

# The Daily Collegian

For the students. For the glory. Since 1887.

Vol. 126, No. 20

Friday, Feb. 13, 2026

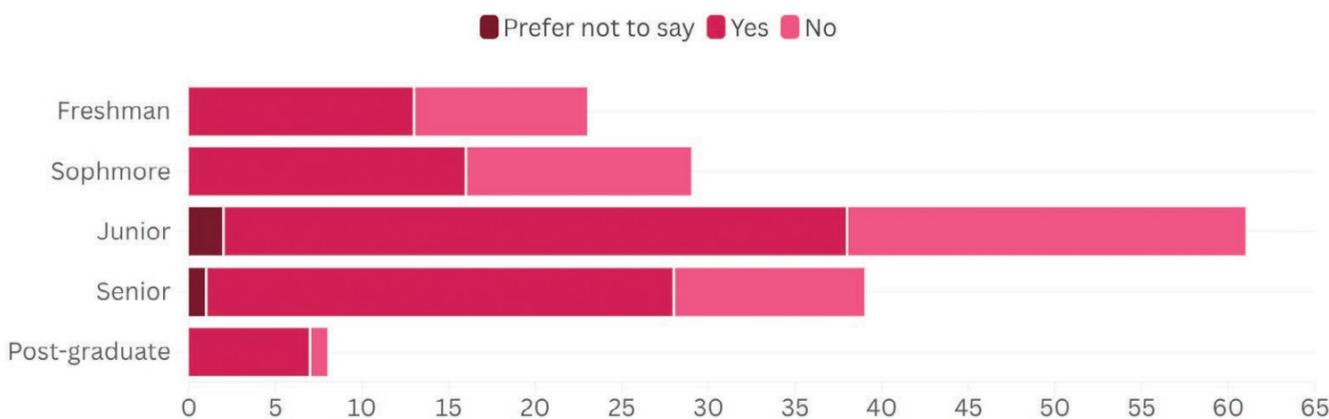
psu.collegian.com

## IT'S COMPLICATED

We surveyed more than 100 students on love and sex. Here's what we learned.

By Alli Satterfield and Skylar Williamson  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

### Sexually active students by year



Visual by Tyler Nolt

Behind dorm room doors and late night conversations, sex is everywhere — but honest conversations about it can be harder to find.

A Daily Collegian survey of 160 students sheds light on love, sex and its impact on campus. Collected in January and February, the responses reveal how students view sex, and why the conversation about it should be more open.

Three quarters of the survey's respondents identified as women, while about 20% identified as men. The remaining 3% identified as either nonbinary, transgender, genderqueer or gender non-conforming.

When asked about sexual orientation, 65% identified as straight, 25% bisexual and 2.5% each as gay, lesbian or pansexual. The remaining respondents identified themselves as asexual, queer or unsure.

#### Sex culture at Penn State

65% of surveyed students are sexually active.

When asked how long

experiences navigating sex and relationships at Penn State. Nearly a quarter said the experience is mostly positive, while 19% said it's mostly stressful. The remainder preferred not to answer the question.

Bailey Paulino-Rivera thinks transitioning to college can be difficult for relationship-minded individuals because of the emphasis on sexual culture. Women tend to be subject to a lot of scrutiny, she added.

"I got into my first 'situation' or whatever

entire community knew."

When asked how "hookup culture" shows up in their college experiences, nearly half of respondents said it shapes most dating and relationship expectations on campus. Almost 22% said it doesn't play a role, about 17% said "it exists but isn't dominant" and a little over 14% said it's discussed more than it's practiced.

Layla Clayton said most relationships on campus are sexually motivated, and, therefore, don't allow for interpersonal connections.

"I feel like there's not a lot of depth to the relationships, hookups or not, that are formed," Clayton, a fourth-year studying communication arts and sciences said.

#### Where relationships bud

Students were given a list of choices and asked to select all of the ways in which they most often meet sexual or romantic partners.

The majority of students, at nearly 100 responses, selected mutual friends. A little over 60 each selected dating apps and parties, and a little over 40 each selected student organizations and classes.

"Most of my friends have come from clubs and mutual friends and those connections feel more organic and built on similarities in hobbies and personalities, which I really value," Brooke Benevento, a fourth-year studying rehabilitation and human services, said. "On the other hand, most of my romantic and sexual connections came through dating apps and that contrast has been really interesting to experience."

#### Playing it safe (or not)

43% of students are using protection every time they engage in sexual activity. The responses revealed condoms are the most used form of protection.

Students were given a list of choices and asked to select all of the forms of protection or birth control they or their partners use. Nearly three-quarters selected condoms. 62 selected a hormonal birth control method such as the birth control pill, shot or patch, while 17 selected an IUD or implant.

12 selected emergency contraception.

Clayton also said college campuses can be a tumultuous environment for student relationships. Apart from the various moving parts of day-to-day college life, students also "are in a place where [they] don't know what [they're] doing sexually."

Less than half of respondents said they received adequate sex education. The remaining said they received either inadequate or somewhat adequate sex education.

Jake Robbins said he is aware of where some campus sexual health resources are, but thinks making a map to more easily locate on-campus resources would help make support

never been tested for sexually transmitted infections.

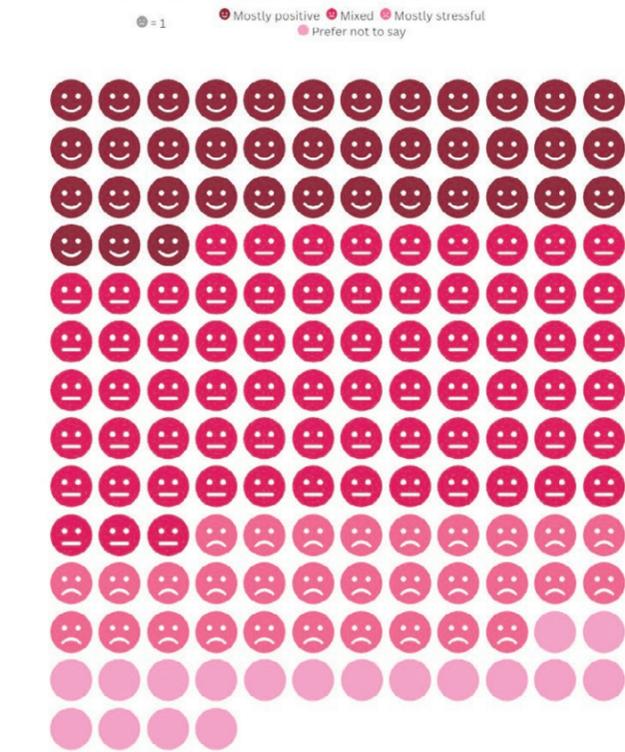
When asked if they had ever received STI testing, just over 43% said they had, while a little over 53% said they had never.

At about 20%, the stand-out reason for students not getting tested for STIs is the stigma or embarrassment surrounding them.

Carmelita Whitfield said students should have clear information on where to receive STI testing on campus.

"Looking at it from a public health or a community health lens, comprehensive sex education is probably one of the most effective tools that we have in reducing STI, transmission (and) lowering the risk of unintended pregnancies," Whit-

#### How would students describe their experience navigating sex and relationships at Penn State?



Visual by Tyler Nolt

more accessible.

"Being in the HUB definitely makes a lot of stuff about the CSGD accessible as I pass through it so often," Robbins, a third-year studying chemical engineering, said. "For other resources and awareness I think it would be helpful to emphasize free testing wherever available to break down the stigma."

#### The fear factor

Although almost 70% of students know where to access sexual health resources at Penn State, 53% of them reported they've

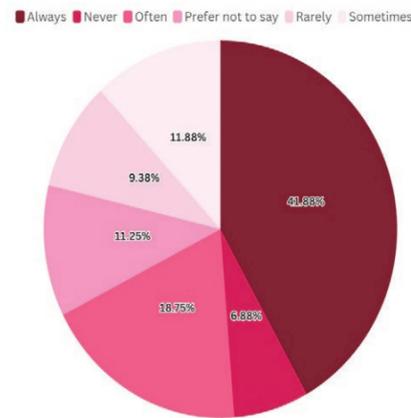
field, University Health Services' associate director of community health, said.

A list of campus resources for contraception, STI, HIV and AIDS testing, HPV vaccines and reproductive health can be found at [studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellbeing/community-health/sexual-health](http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellbeing/community-health/sexual-health).

Sexual assault and violence resources can be accessed at [studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety/victim-survivor](http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety/victim-survivor).

To email reporters: [ams12258@psu.edu](mailto:ams12258@psu.edu) and [sgw5218@psu.edu](mailto:sgw5218@psu.edu)

#### How often do students use protection?



Visual by Tyler Nolt

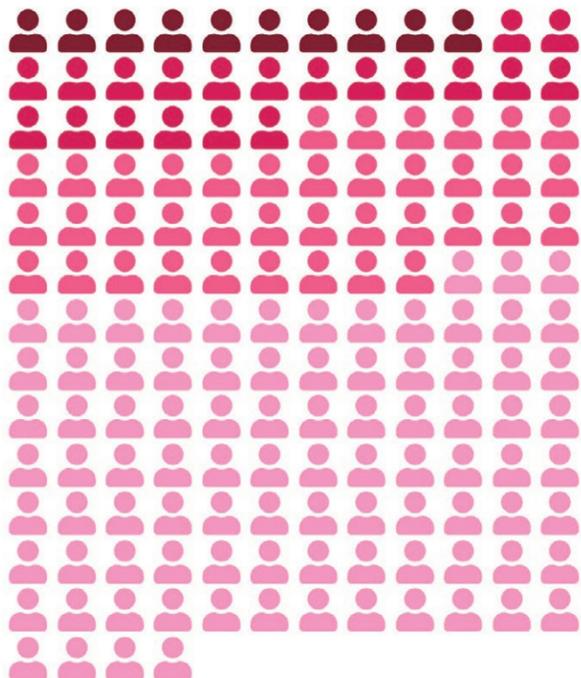
they typically wait to have sex with a new partner, about a quarter of students said it depends. Another quarter responded "after ending a relationship."

Almost half of the students reported having mixed feelings about their

that is," Paulino-Rivera, a fourth-year student studying industrial engineering, said. "It wrecked me because I was treating it like a relationship, and this boy was obviously not being monogamous and not telling me about it when the

#### Are students talking to their friends about sex?

Legend: = 1 (dark red), Never (red), Rarely (pink), Sometimes (light pink), Yes, openly (very light pink)



Visual by Tyler Nolt

# 'MORE THAN JUST BIOLOGY'

## Professionals advocate for better sex education as students discuss gaps

By Jonathan Chiu  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Many students come to college and experience their first bouts of freedom, which allows them to explore their beliefs and perspectives absent of familial influence. For many, it's at the collegiate level where they form firm views on sex and relationships.

Carmelita Whitfield, University Health Services's associate director of community health, said talking about sexual education is important to ensuring that people, even at a young age, have the knowledge and resources to prevent the possibility of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as unplanned pregnancies.

She said open discussions with family members and relatives allow children to feel more comfortable asking questions.

Whitfield also said the lack of a nationwide policy ensuring comprehensive sexual education is taught across the United States, as well as a sense of discomfort from instructors to broach the subject, has left some students at a disadvantage.

"There are a lot of cultural taboos. There's a culture of silence that we also talk about, like, 'If I don't say anything, then I'll just know or I'll ask my friend,' but if you think about it, our friends are our age so what do they know and where are they getting their information?" Whitfield said. "Teachers are often uncomfortable. They can teach you the basics but they don't have the bandwidth to talk about, perhaps, sexual assault or gender identity and that's why it is so important that when you're doing this work that you are well-rounded and well-versed."

Anne Pallozzi said her views on sex were largely influenced by discussions with her parents.



Panelists answer the first set of questions at the "Asking for a Friend" Sex Education Panel on Tuesday, March 25, 2025 in Thomas Building in University Park, PA.

"I have a very open relationship with my parents so we've had these conversations and I was raised with two loving parents so my views didn't change," Pallozzi, a second-year studying biology, said.

On the contrary, Joseph Galo said he didn't begin learning about sexual education until middle school due to his parents not discussing it with him beforehand.

"We didn't really learn anything up until that point but I'm pretty sure we had the class and the talk where we talked about it in fifth grade, I think," Galo, a second-year studying electrical engineering, said. "I guess people could be

on the internet but, I mean, my parents didn't say nothing to me until that point."

He said his sexual education during that time was limited to discussing basic topics and answering questions a "typical middle schooler could have."

Kendall Thomas said her sexual education was often rooted in fears that stuck with her as she entered college.

"I am already overly cautious in that particular area in the first place and we did talk about sexual violence a lot in my school ... so I would just say that, from the get-go, I already looked at it from a cautious standpoint so now, coming to college and it

being like a hub for just chlamydia and a whole bunch of germs and other things, I've already just like, 'Yeah, I'm good,'" Thomas, a second-year studying art history, said.

Jason Burney said Penn State should do more to promote sexual education resources through social media and in high-traffic areas on campus.

"I don't think we hear it enough, I would say," Burney, a second-year studying finance, said. "I think we're mature enough to know about these things 'cause a lot of people are being intimate in college as their first time."

Izzy Roberti agrees with Burney that Penn State needs to

improve its efforts when it comes to making students aware of sexual health resources on campus.

"I was in this class that was teaching philosophy of pacifism and we had a day where someone came in and she talked about various mental health resources and she had a segment specifically about resources for sexual violence or if you are part of the LGBTQ community, where you can go and feel safe," Roberti, a first-year studying history and philosophy, said. "I feel like I've been made pretty aware of the services we have on campus, but I would not say it's a very outward thing that we talk about."

Whitfield said disparities in sexual education greatly impact groups such as the LGBTQ+ community who may not have access to care specialized to their needs.

"If you're transitioning, you're going to need that level of care that, say, someone who is just coming in for regular birth control may not really need," Whitfield said.

She said it's important for there to be a wide range of sexual education resources available on and off-campus as it empowers individuals to make their own decision in regards to their sexual health.

"Sex-ed, honestly, is more than just biology. It's just teaching individuals really how to set boundaries and respect the boundaries of themselves as well as others," Whitfield said. "A 'no' doesn't necessarily mean a 'no' forever. It could just mean a 'no' for right now but you got to learn to respect the 'no.'"

To email reporter: [jwc@psu.edu](mailto:jwc@psu.edu)  
Follow him on X @JonChiu38880

## Advocates work to normalize consent



Stella John/The Daily Collegian

The inside of the Relationship Violence Outreach, Intervention, and Community Education Center on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

By Sara O'Connell  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

*Content Warning: This story discusses sexual misconduct Resources and support are available through Penn State's Counseling and Psychological Services.*

As sexual misconduct awareness and education grow, both on and off-campus advocates are pushing for a deeper understanding of what consent means.

The National Library of Medicine reports college students often lack a clear definition of consent. The Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect, an organization founded in 1975 to end sexual violence, defines consent as specific, voluntary, ongoing and coherent. It must be communicated for every activity and can be revoked at any time.

Yvette Willson said there's a need for increased education around consent.

Willson, the director of Relationship Violence Outreach, Intervention, and Community Education Center (R-VOICE), said practicing saying a firm "no" is important.

"We've done a horrible disservice to girls," Willson said. "We've taught them: be nice, don't hurt somebody's feelings, and as a result, we've taught (them) that their own desires, own wants are not important."

Sophia Mills said R-VOICE utilizes the "F.R.I.E.S." consent model when discussing consent: freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic and specific.

Mills, associate director of R-VOICE, said the organization also

designed animal stickers in an effort to normalize talking about consent. "Elephants for equality," and "Cats against cat calling" are a few of the phrases featured on the stickers.

Sarah Allison said coercion, or one merely being unsure about a situation, are nuances that contribute to common misconceptions regarding consent.

Allison, a Centre Helps hotline counselor, said she often works with people who are unsure whether or not they gave consent. Acknowledging that uncertainty and allowing them room to understand some things may have been nonconsensual validates their situation.

"That's okay if you're unsure," Allison, a fourth-year studying psychology, said. "If you're uncomfortable, then I don't think that's consent."

Allison said while there are resource fairs students can attend, not everybody discovers them in time. She added the stigma behind

**"I encourage people to understand they are individuals. You have emotions. You have feelings. You have thoughts, and all of that matters."**

Sarah Allison

seeking help often results in survivors feeling fearful of not being believed, which also prevents people from seeking out resources.

"If you have any doubt at all or

any worry at all about something that happened to you, it's always okay to go get help," Allison said.

She said it's important for a person to separate themselves from any situation that makes them uncomfortable and to trust themselves in what they believe is best for them. "I encourage people to understand that they are individuals," Allison said. "You have emotions. You have feelings. You have thoughts, and all of that matters."

Education and discussion within the classroom lead to students having a better understanding of consent, according to Jennifer Pencek.

"We all love to think we know about consent," Pencek, the executive director of Center Safe, said. "How are you making sure that what's going on is actually okay with them? And even if they're like, 'yes, let's go,' but someone is incapacitated, or someone is drunk or high, there's no consent."

Centre Safe offers protection orders from those who retaliate against the reporter.

Pencek said she'd like to see more open discussion about the importance of consent. She also said it's important to offer support by listening to people and not bombarding survivors with an interrogation.

"It's just making consent approachable," Pencek said. "Stop making it seem like it's way more complicated than it really is."

To email reporter: [sjo5368@psu.edu](mailto:sjo5368@psu.edu)  
Follow her on X @sara\_connell



Graphic by Lucas Yendzeiwski  
Information Provided by Penn State R-VOICE Center

# Where to find love at Penn State

By **Carolena Bongii**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With Valentine's day quickly approaching on Feb. 14, Penn State students might be searching for a special someone to spend the holiday with. Whether you're hoping to meet the love of your life or just someone who won't ghost you before your formal, here are the best and worst places to meet your special someone at Penn State.

## BEST: HUB-Robeson Center

The HUB is definitely a busy and overcrowded place, but it is perfect to find love and people watch.

With hundreds of students constantly coming and going, there is always something or someone who is there to catch your attention. Sitting in the HUB will give you plenty of opportunities to strike up a conversation and bond over all the people around you.

The HUB is also the perfect place to flirt because everyone is pretending to be busy.

You can easily sit across from someone for hours and only make eye contact exactly twice, but you can still consider it romantic.

## BEST: Beaver Stadium during a football game

Beaver Stadium during a football game is a great place to meet your special someone because you already know they're loyal.

After a season filled with overtime disappointments and failing to win in the big moments, anyone who is still showing up to the games clearly believes in commitment.

Bonding over that one Drew Allar interception during the White Out this season will build a strong and ever-lasting relationship.

If you can survive the heartache Penn State football brings, then you guys can truly survive any obstacle that is thrown your way.

## BEST: The Daily Collegian table in Willard Building

The Daily Collegian table in Willard is obviously filled with the best and funniest people in the world.



Alex Osman/The Daily Collegian

Students sit inside the HUB-Robeson Center on Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

Everyone there is extremely attractive, intelligent and humble, which makes it the ideal place to meet your special someone.

If you meet someone sitting at the Collegian table, chances are they have a great sense of humor and a deep appreciation for satire. But be careful because everyone there will always correct your grammar.

## WORST: Lion's Den

The Den is not the place where people go to find true love, but it is the place where everyone somehow ends up.

The Den is filled with people who swear they never go there, but are always recognized immediately by both the staff and everyone else inside.

Because the Den has no real standards for who gets in, it's hard to believe that any connection made there is meant to last. Most of your conversations at the Den are temporary and almost always forgotten by the next morning.

## WORST: Pollock Testing Center

The Pollock Testing Center is one of the most stressful places on campus, which makes it an awful place to meet your special someone.

No one is ever relaxed or happy, and everyone is either pan-

icking or already convinced they failed an exam.

If you somehow meet someone here, you will forever associate them with stress and the sudden urge to check Canvas.

The Pollock Testing Center is definitely not where love blossoms. It is a place where it always feels like you're doing something wrong.

## WORST: Canvas Discussion Boards

Meeting your special someone through a Canvas discussion is definitely not romantic.

You might think what they said was really smart, but they probably wrote a paragraph about something they didn't even read.

If you somehow think you've found the one through their discussion post, you will have a relationship based on a love for shared procrastination — which isn't the strongest foundation.

At the end of the day, love can happen anywhere at Penn State ... or not at all. If none of these spots work out, there's always next Valentine's Day to lower your expectations.

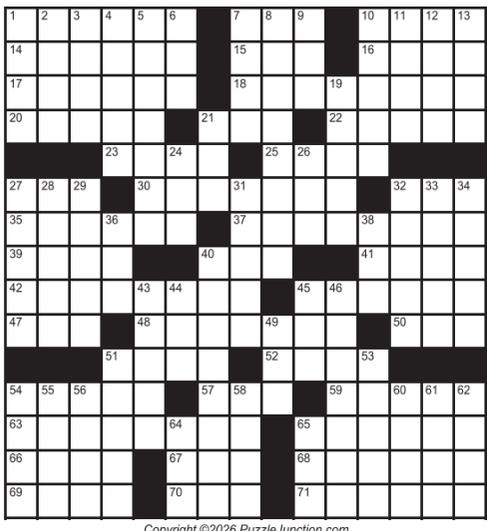
Until then, good luck and never settle for someone who won't go to every Penn State game with you.

To email reporter: [cbb5954@psu.edu](mailto:cbb5954@psu.edu)  
Follow her on X @[carolenabongii](https://twitter.com/carolenabongii)

# Crossword

Across

- 1 Went boating
- 7 Capture
- 10 Drawn tight
- 14 Get even
- 15 Jurist Fortas
- 16 Furthermore
- 17 Step down
- 18 Reminisce
- 20 Histriion
- 21 Evergreen
- 22 Guides
- 23 Margin of victory
- 25 Before heat or meat
- 27 "Thar \_\_\_ blows!"
- 30 Camp item
- 32 Chem class
- 35 Pleasing to the eye
- 37 News feature
- 39 Egyptian solar deity
- 40 Japanese coin
- 41 Arab ruler
- 42 Abandoned ship
- 45 Lounging chair
- 47 Foxy
- 48 Black Sea country
- 50 Asian holiday
- 51 Curved molding
- 52 Fly in the ointment
- 54 Garden tool
- 57 Recliner part
- 59 Cover, in a way
- 63 Wide scene
- 65 Bottle uncapper
- 66 Allege as fact
- 67 Race unit
- 68 Fat controller
- 69 Hardens
- 70 Dutch city



Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

Down

- 12 Preowned
- 13 Rocky peaks
- 19 Oxlike antelope
- 21 Boggy lowland
- 24 Utter
- 26 Pitcher's stat
- 27 Oodles
- 28 Monopoly purchase
- 29 Manicurist's board
- 31 Sorority letter
- 32 Restrict
- 33 Ouzo flavoring
- 34 Military wear
- 36 Compass pt.
- 38 Pastoral setting
- 40 Shrieked
- 43 German pistol
- 44 One of the Clantons
- 45 MSNBC rival
- 46 Kegler's target
- 49 Belief system
- 51 Bouquets
- 53 Welcome
- 54 Luxurious resorts
- 55 Do roadwork
- 56 Dill seed
- 58 Frenzy
- 60 Feed the kitty
- 61 Nobleman
- 62 Muffs
- 64 Stout relative
- 65 Flowery verse

## su | do | ku

© Pappocom

9		3		7		5
6					3	
			2			8
		1		3	6	9
7	8	2			4	
	9		5			
		6				1
	3		8		9	
						5

# 5 must-read romance books



Joe Klein/The Daily Collegian

Romance books sit on a table at the Penn State Bookstore in University Park, Pa.

By **Becca Fein**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It's the season of love, Penn State. For those in happy relationships., those who are still trying to find their other half and others enjoying their singleness, we hope this list of romance books can get you through February 14th.

## "Heated Rivalry"

Coming to you live from the cottage, it's Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov. Author Rachel Reid scored a goal with this one. It starts to get hot on the ice when hockey rivals Shane and Ilya begin to notice there's something more to their competitive feud.

If you love a slow burn, this is the book for you. Shane and Ilya's "situationship" goes on for years before the two give in to their true desires.

With its recent HBO adaptation gaining popularity, you can live the sports romance on the page and screen, and witness the pair share salacious messages and looks.

And when they do, let's just say it's so hot that the ice melts a little.

## "The Notebook"

A devastating classic, Nicholas Sparks has inflicted pain and turmoil on us since 1996. "The Notebook" follows the epic love

story of Noah Calhoun and Allie Hamilton.

The two fall in love at a young age, but after outside forces push against their love, they are driven apart by distance and time. They reconnect later on in life, and Allie must decide if she's going to leave her new life behind for her first love.

The book delivers a moving romance with a heartwrenching twist sure to leave you needing recovery time and a box of tissues, all carried by a second chance romance.

If you need a good cry, this is the book for you.

## "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo"

Taylor Jenkins Reid wrote the romance book of a century.

The story starts with Monique Grant, a journalist, seeking out a front page story when Evelyn Hugo, a Hollywood icon, agrees to share her life story as a way of finally putting rumors to rest and leaving the public eye.

Per the title, Hugo goes through seven different husbands in her lifetime, the novel is definitely worth a read.

## "Funny Story"

The queen of rom-coms, Emily Henry, knocks it out of the park with a bizarre, yet touching story. The book picks up when Daphne is dumped by her fiancé Peter

for his childhood best friend Petra in the opening chapters of the book. Heartbroken and looking for a place to live, Daphne moves in with no other than Petra's jilted ex-boyfriend Miles.

The two, in a scheme to make their exes jealous, begin a fake relationship, which soon devolves into real feelings. While figuring out their budding and somewhat awkward romance, the two realize the situation is nothing short of a "funny story."

## "Regretting You"

This would not be a romance book list without the ruler of them all, Colleen Hoover.

This novel, recently adapted as a movie starring actress Mckenna Grace and rising star Mason Thames, follows the story of the strained mother-daughter relationship between Morgan and Cara, who recently lost two beloved family members in a fatal car accident.

This warped love story highlights the idea of second chances. If you're looking for a sort of twisted book about finding your forever, this is the one for you.

Whatever you decide to do this Valentine's Day, just know, you are never alone. You always have a world of romance squeezed in between a hard cover to keep you company.

To email reporter: [raf5784@psu.edu](mailto:raf5784@psu.edu)  
Follow her on X @[Rebecca\\_Fein](https://twitter.com/Rebecca_Fein)

# WORD SEARCH

© 2026 PuzzleJunction.com

## Arizona Places

R	G	N	E	X	M	A	R	I	C	O	P	A	I	H	S	H	Z
U	J	F	K	P	Y	T	I	C	D	A	E	H	L	L	U	B	N
A	L	E	E	A	J	A	Y	C	F	X	U	S	F	E	F	E	B
X	A	E	S	D	U	N	C	A	N	A	I	B	H	X	C	U	H
E	G	E	G	O	O	D	Y	E	A	R	B	N	L	N	K	O	O
N	M	C	Z	S	A	W	X	G	B	U	C	K	E	Y	E	R	L
O	H	B	C	A	N	K	W	L	P	P	R	R	V	O	E	D	B
T	E	U	S	H	O	W	L	O	W	I	O	I	T	L	H	Q	R
S	T	L	W	W	D	T	C	B	H	L	C	D	D	S	Y	P	O
B	T	O	M	J	E	G	N	E	F	X	K	N	S	U	H	S	O
M	N	T	C	I	S	N	O	F	L	A	K	E	R	M	C	K	
O	O	F	S	S	R	O	X	Z	M	H	A	W	T	P	Q	O	K
T	T	B	C	W	E	A	H	W	C	F	O	Y	H	R	R	O	I
V	F	E	H	B	U	R	G	H	L	L	G	U	I	I	K	L	N
Q	I	N	D	T	E	M	P	E	S	N	U	M	S	S	J	I	G
P	L	S	E	L	A	G	O	N	G	I	L	A	B	E	N	D	M
W	C	O	Q	Q	E	T	I	S	Z	T	R	A	U	Q	A	G	A
T	E	N	W	M	M	W	F	F	A	T	S	G	A	L	F	E	N

- |               |           |            |           |
|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Benson        | Flagstaff | Mesa       | Surprise  |
| Buckeye       | Florence  | Nogales    | Tempe     |
| Bullhead City | Gila Bend | Phoenix    | Tombstone |
| Chandler      | Globe     | Prescott   | Tucson    |
| Clifton       | Goodyear  | Quartzsite | Winslow   |
| Coolidge      | Holbrook  | Sedona     | Yuma      |
| Duncan        | Kingman   | Show Low   |           |
| El Mirage     | Maricopa  | Snowflake  |           |

# Kakuro (Cross Sums)

The rules are easy to learn: 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 may be used only once in any sequence.

			18	15		11	6	38		
	14				22				11	7
	15									
9					25					
					13					
21						17		9		
								5		
				17						
				20				8		
				38						
	8								17	7
	16						22			
4									9	

© 2026 PuzzleJunction.com

## It's OK not to be in a relationship

It's the final scene in the movie. The two lovers are reunited as the music swells. After a confession of love, they kiss. The screen fades and eventually reads "The End." The lights come back on as people exit the theatre. Feelings of jealousy, loneliness and angst swirl inside of those who attended alone.

The feeling of wanting to be in a relationship is a year-round occurrence for some. However, it's often exacerbated with the approach of Valentine's Day. Our society seems to depict being single as the social equivalent of the plague. But in reality, it's perfectly fine to not be in a relationship right now.

You might have read that last line with an accompanying scoff, as if that sentence alone can

cure the perpetual feeling of yearning, but it's true. There's nothing wrong with being alone.

Sure, it might feel awkward if you are one of the only ones in your friend group without a partner, but it's only awkward if you make it that way. Just because you're single doesn't mean you're less worthy than those in relationships.

Of course, there's a type of validation that comes with being in a relationship and it's something that can make us feel good.

But if it becomes something that you are desperately seeking out from others, then you're placing your self-worth in their hands.

We put being in a relationship on a pedestal and once we enter one, it's meant to fix everything or so we're made to believe.

But I think putting so much emphasis on romantic relationships ends up being harmful. It creates expectations that any problems you have

with yourself or in your own life will simply be resolved. But when that doesn't happen, it leaves you feeling disappointed and frustrated because it wasn't the magical fix it was built up to be.

**"It's important to ask yourself why you want to be in a relationship. Go beyond the reasoning of "I just want one," and think about why."**

Emma Strickling

This desire for escape can lead to being in a relationship just for the sake of being in one, where expectations are lowered, leading to excuses being made for the unsavory behavior of the

other person. At that point, you're wasting your own time.

It's also perfectly fine to not want to be in a relationship either. Whether people care to acknowledge it or not, relationships take a lot of time and effort.

If you have areas of your life you want to focus on, then why should you let someone else and their nonsense get in the way. Yes, there's a possibility to do both. But there's the likelihood of needing to make compromises that lead to you sacrificing your own goals.

There's more than one way to live life and you shouldn't let societal expectations force you into a life you don't want. This is especially true for women, as it's often parroted that our only function in life is to be in a relationship. If you have a goal you want to reach, why should you put it on hold for someone else?

I'm not trying to say that being in a relationship is bad. It's fine to recognize that it's

something you would like to have in your future. The problem is when it's something that turns into an obsessive need and your only priority, to the point where you base your self-worth on whether or not you're getting romantic attention.

It's important to ask yourself why you want to be in a relationship. Go beyond the reasoning of "I just want one," and think about why.

If you want to share your life with someone and want to grow with someone while maintaining independence, then there's a possibility for a healthy relationship. If you're just looking to fill a void, then you should probably turn your attention inward to what it is you really need.

Emma Strickling is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a fifth-year studying English with minors in film studies and Italian. Email her at [eks5726@psu.edu](mailto:eks5726@psu.edu)



Cartoon by Nate Campbell

### MY VIEW | Miss Behave

## Your boyfriend isn't better than your girlfriends



Dearest reader, I apologize for my brief disappearance the past two weeks. Apparently, even love columns need a little break or maybe it was just me?

Normally, I write about hearts skipping a beat, those pesky butterflies in your stomach and all that drama that comes with dating and romance.

But today, I'm trading candlelight dinners and wine glasses for sweatpants and binge-watching Heated Rivalry. Because let's be honest, some of the best love stories don't involve kissing or sex at all.

I'm talking about platonic love, the kind that survives your weirdest texts, your bad moods, endless tears and unhinged rants.

Don't get me wrong, romantic love is beautiful. It's exciting and can oftentimes be intoxicating in the best way. Falling for someone, building intimacy, choosing someone who chooses you.

I'm not here to downplay that kind of love, because when it's good, it's really good.

But somewhere along the way, the larger society has placed romantic love on a pedestal. That friendships can

sometimes just be placeholders until the "real thing" shows up. And that's where we get it wrong. While romantic relationships may come and go, friendships are often the steady

**"She's the kind of person I can tell everything to, the one who makes life feel lighter. Everyone deserves that kind of love and person in their life"**

Miss Behave

threads that hold us together in between. They're a constant. They exist without any expectations; you're accepted exactly as you are. No pressure to perform.

Your best friend is someone who knows all your quirks and flaws and somehow, instead of running for the hills, they learn to love them too. Because that's what makes you, well, you.

We rarely acknowledge that friendships are often the relationships that catch us when romance falters. Friends are the ones who stay when

things end. The ones who pick up the pieces and remind us of who we are and were before the heartbreak.

And sometimes, they're the very reason we continue to believe in love at all.

This past weekend, I left campus for a little getaway. Two days without my bestie shouldn't feel like anything, and yet it does. That's how I measure love, not by grand gestures or memories shared, but in how quickly I run back. And more importantly, how safe it feels when I get there.

I'm her best friend and she is mine.

I know myself and how much love I carry for my bestie. And yet, somehow it still isn't enough. There's always more to give. And the funny thing is, none of this is romantic. It's simply the pure joy of having someone who truly gets you.

So, I may not have found the guy I want to marry or the person I want to spend the rest of my life with. But I have found the person that I will walk through all seasons of life with.

She's the kind of person I can tell everything to, the one who makes life feel lighter. Everyone deserves that kind of love and person in their life. I've found that rare soul who tolerates my extreme nonsense and still shows up with a smile. And I hope you all find someone brave

enough to do the same.

Until next time, I'm sending you all lots of love this Valentine's Day.

Yours truly,  
Miss Behave

*Editor's Note: Off the record is a weekly 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.*



Those interested in sharing their experiences or submitting a topic are invited to do so through this anonymous form.

### We want to hear from you

Send us your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community.

Email: [editorinchief@psucollegian.com](mailto:editorinchief@psucollegian.com)

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

Postal Mail/In Person: 115 Carnegie Building, University Park, Pa. 16802

Letters should be about 400-600 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include graduation year. All writers should provide their email address and phone number

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

### Who we are

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its

Board of Opinion, which is made up of members of its Board of Editors, with the editor-in-chief holding final responsibility for content. The opinions expressed on the editorial page are not necessarily those of Collegian Inc., a separate institution from Penn State.

### 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

and solicit advertising for them.

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

### Complaints

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

## Daily Collegian

Collegian Inc., 115 Carnegie Building, University Park, PA. 16802 ©2026 Collegian Inc.

### BOARD OF EDITORS

Editor-in-Chief  
Mercedes Hamilton

Managing Editor  
Kahlie Wray

Digital Managing Editor  
Avery Tortora

News Editors  
Rachael Keller  
Daniela White

Lifestyle Editors  
Katie Herron

Nadya Solometo

Sports Editors  
Andrew Deal  
Myles Hannak

Wrestling Editor  
Lyle Alenstein

Football Editor  
Avery Hill

Photo Editors  
Matt Cropp  
Samantha Oropeza

Visual Editors  
Zeyda Frye  
Ali Hanna

Social Media Editor  
Geraldine Cruz-Hernandez

Investigations Editor  
Avery McGurgan

Opinion Editor  
Teresa Phelan

Newsletter Editor  
Evan Smith

To contact News Division:  
News, Opinions, Arts, Sports, Photo, Video, Graphics  
814-865-1828

### BOARD OF MANAGERS

Business Manager  
Amy Schafer

Vice President  
Zack O'Brien

Sales Directors  
Sri Ginitth  
Rhea Khettry

Business Insights Directors  
Rohan Badami  
Jonathan Zavialov

Creative Directors  
Kimberly Barthel  
Allison Coble

Marketing Directors  
Ella Bernheisel  
Jake Long

Fundraising Director  
Christopher Burnis

DEI Committee Chair  
Alex Fischer

Advertising Manager  
Scott Witham

To contact Business Division:  
Advertising, circulation, accounting and classifieds  
Phone: 814-865-2531  
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays

Scan to access  
PDFs of past  
Daily Collegian  
issues.



## Gavin McKenna's icy week

### Latest updates on Penn State's star freshman forward

By Grace Levy  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State star freshman forward Gavin McKenna was charged with felony aggravated assault, simple assault, harassment and disorderly conduct, following an alleged altercation that occurred in downtown State College on Jan. 31. The aggravated assault charge has since been dropped.

#### HOCKEY

McKenna is the projected No. 1 overall pick in the 2026 NHL Entry Draft. He came to Penn State from the WHL's Medicine Hat Tigers on a reported \$700,000 NIL deal — the largest in college hockey at the time. Since joining the Nittany Lions, McKenna has put up 32 points in 24 games.

McKenna allegedly struck a 21-year-old man in the face that night, causing injuries that required corrective surgery, according to court documents. Police were dispatched to Mount Nittany Medical Center to speak with the victim.

Court documents said the man's jaw was wired shut, his face was swollen, there was dried blood on his lips and he was missing a tooth. It also said he was in "substantial pain" and "unable to speak."

The victim was with two friends who witnessed the alleged assault and told police the man was punched twice on the right side of his face by McKenna following an "exchange of words" between his group and McKenna's.

Police located blood on the



Aayan Hamdani/The Daily Collegian

Forward Gavin McKenna carries the puck at the Penn State men's hockey game against Michigan in Pegula Ice Arena on Nov. 15, 2025.

**"Gavin will participate in all, and continue to participate in all athletically related activities."**

Guy Gadowsky  
Head coach

sidewalk near where the assault allegedly occurred, as well as security camera footage where McKenna punched the victim twice shortly after leaving Doggie's Pub.

McKenna was later

arraigned and released on \$20,000 unsecured bail.

On Feb. 6, Centre County District Attorney Bernie Cantorna announced in a press conference that the aggravated assault charges had been dropped.

"In order to establish probable cause for the crime of Aggravated Assault, the Commonwealth must establish that a person acted with the intent to cause serious bodily injury or acted recklessly under circumstances showing an extreme indifference to the value of human life," Cantorna said in a press release. "Both the District Attorney's Office and the State College Police Department have reviewed video evidence of this incident and do not believe that a charge of Aggravated Assault is

supported by the evidence."

Follow up from State College police found that the victim suffered two fractures to one side of his jaw and is not missing a tooth, contrasting previous reports that he sustained fractures to both sides of his jaw.

Cantorna urged people to refrain from speculating about the case, adding that "verbal argument never, never justifies physical violence."

Cantorna also stated that his office has "unequivocally" not been in contact with ICE, Homeland Security or federal authorities regarding McKenna's visa/immigration status. McKenna is a Canadian citizen and is reportedly on a student visa.

The charges of misdemean-

or simple assault and other summary charges remain.

On Feb. 9, McKenna's preliminary hearing was moved from Feb. 11 to March 11.

Penn State men's hockey's final regular-season game is scheduled for March 6 at home against Wisconsin. March 11 marks the first day of the Big Ten Tournament, with Penn State currently seeded to play at home against Ohio State.

Guy Gadowsky confirmed in weekly media that Wednesday that McKenna will return to the ice for the weekend series at No. 2 Michigan.

"Gavin will participate in all, and continue to participate in all, athletically related activities. But regarding that, I also hope you understand it's an ongoing legal thing, so (it's) inappropriate for me to comment (further) on that."

Penn State Athletics released a statement on Feb. 8, acknowledging the charges but declined to comment on an ongoing legal matter.

Police also said no additional information will be released as the investigation remains active.

#### What to look for next in the McKenna case

Feb. 13 and Feb. 14 - McKenna's first games back, faces No. 2 Michigan in Ann Arbor March 11 - preliminary hearing, start of Big Ten Tournament

Evan Smith, Mia Debelevich and Greg Finberg all contributed to this story.

## Headlining wrestlers

### Cael Sanderson talks upcoming dual in BJC



Matt Cropp/ The Daily Collegian

Cael Sanderson sits during the Penn State wrestling duel against Michigan in the Crisler Center on Feb. 7, 2026.

By Lyle Alenstein  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For the final time in the regular season, Penn State will wrestle in the Bryce Jordan Center, and it's the biggest matchup of the season.

The No. 1 Nittany Lions will wrestle No. 2 Ohio State at 7 p.m. on Friday in a battle of two undefeated squads.

Here's what Cael Sanderson said at his weekly media availability ahead of the dual.

#### Ohio State

In November, Buckeyes' head coach Tom Ryan called out Penn State for not wrestling at the National Duals Invitational, saying how it was a "shame" and it's a "bit of a sign of how they see things and do things."

Sanderson wasn't asked about Ryan's comments earlier this year, only offering his thoughts about the national duals, saying how it wasn't really a consideration for the Nittany Lions to wrestle it. On Wednesday, however, he offered praise for Ryan and his team.

"Ohio State's always a great program. Coach Ryan's done a phenomenal job, very consistent every year," Sanderson said. "They're the title contender and they have an awesome program all the way around. We're excited to compete against a very good team up and down the lineup."

it's Ohio State or the looming postseason.

"It's pretty much the same energy in here, year round, and same same perspective," Sanderson said. "Your next match always seems like a big match, and it is always the most important match, but it's going to come and go quickly and we're going to be on to the next one. So it's more about development, being who we want to be, and then making sure we're training in the right direction."

#### Rocco Welsh

Two years ago, Rocco Welsh was taking the mat for his freshman season as a Buckeye. During that campaign, he lost to former Nittany Lion Carter Starocci in the 174-pound national title matchup.

After redshirting the following year, Welsh transferred to Penn State, and is currently the No. 1 wrestler at 184 pounds. On Friday, the Pennsylvania native will face his former team.

"We recruited Rocco. He committed pretty early in the process. (Pennsylvania) kid, I mean, he's pretty similar," Sanderson said of Welsh from when he recruited him to where he is now. "He's a hammer, tough (Pennsylvania) kid. Just consistent, tough wrestling with a lot of events. Shows he loves wrestling. I think like anyone that has high aim and high goals that are coachable, they're going to keep getting better, but he was pretty stinking good in high school."

As far as facing his former team? Sanderson inferred that

Welsh isn't concerned.

"He's a Penn State wrestler and part of the family. He's good," Sanderson said.

#### 141 pounds

The week after Braeden Davis lost to Brock Hardy of Nebraska, Sanderson told the media Davis "burned" his hand leading up to the matchup in an injury related to a "plugged in scooter."

This past weekend, Davis was inactive against Michigan, with Nate Desmond filling in for him.

"We couldn't wrestle Davis last week, he had a skin issue last week, so Desmond was ready to go and he stepped up and did a great job," Sanderson said.

The skin issue was unrelated to the burning of his hand, as Sanderson called it "something different." After missing the dual against the Wolverines, Sanderson implied that Davis will be the starter against Ohio State.

#### Mitchell Mesenbrink

Sanderson couldn't really tell what happened during Mitchell Mesenbrink's matchup against Michigan. All he saw was him and his opponent, Justin Gates, "flying around with elbows and knees."

"He got hit pretty good and got a pretty, pretty nasty cut," Sanderson said. "And to his credit, was able to just keep his composure and go get that next takedown and win the match."

Mesenbrink ended up with a 20-5 victory over Gates. Despite the brutal blow, there was no concern from Sanderson as far as his status moving forward.

"You have to be careful with it. Obviously, they have face masks you can wear and kind of hope that it will take care of it," Sanderson said. But, at the end of the day, it is what it is. You got to go forward."

To email reporter: [lca5223@psu.edu](mailto:lca5223@psu.edu).  
Follow him on X @LAlenstein

## Rocky's mentality

By Gianna Dowling  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Before its season began, Penn State went on a team retreat to Philadelphia, and used it as a moment to be together as a team without worrying about softball.

"When you have moments with your squad where it's literally just enjoying each other's company and not having to talk about softball," coach Clarisa Crowell said in Wednesday's media session. "I think that trip really just helped us grow together and build relationships."

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the team's trip was their inspiration from the Rocky franchise.

"They just really bought into the story of Rocky, in the state of Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia, Rocky is like a real person," Crowell said. "He was just a blue-collar, tough, gritty guy, which is honestly the makeup of our team, and how our team has won here at Penn State."

Winning is what the Nittany Lions did in their opening weekend, going 4-1, and showed their grittiness by battling out two extra-inning victories.

Penn State showed its toughness and fighting edge in all aspects of the game. At the plate, the Nittany Lions posted a .441 team slugging percentage. Additionally, five players finished the weekend with a .250-plus batting average.

The blue and white also showed how it can get things done in the circle, after going five arms deep in its rotation. The staff posted a 1.46 ERA and combined for 42 strikeouts.

"This year we're going to win games because we're going to be well-balanced," Crowell said. "There are going to be games where it's going to have to be pitching and defense, and there's going to be games where we're going to have to rely on the bats."

To keep the Rocky theme that Penn State has embodied, in Rocky IV, the Italian Stallion takes on Russian Ivan Drago on Christmas Day in 1985. Rocky was a severe underdog heading to face Drago on his home turf in Moscow.

For the first six rounds or so, the match is all Drago, and it looks like Rocky will go down without an easy fight, but then the Pride of Philadelphia finds his momentum as Drago starts



Samantha Oropeza/ The Daily Collegian

Clarissa Crowell stands during Penn State against Bucknell at Beard Field at Nittany Lion Softball Park on April 1, 2025

to wear down.

Rocky never stops fighting and takes Drago to 15 rounds and comes up with the improbable underdog victory, without ever giving up.

Now consider Penn State's eight-inning victory over BYU. After three innings, the blue and white had just one hit as opposed to the Cougars' four, and found themselves down 2-0.

Penn State continued to struggle offensively. Heading into the seventh inning, BYU held a 3-1 lead and out-hit the Nittany Lions 7-5. However, Penn State never stopped fighting and recorded two hits and two runs to send the game to extras.

The Nittany Lions ultimately broke through in the eighth inning with an RBI single from Kirsten Finarelli to win the game.

"No matter what the score is, they're going to keep fighting to the end," Crowell said.

It's not just Rocky's mindset that the team is bringing to the dugout, but they've got all the props to go along with it.

"When they hit home runs, one game they're putting the Rocky gloves over the neck, then one game they're putting on the robe," Crowell said. "We ended up in a gift shop, and everybody was buying Rocky stuff."

It's safe to say Penn State will always have a piece of Rocky Balboa in its dugout, both mentally and physically, as they carry on the rest of the season.

To email reporter: [gmd5738@psu.edu](mailto:gmd5738@psu.edu).  
Follow her on X @giannamd32

# 'I've never met anyone like him before'

## Penn State couple shares their love story

By Lily Dorf  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With Valentine's Day approaching, many college students mourn the crushes and long-lost loves that never came to be. Dating in college is no easy challenge, however, for two students, the near impossible became a reality.

Keerthana Rajamohan and Ansh Ahuja have been together for three and a half years, and started dating during Rajamohan's first year when a mutual friend introduced them.

The two met in-person during a night out, and the rest is history. Rajamohan, a fourth-year student studying supply chain management, said she easily recalls how they fell in love.

"We just got along right off the bat," Rajamohan said. "He is very respectful and such a great gentleman. Honestly, I've never met anyone like him before, so I was hooked."

For Ahuja, the moment he fell for Rajamohan was straight out of a romantic comedy.

"I remembered that I was just walking around the Palmerton — literally in circles — on the phone with my mom and talking about this girl," Ahuja said. "I told my mom during my junior or senior year of high school that I don't think I could get into a relation-



Courtesy of Keerthana Rajamohan

Photo of Keerthana Rajamohan and Ansh Ahuja at Old Main.

ship because I love myself too much, (and) it sounds a little narcissistic, I know. But the fact that I was pacing around, contemplating this, I hung up the phone, and I kind of knew that I really wanted to do this because I wouldn't have even considered this if I was really hesitant about it."

Ahuja graduated with a degree in labor and human resources in spring 2025 and the two are now long-distance.

Rajamohan's friend, Danielle

Bocchieri, has seen the couple through all of their stages and describes their relationship as "supportive."

"I think that they both do a really good job putting their personal lives first and foremost, and then using the relationship to kind of just support them and help them grow and be the best version of themselves," Bocchieri, a fourth-year student studying biology said.

For many, the idea of having a

relationship in college isn't possible, from schedules not lining up to hours of studying and other priorities taking hold. However, Rajamohan sees it differently.

"I think that being in college has definitely made us stronger and I think that we are both focusing on ourselves, but also being there for one another," Rajamohan said. "We both have our lives. He has his job and I have school."

Ahuja said he's happy he was able to experience a college love

story, despite there being stigma around college relationships.

"I wanted a deep and meaningful personal relationship with someone who I truly like and I truly love," Ahuja said. "So I'm glad that I got to experience, I guess, the unpopular experience in college."

Rajamohan and Ahuja said they're always there for each other. The pair know if a trip to see one another doesn't work out they'll still end the day with each other over the phone.

When talking about the challenges of long distance, Ahuja said they support each other as people first, not just another person in the relationship.

"I didn't want her to come to college, get into a relationship and be solely focused on the relationship," Ahuja said. "Rather, she came to college for a reason, as did I. So again, we're really supportive of ... each other's hobbies, our goals and our aspirations."

Ahuja said he doesn't view their relationship as a chore.

"I think it's about perspective as well," Ahuja said. "I don't view this relationship as something I have to do. Rather, it's something I get to do."

To email reporter: [lbd5368@psu.edu](mailto:lbd5368@psu.edu).

# How intimacy shapes college relationships

By Skylar Williamson  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For many college students, intimacy is often viewed as a narrow idea: dating, hook-ups or relationships. In reality, intimacy in college relationships looks different for everyone.

Whether it's opening up emotionally to someone you trust or navigating becoming physically close to a new partner, college should be a time where people begin to understand their definition of intimacy.

Intimacy generally falls into two different categories: emotional or physical. Emotional intimacy involves trust, vulnerability and communication, whereas

physical intimacy focuses on touch, affection and sex.

In college relationships, however, the environment can play a huge role in what type of intimacy is most prevalent. Busy schedules, social pressure, alcohol and evolving personal identities all play a factor in how intimacy is reflected.

For Brooke Benevento, who is interested in becoming a sex therapist, relationships should involve both emotional and physical intimacy. She thinks emotional security is the first step to a healthy long-term connection.

"When people truly feel safe, they can share their thoughts, boundaries and desires openly, which creates a stronger,

healthier connection," Benevento, a fourth-year studying rehabilitation and human services, said. "In my experience, whether a relationship is new or long-term, prioritizing clarity and security sets the tone for everything that follows, making all forms of intimacy more meaningful and fulfilling."

On college campuses, experimentation with intimacy is normal. With this level of trial and error, Benevento said college connections can lean towards prioritizing physical rather than emotional intimacy.

"Dating apps and hook-up culture make connections fast and convenient, but they can also discourage people from being

intentional and authentic," Benevento said. "College intimacy can be intense and meaningful, but it often requires extra effort to sustain emotional depth."

As hook-up culture and quick physical connections are becoming more popular for young adults on college campuses, some students are starting to breakaway from that stigma.

Mark Kormos said many students on campus are letting go of "hook-up culture" and constant physical intimacy for something deeper.

"We are all broken and seeking to be healed," Kormos, a third-year studying economics, said. "Sometimes we think that physical pleasure will help us with that,

but eventually the pleasure wears off and we remain broken."

Kormos said students are finding more meaningful ways to fill their time, hoping that later leads them to building strong emotional connections.

To email reporter: [sgw5218@psu.edu](mailto:sgw5218@psu.edu)

To continue reading:



# The Daily Collegian Lovelines



Happy Valentine's Day Aliyah, sending love from Penn State to Delaware!

To the girl that does it all, we love you!  
-Love, M, D, J and B

Breaking News: Abdu Keeley voted Partner Of The Year 9th year in a row!

Dear, Bri, Kate, and Sydney, I love you guys so so much! Love, Mackenzie

Shoutout to the amazing people college has brought me!

India, Becca, Sam, Kaelyn, Avery, Abby, Aza, I love you guys all so much

Sam, Kaelyn, Avery, Sam, Eloise, Kenzie, India and Gwen: I love you all dearly!!- Becca

Kat, will you be my valentine?

Beautiful gay women please hit me up (5'5, feminist, passionate) - Riddhi Aitha

I love you Kippi Hall

I love you Susannah Hall!

I love you Matteo Mastrocola