new year is a time of growth and change for our editors.

### Mercedes Hamilton, Editor-in-chief

My New Year's resolution is to find a better work-life balance.

### Kahlie Wray, Managing Editor

This year, I'd like to stop second-guessing myself. I plan on learning to trust my gut.

### Avery Tortora, Digital Managing Editor

My New Year's resolution is to reduce my screen time in the morning and before bed, as well as read every night.

### Mia Debelevich, News Editor

In 2026, my resolution is to place my focus on moving on. I

tend to get stuck on past, trivial moments, and I want to start keeping those things tucked to the far end of memory to make more room for the good things in my life.

### Rachael Keller, News Editor

This year, as a New Year's resolution, I set the goal to put myself first more. I think with school and clubs, it's extremely easy to lose yourself in your work and the things happening around you.

Therefore, this year I want to focus more on putting myself first and focusing on my identity outside of school and the chaos.

### Katie Herron, Lifestyle Editor

My New Year's resolution this year is to speak more positively and say "yes" to more things.

### Nadya Solometo, Lifestyle Editor

This year, my resolution is to better myself both mentally and

physically. I want to make sure I stay active and remember to enjoy my last semester and summer in undergrad because this will be one of the times I look back on fondly in years to come.

### Andrew Deal, Sports Editor

My New Year's resolution is to be more organized with everything.

### Myles Hannak, Sports Editor

My resolution is to trust the process without pretending it's fun.

### Avery Hill, Football Editor

My New Year's Resolution is to be more determined and intentional on achieving what I want in life.

### Lyle Alenstein, Wrestling Editor

My New Year's resolution is to be better with my time management. When I have a task I

need to get done, I can't put it off till later and just need to bang it out right then and there.

### Teresa Phelan, Opinion Editor

My resolution is to be more spontaneous and say yes to more opportunities.

### Matt Cropp, Photo Editor

This year, my goal is to attend all my classes and not skip. I also want to run a marathon.

### Sammy Oropeza, Photo Editor

My New Year's resolution is to start budgeting and cook more. Last year I had no money, so I'd like to change that this year.

### Zeyda Frye, Multimedia Editor

My New Year's resolution is to start getting into reading.

### Ali Hanna, Multimedia Editor

My resolution is to make decisions on my own without asking anyone for their input.

### Geraldine Cruz-Hernandez, Social Media Editor

This year, I will be living my best life. I will also stop doomscrolling and finally pick up a book again.

### Avery McGurgan, Investigations Editor

My New Year's resolution is to be better at setting and enforcing boundaries with my friends and to be more social in group settings.

### Jocelyn Bilker, Newsletter Editor

This year, I'm aiming for a 40/60 split: dialing back the rush and putting more energy into presence and the people who keep me grounded.

### Alex Fischer, DEI Chair

My New Year's resolution is to go to all my classes, learn as much as I can, and enjoy my last semester at Penn State.



Cartoon by Nate Campbell

## Off the record | Ins and outs of 2026

Dearest reader,  
Welcome back to another semester in Happy Valley — where the drama is high, the standards are low and somehow everyone's still trying to "just see where things go."

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Miss Behave and this semester I have the pleasure of exploring everything and anything about love, relationships and sex with you. And the best part? You get to send in your own stories and advice, anonymously, of course.

Think of me as your campus Cupid, if Cupid had a sharper tongue and better Wi-Fi. So grab your beverage of choice and settle in, because it's time to talk about what's in and what's out as we enter our 2026 era. The popular "ins" and "outs" trend is the new way to set intentions, and naturally I have thoughts.

I know we're all busy bees this first week back, so let's skip the foreplay and jump right into it.

### INS Self-Respect (Membership Mandatory)

Self-respect is mandatory. Desperation is the emotional equivalent of wearing socks with sandals, stop it. Also, if someone can't meet you at your level, don't lower standards and don't you dare settle for less

than you deserve. Respect yourself and know your worth.

### Emotional IQ

Ladies, if you can order a Starbucks with multiple modifications, you can say what's actually going on in your head. Gentlemen, if you can rant about your favorite sports team for half an hour, you can spend a few minutes admitting you have feelings. Speak up and be honest.

### Dating with Intention

We're dating like adults ... calendars, expectations and actual standards included. If you want something casual, say it. If you want something real, act like it. Show up, text back like a functioning human and stop acting like effort is optional.

Modern dating isn't always cute; it can be exhausting. So stop with the games, stop with the mixed signals and for the love of all that is holy, stop chasing people who won't even meet you halfway.

### A Review Board

Your friends are the jury. If your friends aren't hyping up your standards, they're enabling your delusions. We should be able to lean on our close friends for advice and some guidance.

Navigating a love life isn't an easy task, and without a friendly jury, it's basically a trial by fire.

When it comes to crushes, dating and relationships, none of us have it all figured out. It's easy to get lost in your own feelings. Take a breath. Sometimes your friends can see the

red flags or the hidden gems that you can't.

### OUTS

#### Chasing the unavailable

Newsflash. If they're unavailable, they're unavailable. Stop wasting your emotional energy on a figment of your imagination. Chasing someone who isn't showing up for you isn't romantic. It's pathetic.

Your time, attention and feelings are worth more than being a background character in someone else's story. Walk away, save your energy and invest it where it's actually wanted.

### Mixed signals

Mixed signals are manipulative. One minute, they're all warmth and charm, the next, they vanish like Houdini. If someone can't communicate, they're not complicated, they're careless.

Stop twisting yourself into knots trying to interpret vibes, texts, or emojis like a cryptic code. Give your attention and effort to people who actually show up consistently, not ones who leave you guessing.

### Ghosting

It's not Halloween. Grow up.

### Red flags

Listen, we will not be color-blind in 2026. If it's giving toxic energy, leave. Ignoring warning signs isn't brave; it's dumb.

Likewise, red flags aren't suggestions; they're stop signs. Respect them and trust your gut.

I apologize if I sound a little harsh. Scratch that, I'm not

sorry. I'm here to be real with you. If anything I said makes you flinch, chances are it's about you. And if it is, maybe it's time for a little self-reflection as we enter the new year.

I truly hope everyone had a great first week back. Take some of these thoughts to heart. Let them inspire you, or simply remind you that you matter. Your time, effort and heart deserve to be treated with care.

I hope your first week back is as exciting as the stories waiting to be written.

Yours truly,

Miss Behave

*Editor's Note: Off the record is a biweekly column written by a third-year Collegian staffer writing under an alias. It aims to promote a space for honest conversations about love, sex and relationships. Write in to our columnist using the QR code.*

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# Growing into the game

## Ivan Jurić continues to grow in first season in Big Ten

By Will Horstman  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Seven-footer Ivan Jurić started playing basketball as a guard, but then during the summer when he was 15-years-old, he grew over seven inches taller, making a position switch to the frontcourt.

Now, Jurić is in his freshman year at Penn State, where he's become a standout player with recent performances like 20 points against No. 2 Michigan and nine points and 10 rebounds versus No. 5 Purdue last week.

"He's a huge part of what we do, and for him to be learning all this going through Big Ten play against the players and teams, says a lot about him and his potential, which is a great word to have tagged to you," Rhoades said Monday. "His potential is he has a very high ceiling, but he is very open to understanding and applying it. You see what you can get from him, and he's done a good job being more consistent, and he's still a young guy, so it's gonna be some ups and downs for him."

Jurić is averaging 9.1 points and 4.1 rebounds per game through 16 appearances this season. After coming off the bench the first four games, the big man has started the last 12 games after proving to Rhoades he wouldn't get in foul trouble on a regular basis.

He's acted as a typical center by battling for boards and going for tough baskets in the paint,



Owen Bellard/The Daily Collegian

**Forward Ivan Jurić (3)** waits to shoot a free throw during the Penn State men's basketball game against Campbell University in the Bryce Jordan Center.

but he also brings the ability to stretch the floor to the Nittany Lions. Jurić has taken 30 3-point attempts this season, knocking down 10 of them, including four made 3-pointers in the last three games.

Jurić said his shooting skill comes from his days playing as a guard. He grew up in Croatia, and he played for the professional team BC Dubrava in the Croatian Premier League during the 2023-24 season.

The Zagreb, Croatia, native played for his home country in the 2024 FIBA U18 Eurobasket. He explained what it was like while making the transition to center, citing his playing

experience overseas.

"First, it was kind of hard, because I still had to grow into my body and put on some weight since I played with grown men back in my country to be able to fight with them," Jurić said Monday. "Then I just used what I knew, started passing and shooting."

Jurić has grown into his large frame as his listed weight with Penn State being at 250 pounds.

Jurić was a late addition to Penn State's 2025 recruiting class, signing in May after playing the 2024-25 season with Sunrise Christian Academy. He was rated as a 247Sports composite 4-star and the No. 154

player overall.

With the Nittany Lions, Jurić gets to work with assistant coach Brent Scott, who played a key role in developing 7-footer and NBA first-round pick Yanic Konan Niederhauser.

"I think he's helped me with a lot of things," Jurić said. "The thing that worked for me the best is watching film with him, because the great player he was, he can tell me from a different perspective, like the way I do some things. So, yeah, I think every aspect I improved on, he's got a big hand in it."

Jurić's potential as a 7-footer who can play in both the interior and on the perimeter makes him

an important player to watch for opposing defenses.

Rhoades said Jurić had a "high-level" performance against the Boilermakers, acting like a guard on the outside at times to help the rest of the offense against the Boilermakers.

"He's a huge part of what we do, and for him to be learning all this going through Big Ten play against the players and teams, says a lot about him."

Mike Rhoades

Coach

"I thought he connected our offense a lot, not just because he rebounded and scored, but just continuing to keep our offense in a flow, and I thought at times Purdue got behind because we played through the big man, even on the perimeter, and it put them at a disadvantage," Rhoades said. "I think it was one reason why we had so many layups and scores in the basket in the second half. They're so worried about him away from the basket, it created scoring, scoring lanes for other guys. So he's been doing a very good job."

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# Spengler Cup, injuries



Megan Miller/The Daily Collegian

**Head men's hockey coach Guy Gadowsky** answers questions during a press conference in Pegula Ice Arena.

By Maggie Hardy  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Guy Gadowsky spoke at the weekly media on Monday for the first time since before the blue and white's extended break. While NCAA contests paused during the break, several Nittany Lions continued playing abroad during the six-week hiatus.

Since opening play in the unofficial second half of the season, the blue and white earned a series split with RIT, and most recently, are coming off a Big Ten series sweep of Minnesota.

## Injury update

Despite the successful series at Pegula Ice Arena, a dark spot on the weekend was the number of injuries sustained by the Nittany Lions. Gadowsky opened the press conference with updates on several blue and white skaters.

"I can share that Braedon Ford

is going to be out for a significant amount of time," Gadowsky said.

Ford recorded his first goal of the season after opening the scoring for the blue and white early in Saturday's contest with the Golden Gophers. In the second period, the forward went down awkwardly into the boards and was in visible pain on his way to the locker room.

Gadowsky listed three other skaters that were "day-to-day, with nothing concrete," including the team's points leader, Charlie Cerrato. Cerrato exited Friday's game with an injury and was then scratched for Saturday. Both Shea Van Olm and Casey Aman were also included in that group.

## Spengler Cup recap

Over the break, five Nittany Lions competed in the Spengler Cup as a part of the first-ever U.S. Collegiate Selects team. Led by Gadowsky, they finished a successful inaugural campaign, culminating in a silver medal.

"The entire experience was really tremendous," Gadowsky said. "Switzerland is beautiful, the food was great, the atmosphere at the arena was incredible."

Gadowsky brought Cerrato, JJ Wiebusch, Matt DiMarsico, Aiden Fink and Mac Gadowsky over with him, and he spoke on what it meant to share the experience with them.

"It was awesome, I feel very grateful that we were able to do that, and they deserve it," Gadowsky said. "I didn't set out to take that many Penn Staters, but I felt they absolutely deserved it, and they all played really, really well."

## Fink's return

After going down with an injury in late October, Fink made his return to the lineup in the new year and has made an immediate impact.

"You can't deny, Aiden Fink is an excellent scorer," Gadowsky said. "But when he's at his best, and the real influence that you're talking about is how he does it, his motor."

Gadowsky spoke more on Fink's work ethic, saying, "he consistently gives a lot of himself."

After the forward's three-assist performance on Saturday, Fink became the fastest Nittany Lion in program history to reach the 100-point threshold, and just the ninth all-time.

"No one consistently is going to score every game or get points every game, but (Fink) will never not get points because he's just cruising," Gadowsky said. "I haven't seen that out of him."

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Matt Clegg/The Daily Collegian

**Head coach Carolyn Kieger** points during the Penn State women's basketball game against Illinois in the Bryce Jordan Center.

# Weekly woes

By Noah Aberegg

THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Playing with homecourt advantage over two top teams from the Big Ten, Penn State looked for its first win since early December in last week's outings.

Instead, the Lady Lions endured a blowout loss to Michigan on Thursday and 92 to Illinois, two of the highest scoring totals of the season.

Different aspects of the blue and white's defense showed up, as it forced 21 turnovers on Illinois. However, they only recorded nine turnovers against the Wolverines.

Rebounding was a similar struggle during Sunday's game, as the Lady Lions allowed 10 offensive rebounds while recording just 13 defensive rebounds.

## Merkle's efficiency

6-foot-6 Gracie Merkle stands as one of the most efficient players in the country through 10 weeks, shooting 74.6% from the field.

Against both Big Ten squads last week, Merkle went a combined 17-for-23 as she tallied 42 points.

However, Merkle's biggest highlight from the game on Sunday was her free throw efficiency. With her strong, back-to-the-basket style of play, the Mount Washington, Kentucky, native has found her way to the free throw line for 59 shots this season.

Against Illinois, Merkle shot from the free throw line 10 times, going 8-for-10. Earlier in the year, she shot under 60% from the line, but has since gone over 60%.

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# New coach at the helm

By Sam Simonic  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

There's a new coach in town and she won't need to travel far.

A trip down I-95 brought St. Josephs' Hannah Prince to State College. Penn State Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft announced the signing on Tuesday afternoon.

"We are grateful and excited to welcome Hannah Prince to Happy Valley as the leader of our field hockey program," Kraft said. "Hannah has already achieved national success and has emerged as one of the bright

young coaching stars in collegiate field hockey."

The move followed a near month-long search that began after Penn State parted ways with Lisa Bervinchak Love. The Nittany Lions marked three subpar seasons with Bervinchak Love at helm, as the team combined for a 24-27 losing record.

In her time at St. Joe's, Prince led the Hawks to four-straight NCAA Tournament appearances and a National Championship berth.

The now 33-year-old began her coaching career at New Hampshire, where she led the Wildcats to two American East Championship berths.

The now 33-year-old began her coaching career at New Hampshire, where she led the Wildcats to two American East Championship berths.

St. Joe's as an assistant coach in 2017 and took over as head coach in 2022. Prince led the Hawks to four consecutive Atlantic 10 Tournament titles and won two regular-season championships.

Penn State is the owner of two national titles in field hockey having won in back-to-back seasons in 1980 and 1981, while holding six Big Ten titles, most recently in 2016.

Prince will mark the seventh head coach in the school's field hockey history. Penn State will look to bounce back in 2026 with its new coach.

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