

# The Daily Collegian

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## 'We could all use a bit more love'

### *Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service honors his legacy*

By Alex Fischer  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Students gathered in the HUB-Robeson Center Monday afternoon to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy with an annual Day of Service. Hosted by the Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Student Committee, the theme for this year's MLK Day celebrations is "Undaunted Hope."

The MLK Day of Service is part of a nationwide movement started in 1994 to turn a federal holiday — a day "off" — into a day of community service — a day "on."

The event began with breakfast, followed by a keynote speech from Smeal College of Business Associate Dean Jamie Campbell and a video about the life and legacy of King.

Attendees then dispersed into volunteer groups to work with non-profit organizations from Centre County, including Centre Safe, the Jana Marie Foundation, the Youth Service Bureau and the Institute for Promoting Health, Education, Art and Technology (iPHET).

Maya Mathes, a member of the MLK Commemoration Student Committee's planning committee, was thrilled to see about 600 people in Alumni Hall at the start of the day.

"I just hope that people get a lot of fulfillment out of this," Mathes, a third-year studying food science, said. "(Waking) up early in the morning, on a snowy day with 22 degree weather, no school ... I'm just happy that a lot of people just want to give back to our community."

Mathes said her mom raised her to always give back to the community.

"It's just always been a core part of who I am as a person,"



Jonathon Chiu/The Daily Collegian

**Students** gather in Alumni Hall during the MLK, Jr. Day of Service in the HUB-Robeson Center.

Mathes said. "And I feel like just being able to give back to Centre County, where I've been a resident for three years now, I feel

**"With everything going on in the world, we could all use a bit more love, we could all use a bit more unity."**

Kadyn Young

like it's a really nice way for me to just show my appreciation to everybody around me."

Patrick Williams, the outreach director for the MLK Commemoration Committee, said his favorite part of the day was going from room to room, checking in with each volunteer group and seeing everyone talking to each other.

"Everybody is just spreading

love because that's what MLK wanted," Williams, a fourth-year studying telecommunications and media industries, said. "You get people from diverse backgrounds just spreading awareness, spreading love, everybody coming together."

Ezekiel Hernandez spent the afternoon helping the Youth Services Bureau package diapers with members of his fraternity, Sigma Lambda Beta.

"There's a lot of stuff that's been happening all across the United States and across the world," Hernandez, a third-year studying computational data science, said. "I'm Latino, (and) there's been a lot of different things with ICE, with Venezuela, just so many different things that are happening right now ... but there's still a lot of people that are in need of help, and we just need to keep pushing forward."

Valeria Herrera attended the

event with her roommate.

"I actually transferred from a community college this semester, so this is all very new," Herrera, a third-year studying global and international studies, said. "I wanted to get more involved on campus and just help out as much as I can."

Herrera worked on making "Jared Boxes" for the Jared Box Project, which are plastic, shoe-sized boxes filled with gifts, games and toys which are given to children in hospitals all over the country.

"I think it's so much fun to just envision a little kid receiving a box, and then just lighting up (with) excitement," Herrera said. "I just want to make positive impacts in (these) little kids' lives, because they're just in hospitals all day, every day, and I feel like their days could definitely be really gloomy ... I want to make them happy and make their childhood as normal as possible."

Kadyn Young was at the Day of

Service with members of her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, making first-aid kits for iPHET.

"With everything going on in the world, we could all use a bit more love, we could all use a bit more unity," Young, a second-year studying finance, said. "So, I feel like that's a great way to honor him, (by) helping others and giving back to our community ... (MLK Day) is not just a day off, it's a day of doing something to honor his legacy."

Paris Stafford, co-director of the MLK Commemoration Committee, said it's important to not forget MLK's legacy.

"No one wants to repeat history," Stafford, a third-year studying economics, said. "So really just, keeping all our generations, future generations informed of what MLK did." King is also the reason Stafford went into economics, as King had written a book about the connection between systemic poverty and systemic racism.

"He wanted everyone to be equitable and everyone to be equal," Stafford said. "I really thought that was just phenomenal. And using that type of mindset, it really got me into economics and wanting to kind of close that generational wage gap."

As volunteers came back together in Alumni Hall at the end of the event, they were asked to sign a large "MLK 2026" poster on their way in. The prompt was: "What hope do you want to create?"

"MLK has definitely been a big part of my life," Stafford said. "And so, really, just seeing this opportunity to do service in my community is just phenomenal."

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## 'Stories like Keaghan's gives people hope'

### *THON family reflects on journey to bell ringing*

By Emma Naysmith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Parents of 10-year-old Keaghan Faulders, Bryan and Kaitland, describe their daughter as having a "spunky personality" and a "no-quit attitude."

After receiving a diagnosis of T-cell Leukemia in 2022, Keaghan, just shy of age 7, was scheduled for immediate surgery and treatment.

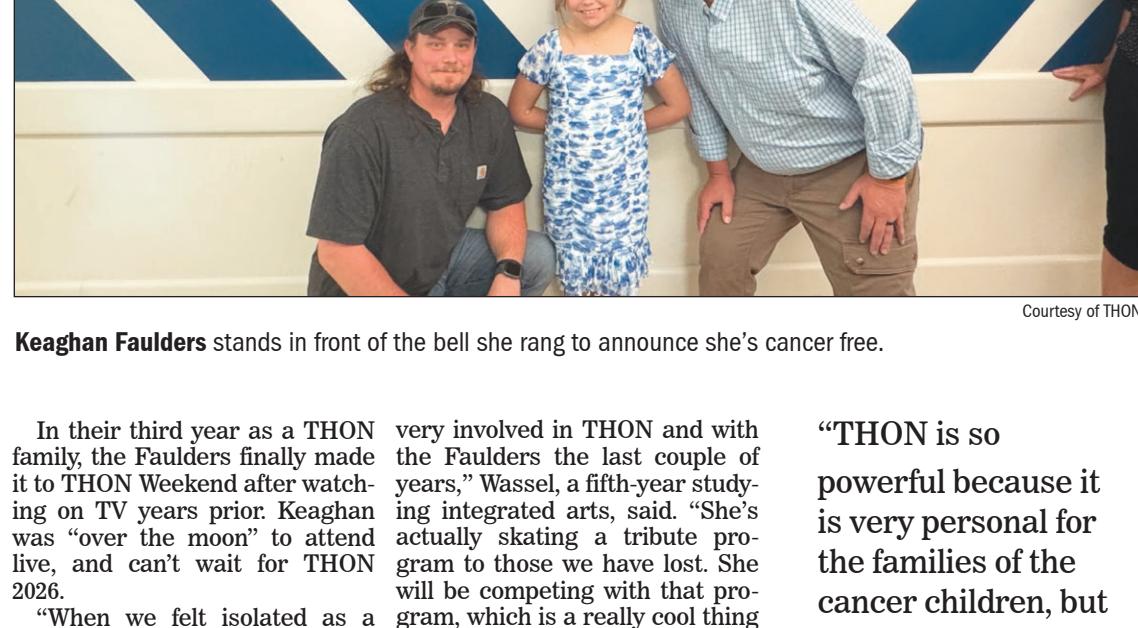
"We just kind of took it in stride," Bryan said. "We enjoyed the good days, which that first year was few, far and in between, but we enjoyed the good days. The days that were a struggle, or spike in fevers, she wasn't feeling well, we stayed by her side."

Soon after the initial diagnosis, Bryan said they were introduced to THON and the Four Diamonds, and a "weight was lifted off their shoulders."

"In the back of your mind, you're thinking in your head, 'Well, one, let's get her feeling better,'" Bryan said. "But two, how the heck are we going to pay for this? And how are we going to afford this down the road? And we'll figure it out, but it's going to be a long journey."

**"That little spark there that she has just does not let cancer steal her joy. It's just pure key."**

Bryan Faulders



Courtesy of THON

**Keaghan Faulders** stands in front of the bell she rang to announce she's cancer free.

In their third year as a THON family, the Faulders finally made it to THON Weekend after watching on TV years prior. Keaghan was "over the moon" to attend live, and can't wait for THON 2026.

"When we felt isolated as a childhood cancer family at the beginning, and we weren't sure who to connect with," Kaitland said. "THON really pulled us in. They kind of wrapped us up in their energy, and you don't really understand the energy until you go to THON."

The Faulders family is paired with the Penn State figure skating team through the THON "Adopt-a-Family" program. Kaitland said they have supported her family through all of their highs and lows.

Ice skating team member and THON Chair Emma Wassel said Keaghan and her family will always be an inspiration for the group, and is the strongest girl they know.

"We have a teammate this year, Lillie Nye, and she has gotten

very involved in THON and with the Faulders the last couple of years," Wassel, a fifth-year studying integrated arts, said. "She's actually skating a tribute program to those we have lost. She will be competing with that program, which is a really cool thing for us to see."

Throughout treatment, Keaghan demonstrated impressive strength in her ability to bounce back after tougher days, according to her father.

"That little spark there that she has just does not let cancer steal her joy," Bryan said. "It's just pure key. And wanting to help out where she could, when she could and giving back to the hospital. These kids are resilient ... if the kids were feeling okay, they had a smile on their face, not a care in the world, and just powerin' through."

In addition to treatment in the hospital, Keaghan spent her time running her own nail salon, playing Uno with nurses and even donated her hair to create a wig for another child fighting cancer.

**"THON is so powerful because it is very personal for the families of the cancer children, but I hope when they hear stories about a real child like Keaghan."**

Kaitland Faulders

"Her ability to connect with adults and nurses and volunteers and teachers that came into the hospital just like they're just normal people and even other kids that were battling cancer," Kaitland said. "It was quite amazing to see both her strength and her personality continue to show through no matter how she felt."

Keaghan's resilience was rewarded with remission in 2023 and a long-awaited bell ringing in May 2025 to symbolize the end of

her cancer treatment.

Keaghan's father said it was one of the "proudest days of his life" and her mother said it symbolized survival and a thankfulness to ring the bell and celebrate its meaning after passing by it thousands of times throughout their treatment journey.

"For Keaghan and even for us, it was really more to end the fight that she never asked to face, it is just the strength that we saw behind her," Kaitland said. "For us, it just symbolized that we survived. We're so happy we got here. We're so proud."

Wassel said she was lucky enough to be personally invited by Keaghan to support her in ringing the bell at the Penn State Health Children's Hospital. Additionally, she said the team looks forward to welcoming her onto the ice rink for her first time skating.

"Keaghan's story is just so inspiring for us as a team," Wassel said. "A lot of us kind of grew up in a solo sport, one where we didn't really have teamwork and like that kind of level of camaraderie, and so the Faulders have such a strong team of friends and family that were and are still backing them throughout Keaghan's battle, and they show us that there's strength in leaning on those who love you."

Kaitland said "stories like Keaghan's gives people hope." Hope to those standing THON Weekend, and hope to families facing similar challenges.

"THON is so powerful because it is very personal for the families of the cancer children, but I hope when they hear stories about a real child like Keaghan, we are a real family, and we've lived the long nights," Kaitland said. "We've felt their fear; we've praised the victories."

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# THIS WEEK



# Small Resets

## Tips to glow up for the new year

By Lexi Cannan  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

There's something about the new year that makes it feel like everyone suddenly needs to get their life together.

All at once, it's new routines, new goals and trying to become the "best version" of yourself — even though most people are still just getting back into the semester and double-checking where their classes are.

A glow-up doesn't have to be extreme. You don't need a crazy early alarm or some perfect system to change your life. Usually, it's just small things that make everyday college life feel easier.

### Start small with your routine

One of the easiest places to start is your routine. You don't have to overhaul your entire schedule — just start small. Trying to change everything at once usually doesn't stick, especially once classes get busy.

Going to bed earlier, eating something before your first class or finally using an alarm you won't snooze ten times can make your day feel way less chaotic. Even one of those changes helps you feel a little more on top of things.

### Clean up your space (even a little)

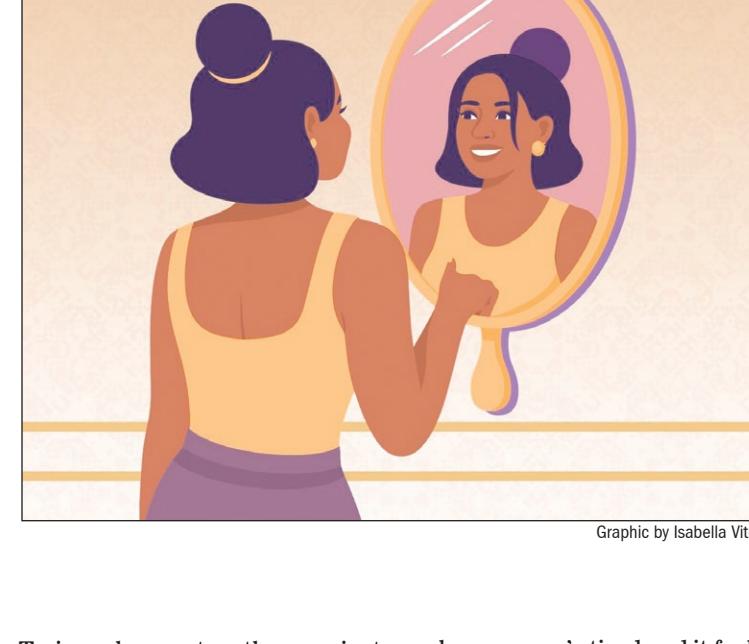
When your room is a mess, everything feels harder — papers on your desk, cups you forgot about, clothes on the floor that have been there way too long — it adds up fast.

You don't need to clean your whole room. Clean off your desk, your backpack or even your phone if you're feeling productive. It doesn't fix everything, but it helps your space feel less chaotic.

### Movement that actually feels doable

Being active doesn't have to be a big thing. You don't need hard workouts or gym motivation. Some days it's just walking to class, stretching a little or pacing around your room.

Going with a friend helps too.



Graphic by Isabella Viteri

Trying classes together or just meeting up makes it feel more like hanging out than working out.

You can complain the whole time, laugh about not knowing what you're doing and leave early if you want. It just feels like a break from sitting around all day, which is kind of the point.

### Rethink the way you choose your daily outfits

Let's be honest — most of us wear the same few outfits every week. A glow-up doesn't mean changing that, it just means liking those outfits.

A good hoodie, jeans that don't feel awful and sneakers that go with everything can make even low-effort days feel better.

When you actually feel comfortable in what you're wearing, you're not constantly thinking about it throughout the day. You can actually focus on class, run errands or just get through a long day on campus.

It's not about looking dressed up — it's about feeling like yourself, even on days when you're putting in the bare minimum.

### Take your mental health seriously

The beginning of second semester is rough. It gets dark

early, everyone's tired and it feels like there's always something you should be doing.

Taking care of your mental health sometimes just means stopping for a second. Skipping plans, logging off or even sitting in your room doing nothing without turning it into a whole guilt spiral. You don't have to push through everything.

It's okay to slow down when things feel overwhelming. A glow-up isn't just about looks — it's taking care of yourself when you need to. Instead of big goals, think about how you want to feel this year. Less stressed, more balanced or just better overall.

### Focus on how you want to feel

Instead of putting pressure on yourself with big resolutions, it helps to think about how you want to feel this year. Maybe that's more balanced, less stressed or more confident.

Let whatever habits you pick support that instead of making your life harder. You don't need to do everything "right" or have it all figured out — just do what actually works for you and your schedule.

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# Crossword

## Across

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
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## Down

23	carte	47	Pathet
24	Prospector's need	48	Little wriggler
25	Antagonistic	49	Havana residue
26	Take steps	50	Engine need
27	Born	51	Squalid
28	Outback runner	52	Upside-down
29	Extreme suffix	53	sleepers
30	Heating fuel	54	Fence part
31	Director Howard	55	City on the Rhine
32	Army unit, briefly	56	Horned goddess
33	Last Greek consonant	57	Start of a cheer
34	Alias predecessor	58	After fire or harvester
35	Slough	59	Don't waste
36	Botanist Gray	60	Quiche, e.g.
37	Crucifix	61	Spanish aunt
38	Swindle	62	Hesitant sounds
39	Check for accuracy	63	Hog heaven?

# sudoku

© Pappocom

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# WORD SEARCH

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## Espionage

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Agent  
Capture  
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Courage  
Courier  
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Data  
Disguise  
Escape  
Guile  
Ingenuity  
Intrigue  
Message  
Mission  
Mole  
Orders  
Plot  
Report  
Rescue  
Risk  
Scheme  
Secret  
Signal  
Spy  
Stake Out  
Trailing  
Traitor  
Vigil  
Weapons

# 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.

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# Students are already using AI. Universities should teach them how

## OUR VIEW

Higher education has a responsibility to prepare students for a future alongside AI by equipping them with the skills to use it wisely and understand its broader consequences.

AI is its ability to create text, images and code using existing data. Its capacity to produce original-seeming work has driven concern surrounding academic integrity and sparked conversations over what constitutes appropriate versus unethical use in both classrooms and everyday life.

Despite this, only 39% of academic institutions had an AI-related acceptable use policy as of early 2025, according to Stanford's report. While Penn State doesn't have a university-wide AI policy, it implements course-specific policy and provides general guidelines for both students and professors.

Last year, Penn State launched an artificial intelligence engineering major and minor, making it stand out among universities preparing future engineers to build and refine these systems.

However, AI's influence extends far beyond engineering. This technology is rapidly enter-

ing fields across the liberal arts, business, journalism, healthcare and many other disciplines.

Whether we like it or not, this integration is largely beyond our control, as employers across industries are already using AI tools to cut costs, increase efficiency and remain competitive.

What is within our control is how we're navigating it.

Universities should not encourage students to have AI complete their work for them. Instead, institutions and professors must teach students what AI is already being used for in their respective industries, and when it shouldn't be used and why.

While universities are still deciding how to approach AI in the classrooms, it's evident that education on the matter is essential in preparing graduates who will work alongside AI in their careers. Acting as though AI doesn't exist or banning its use outright is disservice to stu-

dents.

Fear-based conversations don't prepare students for life after graduation; thoughtful, honest discussions about the realities and future of AI do.

Understanding both the benefits and drawbacks of AI technology not only prepares students for the inevitable but provides them with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their AI use.

As AI use expands, it is imperative that conversations about misuse, along with environmental and societal impacts, expand as well.

According to Harvard Business Review, the training process for one AI model releases carbon emissions equivalent to those of hundreds of homes nationwide and has caused severe stress on our freshwater resources.

The rise of generative AI has also intensified ethical concerns around plagiarism, originality and accuracy. Because these

tools generate content based on existing material, students must be taught how to use them in appropriate contexts and how to properly evaluate and verify AI-produced information.

AI systems are also prone to factual errors and bias, making human oversight imperative. Without instruction on when AI use crosses ethical boundaries and when it can be used responsibly as a tool, students are left to navigate these risks on their own.

As AI continues to evolve and become used on a wider scale, it's of the utmost importance that higher education institutions educate their students on how AI is utilized and how to engage with the technology responsibly.

Furthermore, AI bias stems from both explicit and implicit human biases embedded in various stages of its pipeline, from data collection and labeling to model training and deployment, according to Chapman University. The system has already produced unfair and discriminatory bias in reporting, sourcing and continues to reinforce existing biases.

A comprehensive AI education should force people to rethink the way they engage with artificial intelligence.



Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | Emma Strickling

## Music's evolution away from

### sincerity

Much like anything, music has evolved and continues to evolve over time. While things like genre popularity have influenced its direction — the most

influential factor is arguably

technology.

Increased technological capabilities has allowed artists a greater ability to expand the way they create music. While technology is a helpful tool, I think it's led to less authenticity in music. For example, autotune, which made its way onto the music scene in 1997, has made music less unique and personal.

Cher's "Believe," one of the more notable songs featuring autotune, used it as a pitch corrector. Its usage meant less time was spent in the studio rerecording vocals, saving the bigwigs of the label money.

Today technology can do a myriad of things, such as shape one's voice manually.

Furthermore, its broadened capabilities now make this a staple within the music industry today, with a large majority of artists using autotune on their records.

While some argue technology broadens the scope of musical

ability, I believe it takes away the opportunity for an authentic sound — making each singer's voice a replication of others. All the distinct little quirks within a singer's voice are no longer present, leaving the vocals sounding soulless.

So what if the note is a little flat?

I want to hear the little imperfections. I want to hear the humanity of natural singing and instrumentation, not something that sounds like it's coming from a computer.

One of my favorite artists is Bob Dylan, and occasionally, when I mention that to people, they normally comment on his singing voice. I know he's not the best singer ever to exist on this Earth.

However, the thing that sets Dylan apart from modern-day singers and one of the reasons I admire him is that he's not pretending to be some great singer. Even as an 84-year-old man, he's still performing, now with a gravelly and weathered voice. Some might argue it's worse than before, but he isn't covering it up.

Not only does excess technology rob music of an authentic sound, the lyrics suffer as well. If it seems like songs today are simpler and more repetitive, it's because they are. A study from the Scientific American magazine found over the past 50

years songs have adopted longer choruses which is part of the reason everything sounds the same.

In a lot of modern music it seems like the chorus takes up half the song, and in some cases it absolutely does.

Even songs today credit multiple people writing on them. Popular names like Benson Boone and Sabrina Carpenter have credited at least three people per song on their most recently released album. One would think that by having a variety of perspectives, there would be a greater possibility for more unique lyrics and less repetition. But alas that isn't the case.

Authenticity of voice is especially important for songwriting because it creates a connection between performer and listener. It's more compelling when you hear a song that comes from a place of true expression and feeling, whereas repetitive writing potentially leaves the listener uninspired and bored. Well, at least it does for me.

I think something that gets overlooked today is that songwriting is just as much a method of storytelling as any artistic medium.

Take the song "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" written by Stephen Stills and performed by Crosby, Stills & Nash. It's divided up into four sections, true to its

name as suite, with each section distinct from the others. Yes, there's a repeating theme in the first part with the chorus, but it's not like it occurs during the entire seven minutes of the song.

Through his songwriting, Stills reflects on a relationship that's on the verge of ending. Not only is there strong lyrical writing, but the inclusion of harmonies provided by bandmates David Crosby and Graham Nash really help to create a sound that's distinct and authentic to their group.

To make it clear, I'm not trying to say that music needs to be complex in order to be considered great.

Simple songs can be great, too, if they're done well. What I really mean is that creating music that's heavily repetitive and dependent upon technology takes away the potential of greatness.

Perhaps these artists of today should focus more on their own abilities and not what will be commercially acceptable. If technologies like autotune are a must to today's artists, then I think they might be in the wrong business.

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## New sheriff in town

### Kayla Treanor brings a championship mentality

By Noah Aberegg  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Players sat around the locker room in anticipation on Selection

Sunday, waiting to hear their name called for the fourth straight year.

These moments defined coach Kayla Treanor's four seasons at Syracuse, leading her team to a 59-24 record. After being named the next Penn State women's lacrosse coach in May 2025, Treanor will have an opportunity to do the same in Happy Valley.

"That drive to be a national championship team will never change for her," Julia Basciano, a midfielder under Treanor at Syracuse and now at Penn State, told The Daily Collegian. "That is always going to be the expectation and the standard for her."

Treanor's championship drive started long before her time coaching Penn State, Syracuse and Boston College. The Niskayuna, New York, native became a star with the Orange as a player, becoming one of the most decorated women's lacrosse players of all time.

Under the player leadership of Treanor, Syracuse experienced four straight championship weekends, including a spot in the 2014 NCAA title game.

During that stretch, she became the program's only four-time IWLCA All-American, a three-time Tewaaraton Award finalist and Syracuse's all-time leading scorer.

"She's just really inspiring from the player that she was in college throughout her whole entire career," Basciano said. "She steps out onto the field every day to coach us and motivate us, and she's very humble about her career. Little does she know that she is an inspiration to probably every single person on our team."

Following her time at Syracuse, Treanor spent time with the U.S. women's lacrosse team, quickly becoming the team's all-time



Courtesy of Penn State Athletics

**Women's lacrosse coach Kayla Treanor** holds a lacrosse stick during a Penn State women's lacrosse practice.

leader in points and goals. With Team USA, Treanor won gold at the 2017 and 2022 World Championships before retiring and picking up her coaching career at Harvard and Boston College. She ultimately returned to her alma mater in 2022.

"My coaching philosophy has changed so much," Treanor said. "I've had really great experiences (at each school) and learned that all the players are so different, so it's always coming in and trying to understand your players and your team and how they learn best."

Despite only spending four years with Syracuse, Treanor capitalized on every season with tournament appearances in each of the four years and semifinal appearances in 2023 and 2024.

After falling in the second round of the 2025 NCAA Tournament, Penn State vice president of Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft reached out to Treanor about filling the position left by former coach Missy Doherty. The pair already had a connection from their time at Boston College, and Kraft hoped to rekindle that relationship in Happy Valley.

"In full transparency, I never

thought I was leaving Syracuse," Treanor said. "It's really just an opportunity that I absolutely could not pass up. This is such an incredible school, amazing administration and amazing team and players with rich history and success and tradition."

While many teams experience roster turnover following coaching changes, the Nittany Lions held fairly steady, knowing they were getting a high-caliber coach.

"We always spoke about having a championship culture, but this year, you can actually feel it," senior attacker Erika Ho told the Collegian. "Everyone has a different drive this year, and that's kudos to Kayla and the rest of the staff for making and creating a winning culture."

Part of that championship culture comes with Treanor's coaching philosophy of empowering each individual player and building team passion.

"Everyone's obsessed with Curt Cignetti right now because he's an amazing coach and talks so much about one play at a time, and every play is the same and every game is the same," Treanor said, referencing Indiana foot-

ball's national championship-winning head coach. "Nothing is too special or too big of a moment for their team, and I think it's similar

**"She's just really inspiring from the player that she was in college throughout her whole entire career."**

Julia Basciano  
Midfielder

to my philosophy."

Treanor's philosophy and championship pedigree have resonated not only with the returners at Penn State but also with transfers, including Basciano, who followed her to Happy Valley.

"Coach Treanor is just an amazing person as well as an amazing, amazing coach," Basciano said. "There really is no other person that I would want to be coached by."

Outside of Treanor's coaching style and work on the field, her compassion and care for her

athletes have been just another thing that motivated the team to play for her.

"You can tell her, and the entire staff just deeply cares about you, both as a person and a lacrosse player," Ho said. "Being around the staff, I feel like I'm a better person, and I think I've learned so much in only a few short months being under them."

While this kindness and compassion from Treanor and the entire coaching staff have made the team feel welcome, the same has been felt by Treanor as she's gotten to know her Penn State team after a few months.

"To be honest, I think this is one of my favorite teams I've ever coached," Treanor said. "I'm just looking forward to continuing to develop my relationships with players and just continue to get to know them, because they are really a special group."

Included in those feelings toward the team is that championship-level pedigree she brings to Penn State.

Despite never winning the big game, Treanor has the expectations each and every year to be playing for a spot to win a national championship. If she is successful with the Nittany Lions, it will be their first title since 1989.

"What excites me the most is just how much they care," Ho said. "It really means so much to me, just seeing how much work they put in, how much they genuinely care about each and every one of us and how much they care and want to be a winning program."

While it has been nearly 40 years since Penn State's spot in the history books, Treanor believes that Penn State can make it back and be one of the best programs in the country.

"It's just a no-brainer," Treanor said. "This is a place where we can win national championships and be one of the Blue Bloods of college lacrosse."

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## O' captain, my captain

### Penn State's 12th leader, Dane Dowiak exemplifies what it means to be captain

By Greg Finberg  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

When Dane Dowiak speaks, his teammates listen.

**HOCKEY** The junior forward never shies away from speaking his mind. And he's sometimes brutally honest. But he can be, because he backs his words with an unmatched work ethic.

He's considered the strongest player on the team. He's unafraid to scrap for a loose puck along the boards or lay a booming hit to spark a comeback. He's willing to play any role asked of him with no complaints.

Bottom line: Dowiak is a team-first guy. It's why his teammates love him. It's why they respect him. And it's why they voted him the 12th captain in program history.

"(Dane) is very accountable to himself. He talks a big game, but he backs it up," Penn State coach Guy Gadowsky said. "He's an extremely strong, gritty guy. He loves Penn State and embodies it. Most importantly, he plays for the team."

Gadowsky lauded Dowiak's

**"He talks a big game, but he backs it up. He's an extremely strong, gritty guy. He loves Penn State and embodies it."**

Guy Gadowsky

Head coach

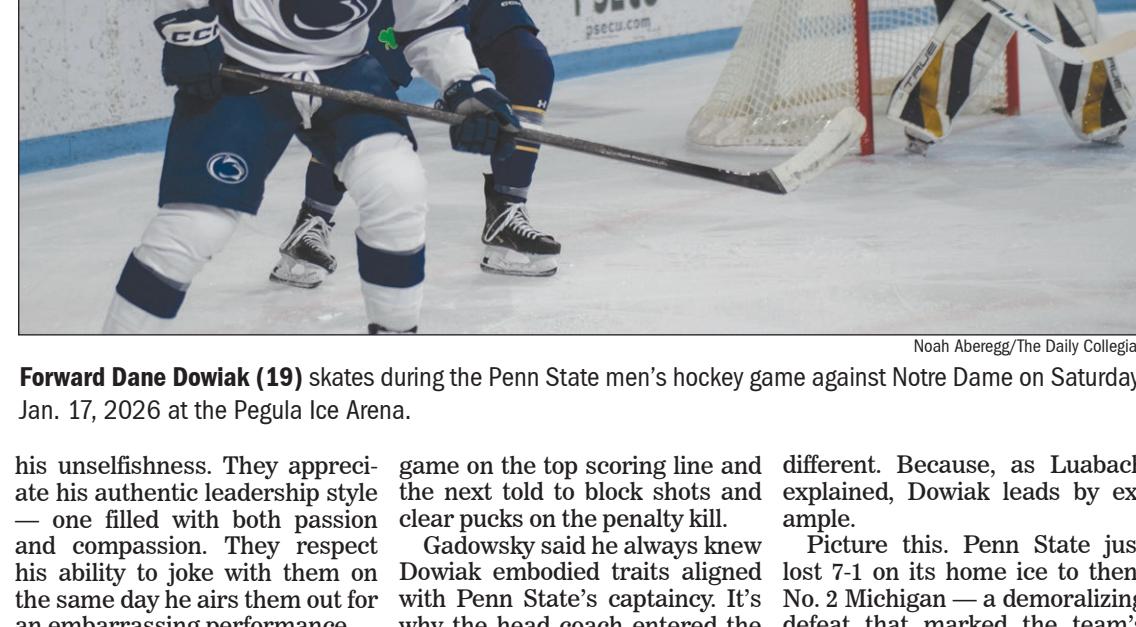
willingness to do "the little things" that don't show up in the box score. Like getting pucks out of the defensive zone, winning face-offs, getting cross-checked as he pokes at a loose puck, and, as Gadowsky elegantly stated, "getting his ankles hacked."

Dowiak's teammates recognize

willingness to do "the little things" that don't show up in the box score. Like getting pucks out of the defensive zone, winning face-offs, getting cross-checked as he pokes at a loose puck, and, as Gadowsky elegantly stated, "getting his ankles hacked."

Dowiak's leadership role has

grown since his first collegiate season. But he's never needed a fancy title or a letter stitched on his jersey to motivate his team-



**Forward Dane Dowiak (19)** skates during the Penn State men's hockey game against Notre Dame on Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026 at the Pegula Ice Arena.

his unselfishness. They appreciate his authentic leadership style — one filled with both passion and compassion. They respect his ability to joke with them on the same day he airs them out for an embarrassing performance.

And they laud his willingness to never ask something of them he wouldn't do himself.

"Dane is a nails guy — a guy we all look to when things are tough," sophomore forward Braeden Ford said. "When things are tough, you look for a guy to lead the way, you look for a guy to lead the charge, and Dane is the perfect guy to do that. He'll go through somebody on the wall. He'll go score a greasy goal. He's a guy that everybody looks to for some energy and to get us going."

Dowiak's leadership role has grown since his first collegiate season. But he's never needed a fancy title or a letter stitched on his jersey to motivate his team-

as he pokes at a loose puck, and, as Gadowsky elegantly stated, "getting his ankles hacked."

Dowiak's teammates recognize

game on the top scoring line and the next told to block shots and clear pucks on the penalty kill.

Gadowsky said he always knew Dowiak embodied traits aligned with Penn State's captaincy. It's why the head coach entered the season with high expectations of his junior captain. And it's why he appeared unfazed to see his players accept Dowiak's leadership style.

"We are seeing exactly what we saw from Dane the previous two (seasons), and I'm sure it's exactly why he got selected by his peers," Gadowsky said. "He does his job. He can play in every situation, and no matter what you ask of him, he never complains. He's never even hinted at wanting a different role. He'll do whatever is asked of him to the best of his ability."

Junior forward Reese Laubach is in his third season with Penn State. He's experienced various leadership styles, from the vocal leadership of captain Christian Berger to the quiet, measured leadership of last season's captain, Simon Mack.

But Dowiak brings something

different. Because, as Laubach explained, Dowiak leads by example.

Picture this. Penn State just lost 7-1 on its home ice to them. No. 2 Michigan — a demoralizing defeat that marked the team's third consecutive loss. Its players

different. Because, as Laubach explained, Dowiak leads by example.

"When things are tough, you look for a guy to lead the way, you look for a guy to lead the charge and Dane is the perfect guy to do that."

Braeden Ford

Forward

were defeated and discouraged. Most importantly, they were embarrassed by their poor effort against a Big Ten rival.

The Nittany Lions sat silent at their lockers, awaiting a possible message from Gadowsky.

But their coach never showed.

He knew his captain's words

would hold more weight. He knew Dowiak would speak because his competitiveness wouldn't stand another effort like the one seen that Friday night inside Pegula Ice Arena.

And, as Laubach said, when Dowiak spoke, everyone listened.

"(Dane's) words go a long way with how he plays and how he holds himself," freshman defenseman Nolan Collins said. "He plays hard for us. He blocks shots for us. He throws his body around. So it's easy to follow a guy like that."

Dowiak's words did hold weight. The junior forward assisted Laubach's game-winning goal as Penn State defeated Michigan 4-2 the next night.

It was an example of Dowiak's leadership style, one that rubbed off on his teammates to earn an upset win. And while that style resonated that night, his leadership extends beyond hustle plays and blocked shots.

Sophomore goaltender Kevin Reider called Dowiak an "awesome leader" because of his positivity on and off the ice. Sophomore defenseman Nick Fascia said it's "easy" to play for someone like Dowiak, who himself does everything he asks of others.

Halfway through Dowiak's first season as captain, the Nittany Lions are rolling. They're 16-6 and ranked No. 8 in the latest USCHO poll.

There are many reasons for Penn State's hot start. The additions of top NHL draft prospects Gavin McKenna and 2025 first-round pick Jackson Smith have certainly helped. As has standout play from its goaltending tandem of Reider and Josh Fleming.

But, as Dowiak's teammates would tell you, his leadership has topped everything.

"Dane is a Trojan. He's our captain," freshman forward Shea Van Olm said. "We look up to him, we want him to lead, and he knows, being in the position he's in, he's got to lead by example."

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# College Republicans host Pennsylvania Collegiate Leadership Conference

By Sara O'Connell  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

On Friday and Saturday, the Penn State College Republicans hosted its third annual Pennsylvania Collegiate Leadership Conference in the HUB-Robeson Center.

Throughout the conference, the Penn State College Republicans offered a variety of speakers, including elected officials, Turning Point USA members, students and other political activists, part of efforts to introduce conservative principles throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Hunter Steach, the Penn State College Republicans' vice president, said the goals of the conference were civic engagement and creating a safe place for those with conservative and liberal ideologies alike to attend.

Steach said he wanted to allow attendees to meet with speakers, such as Glenn Thompson and Stacy Garrity, to gain insight into conservative perspectives.

Mia Humphreys, the Penn State College Republicans' director of special events, said the event offered community building for conservatives to portray their ideas, goals and values.

In Glenn Thompson's speech, he said principles and values define each person. He offered insight into his values as a Congressman by offering advice to potential future political leaders.

"Always try to listen twice as much as you speak — that's a true leader," Thompson said.

Brooke Phillips, a former member of the Penn State College Republicans, said that by listening and working together, real understanding and progress can happen.

"Conservative principles support open discussion and civil discourse," Phillips said. "We shouldn't avoid these difficult conversations."

Throughout the conference, the Penn State College Republicans



Courtesy of Hunter Steach

**Attendees sit** inside the Alumni Hall during the Penn State College Republicans third annual Pennsylvania Collegiate Leadership Conference on Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026 in University Park, Pa.

cans and their speakers presented conservative perspectives on various political topics. Ideas on how to combat issues — such as defending the republic by exploring ways to counter immigration flaws and a debate over U.S. policy regarding Venezuela to gain attendees' perspectives — were also presented.

"Each side should be given the opportunity to express their views calmly, without attacking, while seeking common ground and shared goals," Phillips said.

Phillips, a Penn State alumna, said she values learning from other people and believes disagreement doesn't have to prevent cooperation.

"I've had a lot of people in my time here, from [a range] of political ideologies that feel afraid to share their beliefs," Steach, a

fourth-year studying political science, said. "This conference enables people who have a dream in politics or not politics, and something in this realm, [to] chase them."

Humphreys said the topics were intended to rally people together and enhance perspectives by standing up for beliefs and allowing attendees to speak their truth.

"We're trying to continue free speech and free narrative on college campuses today," Humphreys, a second-year studying political science, said.

Penn State ranked 228 in a College Pulse Free Speech ranking in 2024 and again in 2025. The ranking detailed students' comfort expressing their ideas, as well as their tolerance for liberal and conservative speakers.

Despite the ranking, Penn State is considered to have a balanced ratio among conservative and liberal students.

"The climate here is great," Humphreys said. "We have a great relationship with the College Dems. We work together. We do our 9/11 event together. Overall, Penn State does a better job of allowing all of us to have a voice compared to other college stories we may have heard of."

Steach said he always felt safe and respected at Penn State regarding his political beliefs and affiliation.

The growth of the College Republicans has gone from roughly three chapters to twenty-plus chapters connecting over the past three years, according to Steach.

"A lot of college students some-

times aren't politically engaged at all," Humphreys said. "They don't go to the polls and vote, and that's ultimately what's most important."

She said the conference was meant to spread the word regarding conservative thought and get attendees involved to become more politically active.

Steach said he wanted people to feel more confident and comfortable sharing their beliefs after attending the conference.

"We are a diverse community here at Penn State," Phillips said. "Exposure to differing perspectives allows students to form their own opinions and develop skills to engage respectfully."

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## ASA holds Mr., Miss Africa Pageant

By Jonathon Chiu  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Heritage Hall came alive with music and dance Saturday evening as the African Students Association (ASA) held its 13th annual Mr. and Miss Africa pageant in the HUB-Robeson Center.

The pageant, themed "Crowned in Heritage," saw five contestants "embody the beauty, strength and elegance" of their respective countries. Each contestant integrated elements of their culture within their entrance into Heritage Hall and during events later into the night that were observed by a panel of four judges.

The contestants also presented an issue within their country they felt a personal connection to, as well as causes currently working to solve them.

Mercy Adetoyese, ASA's president, said she has helped set up the pageant since her freshman year and thought of the event as a way to display African culture in University Park.

"This pageant is a way for people to showcase their culture, their identity, to the rest of Penn State and, honestly, it takes a lot of guts and bravery to even be up here, so going from being a shy and timid person to being able to get up on that stage is something I also truly admire," Adetoyese, a fourth-year studying cybersecurity, said. "I hope they understand that ASA is a place where we don't just come to talk about classes or the workload or how our week is going. We come to truly engage with others, learn about our cultures and how we can cultivate those cultures to build a stronger bond between each other."

The pageant concluded at 10 p.m. following the crowning of Ader Deng, a first-year studying cybersecurity who advocated for increased educational resources as the pageant's first Mr. South Sudan, and Zara Amos, a first-year studying political science who advocated for ending period poverty as Miss Ghana, as Mr. and Miss Africa.

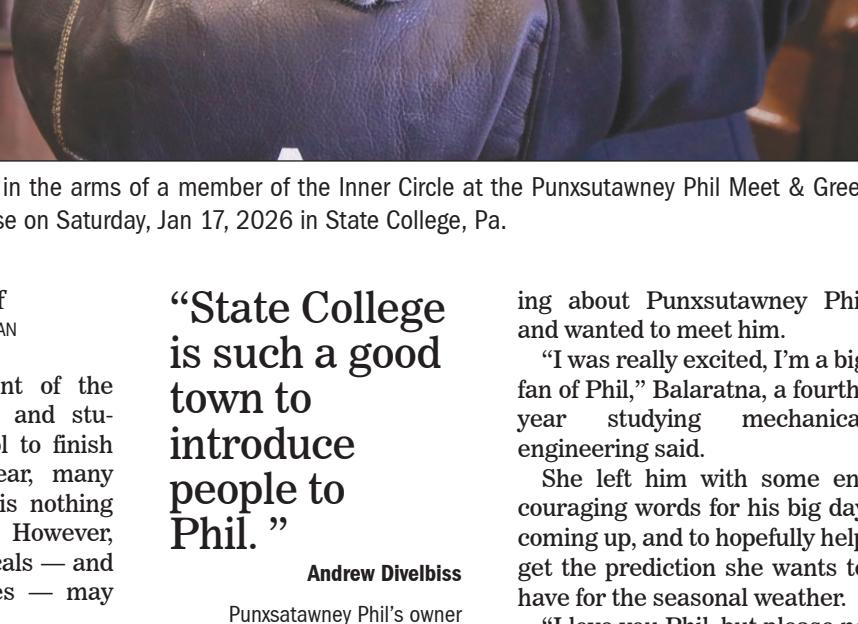
They were crowned by Wisdom Moses, ASA's public relations chair and 2025 Mr. Africa winner.

Ian Mwaura, who travelled to University Park from Williamsport to attend the pageant, said he believed Deng's and Amos's victories were well deserved based on what he saw during events, such as the talent show, and the causes they presented.

"Mr. South Sudan, he did his thing, his talent definitely stood out, his principles and what he stands for also stuck out and the same thing with Miss Ghana," Mwaura, a third-year studying heating, ventilation and air conditioning engineering technology at the Pennsylvania College of Technology, said. "Everybody talks about the problems that go on in the world but to actually make an organization at such a young age, to tackle them and get your hands dirty and do something about it, that's very commendable."

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## State College welcomes Punxsutawney Phil



**Punxsutawney Phil** sits in the arms of a member of the Inner Circle at the Punxsutawney Phil Meet & Greet inside The Press Taphouse on Saturday, Jan 17, 2026 in State College, Pa.

By Lily Dorf  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After the excitement of the holiday season fades and students return to school to finish out the academic year, many feel as though there is nothing exciting to anticipate. However, some Pennsylvania locals — and the surrounding states — may disagree.

Groundhog Day, celebrated annually on Feb. 2 in Punxsutawney, Pa. is a cultural tradition in which a groundhog — named Punxsutawney Phil — is brought out from his burrow to predict whether winter will last for another six weeks or an early spring will arrive.

While fans typically have to travel to Punxsutawney for the event, State College residents were able to have a special chance to see the famous furry friend.

Penn State students and State College locals gathered at The Press: Cider & Craft Beverage Taphouse to meet Punxsutawney Phil and his handlers. Some attendees dressed for the occasion, wearing top hats and suits to match the groundhog's handlers.

The event started at 2 p.m., and by 2:30 p.m., the line to see Phil and his crew was wrapped around the block.

The Press is owned by four lifelong friends, who happen to all be from Punxsutawney, Pa. One of the owners, Andrew Divelbiss, said he wanted to

**"State College is such a good town to introduce people to Phil."**

Andrew Divelbiss

Punxsutawney Phil's owner

bring Phil to Happy Valley so he could experience life outside of Punxsutawney.

"State College is such a good town to introduce people to Phil," Divelbiss said. "That's a big thing that everybody in Punxsutawney tries to do is spread the incredible thing of Punxsutawney Phil."

With the help of his family, who are a part of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, Divelbiss said he was able to bring his family and business together through the event.

Excitement buzzed through the line as students and locals waited to see Phil and hopefully take pictures with him.

During the event, handlers and club members handed out Punxsutawney Groundhog Club tokens and top hats.

Many attendees learned about the event online, but Sophia Balaratna said she heard through word of mouth and knew she wanted to attend.

As a Pennsylvania native, Balaratna said she grew up hear-

ing about Punxsutawney Phil and wanted to meet him.

"I was really excited, I'm a big fan of Phil," Balaratna, a fourth-year studying mechanical engineering said.

She left him with some encouraging words for his big day coming up, and to hopefully help get the prediction she wants to have for the seasonal weather.

"I love you Phil, but please no more winter," Balaratna said.

Sagufta Muktadir, also a Pennsylvania native, said she knew she needed to attend the moment she read about the event.

Muktadir, a fourth-year studying biomedical engineering, said she and her family are fond of Phil, but have never traveled to Punxsutawney for Groundhog Day.

"I love him," Muktadir said. "I love his predictions and everything — I was super hyped to come and see him in person."

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