

# Crowning Mr. and Miss Africa

By Kiera Ginn  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The African Students Association hosted its 12th annual Mr and Miss Africa pageant Sunday in Heritage Hall, with the theme Young, Rich and African.

This year five African countries — Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon, Kenya and Ethiopia — were represented by eight contestants.

Wisdom Moses, who represented Nigeria, decided to participate in the pageant with encouragement from others in ASA and as a way to show off his culture.

“Being able to have your culture celebrated on a stage like this, and not only your culture, but your personality, too,” Moses, a first-year studying cybersecurity analytics and operation, said.

Jemima Ogboi-Gibson said she joined the pageant as a way to meet people.

“It was a very fun experience, and I found some great friendships through it as well,” Ogboi-Gibson, a third-year studying forensic science and biochemistry and molecular biology, said.

The pageant consisted of seven sections including introductions, awareness, platform, swim, talents, formal wear and Q&A. Each section included aspects of both traditional and modern clothing, music and dance.

According to Moses, many of the contestants’ attire required several months of planning and coordination with tailors and family members.

“It’s all traditional African wear, but the thing is, we’re all from different countries, so it’s gonna be different,” Moses said. “I had a family member who went to Nigeria over the break, so they gave the measurements



Courtesy of Bernard Attipoe

**Contestants in the African Students Association’s 12th annual Mr. and Miss Africa pageant** pose with their awards. Wisdom Moses and Omna Mulugeta, center front, were crowned Mr. Africa and Miss Africa, respectively.

to our tailor, they got it done and shipped it over.”

Dylan Nunyi has attended the pageant in previous years and decided to participate as a contestant this year as a way to experience new things.

“I really just went to expand (and) flesh out into new stuff, so I thought the pageant was the one of the biggest (things) that allowed me to see the type of person I am,” Nunyi, a third-year studying civil engineering, said.

Attendee Landen Gibson said both contestants and attendees alike wore impressive outfits that showcased African culture.

“The outfits tonight are very cultural, specific to whatever region everybody’s from,” Gibson,

a fourth-year studying computer science, said.

“It’s very formal, very regal. I mean, everybody came out here stunning, looking their best. I love to see that.”

The awareness section of the pageant had each contestant showcase an issue that is prevalent in the country they were representing. The winners of the pageant will receive money to put toward their cause.

Gibson said the presentation on human trafficking in Nigeria was most interesting to him.

“Human trafficking in Nigeria — that one has me because in modern day slavery, (it’s the) small and really big stuff that nobody really talks about, I feel,”

Gibson said. “That one definitely spoke to me the most.”

Moses said the contestants were either born in the African country they represented or are first-generation Americans. Several of the participants even learned about other African countries through the pageant.

“All the countries in Africa all have different cultures, so everything is a surprise even to us,” Moses said.

Leading up to the event, Nunyi said participants had rehearsals for months, which became more frequent as the pageant came closer.

“We’ve been practicing since the end of September,” Nunyi said. “We practiced three times a

week, but for the past week, we’ve been practicing every day, some days multiple times.”

At the end of the night, Moses was crowned Mr. Africa, and Miss Ethiopia, Omna Mulugeta, a fourth-year studying finance, was crowned Miss Africa.

“I love just being able to, as I say, show off my culture, but also see other people’s culture,” Moses said. “It means a lot because everybody’s culture means a lot to them. It’s really all about showing where you’re from, where you started off as, how it brought you here and just showing everybody the goods and stuff.”

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## Celebrating MLK’s legacy

By Jonathon Chiu  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

State College community members and Penn State students gathered at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza to participate in a peace march on Friday as a part of a series of events to celebrate MLK Day.

The event began with speeches from Gary Abdullah, an elder at the Unity Church of Jesus Christ, and Mayor Ezra Nanes.

Abdullah spoke about the importance of standing up for social justice and civil rights on and off campus.

Nanes followed, telling attendees King’s legacy was “more than a call for justice.” It was also a “profound affirmation of dignity,” he said.

The march commenced shortly after Nanes concluded his speech, with members of the Gamma Nu chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. leading the procession to the HUB-Robeson Center’s Heritage Hall.

King became a member of the Sigma Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha as a graduate student at Boston University in 1952.

Tyler Word, a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, considers King the reason many



Joe Klein/Collegian

**Participants** walk up Fraser Street during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace March on Friday Jan. 17, 2025. Members of the Gamma Nu chapter of Alpha Phi Fraternity, Inc. led the procession.

people of color have been able to contribute to society.

“All of the achievements that people of color have made, advancements within society that people of color have made, wouldn’t have been able to (happen) without Dr. Martin Luther King putting his foot out there, advocating for those people to

have those opportunities,” Word, a third-year studying advertising, said.

Alpha Phi Alpha member Nathaniel Cosme-Ortiz said Americans should follow King’s example of finding ways to solve problems without using violence.

“One big thing I feel like America can take away from Dr. King’s teachings is just being able to get things across and being able to get solutions without having to resort to violence or other crude ways,” Cosme-Ortiz, a third-year studying mechanical engineering, said.

Cosme-Ortiz said King has shown people different ways change can be done peacefully and gave people new ways to find solutions.

The march was followed by a program called “Rhythms of Change.”

The event included a keynote address from Clarence Lang, dean of the College of the Liberal Arts, with Sir Dominique Jordan, poetic vanguard, as a featured guest.

The event also included performances by Dark Storm Step Team, the Unity Christian Campus Ministry Choir and Darnell Roulhac, an assistant teaching professor of voice at the

School of Theatre.

Roulhac said King inspired him to teach as a way to give back to future generations.

“For me, he means that there is a dream beyond my dream, and I think that is one of the reasons why I’ve gotten into teaching,” Roulhac said.

“I believe that there are some amazing teachers in the past, and I want to be an amazing teacher for this next generation so that they can be amazing teachers for the next. And I think that is how we keep giving back. That is my version of service, and giving back is the teaching that I have been taught.”

Attendee Asriel Thomas said it’s important to stand up for yourself and what you believe in as King did.

“He never stopped fighting for us,” Thomas, a second-year studying criminology, said. “So I feel like you should never stop fighting for yourself in general. People are never gonna always see eye-to-eye with you, but it’s okay...that doesn’t mean you stop believing in what you believe in.”

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## Board of Trustees seeks new student positions

By Annelise Hanson  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State is now accepting applications for the next student trustee on its Board of Trustees, as well as spots on the selection committee.

The student trustee represents the student body in discussions and decision-making about social and educational issues at Penn State, according to a press release from President Neeli Bendapudi. The two-year position is one of 38 board members, including faculty, alumni, industry, government officials and others, tasked with overseeing the university’s policies, finances and strategic direction.

The selected student will succeed Kevin Schuyler, who was described as a “critical member of the board” in the press release. The deadline to apply is Feb. 21.

Students can also apply to serve on the selection committee, which is tasked with choosing the next student trustee. Six at-large positions are available for the committee, and applications are due by Feb. 7.

Applications for both roles are open to all full-time undergraduate, graduate and professional students across all Penn State campuses, including World Campus.

An information session, hosted by Schuyler, will be held at 6 p.m. on Feb. 3 in 134 HUB-Robeson Center and via Zoom.

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Scan here to apply



Joe Klein/Collegian

**A participant** holds a sign during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace March on Friday Jan. 17, 2025 in University Park, Pa.



# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## Rince na Leon wins THON Showcase

By Xandra Adams-Dennis  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Rince na Leon received the grand prize of \$3,000 and a performance slot during THON weekend at the annual THON Showcase presented by Dunkin’ Donuts Sunday evening in the Schwab Auditorium.

The Irish Dance team competed against 13 other performance organizations on campus for the coveted spot and money toward their fundraising goals.

Whiplash Dance Team placed second and won \$2,000; Orchesis Dance Company placed third and won \$1,000; Lyrical Line Dance Company placed fourth and won \$850; and Urban Dance Troupe placed fifth and won \$650.

“All these acts are so incredibly talented,” Emcee Sophie Kaiser said. “It’s so awesome to see their dedication to the performances and THON.”

Kaiser, a third-year studying geography and security and risk analysis, is currently serving as a THON captain.

Kionne Reese Abrams, a Four Diamonds child and cancer survivor, was a judge alongside his mother Alyssa, THON Executive Director Keegan Sobczak and



Kayla McCullough/Collegian

Rince na Leon dances at the THON Showcase in the Schwab Auditorium on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

Dunkin’ Representative Megan Million.

The night kicked off with Whiplash and its two families dancing to a hip-hop mix featuring hits by Jennifer Lopez and The Notorious B.I.G.

The group strutted on stage in

matching neon pink parachute pants, black tops and pink bandanas. The crowd cheered as they featured one dancer diving over another center stage.

The next group was The Coda Conduct, who sang Silk Sonic’s “Skate” a cappella. They performed in line formation, wearing matching light-wash jeans and black and white tops as the audience clapped along.

Orchesis Dance Company followed with a contemporary number to “Dream State” by Son Lux, which was meant to embody the adrenaline rush you feel walking into the Bryce Jordan Center at THON.

The number opened with the team hoisting one member up in a handstand split, which wowed the audience. The team transitioned between floor work and standing, with dancers moving in and out of the wings at every new verse.

Next, THON Head of Security Mikey Flynn took the stage with a simple request.

“This is one of my favorite songs...if you know it, sing along,” Flynn told the audience. He strummed the opening chords of

“Dancing in the Dark” by Bruce Springsteen.

Then, the Sign Language Organization paid tribute to Teen Beach Movie with a performance of “Can’t Stop Singing” from the soundtrack.

The group used a ukulele, rainbow umbrellas and a fake water curtain like the scene from the movie.

I Alley followed with a mashup of Bastille’s “Pompeii” and OneRepublic’s “I Lived.” The group played the keyboard, two guitars and used a wooden stool as a drum, putting their own folk twist on the pop ballads.

The last group before the intermission was JaDhoom, Penn State’s South Asian Co-Ed Fusion Dance Team. They danced to a fast-paced medley of Bollywood remixes, transitioning between high-energy footwork and precise motions.

During the 15-minute intermission, the audience had a chance to compete for extra money to go toward the fundraising goal of the THON organization of their choice with a raffle and a trivia game.

Riley Wolf said her friend in

Whiplash convinced her to attend the showcase.

“It was a great show,” Wolf, a second-year studying business, said. “I came last year, too, and it was good both times.”

When the intermission concluded, Penn State’s all-male a cappella group, The Statesmen, sang “It’s Gonna Be Me” by \*NSYNC, followed by Lyrical Line Dance Company dancing to “I Am Here” by P!nk, dedicated to its three THON kids.

Next, Natalie McMahon sang “Ho Hey” by the Lumineers while playing her guitar.

Rince na Leon followed, dancing to a medley of Justin Bieber songs. The audience roared with applause after the group concluded with Bieber’s hit “Baby.”

Another soloist, Zack Yaros, took the stage next. The member of the special-interest THON organization Hershey Kisses, sang one of their THON children’s favorite songs, “Here Comes The Sun” by The Beatles.

Next was Urban Dance Troupe with a Bruno Mars mashup in baseball jerseys and black bottoms.

The final group to perform was The Singing Lions, singing “Don’t Give Up On Me” by Andy Grammer with excerpts from “Dancing in the Sky” by Dani and Lizzie and “Over the Rainbow” by Judy Garland.

After group performances, Abrams presented his gymnastics skills with a floor routine set to “Footloose” by Kenny Loggins.

Attendee Magill Williams said she feels special working on public relations for THON and connecting local media to events throughout the semester.

“I get to see so many stories being shared and the THON mission being spread,” Williams, a fourth-year studying photojournalism, said.

“It’s thousands of student volunteers. So many students dedicating their time to this cause is amazing.”

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## Students react to Starbucks policy

By Jonathon Chiu  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Students who frequent the Starbucks on College Avenue to catch up with a friend or study will now have to make a purchase the next time they visit or otherwise be asked to leave.

Starbucks plans to get rid of its open-door policy that allowed anyone to stay within Starbucks locations without needing to purchase any items, according to the Associated Press.

Jack Brenner said he understands the policy change and that the open-door policy may have been a drain on the company’s finances.

“Personally, just standing on a business aspect, I get where they’re coming from,” Brenner, a third-year studying mechanical engineering, said. “There is a loss of sales for people that are just sitting there and not buying anything.”

On the other hand, Julia Salinas goes to Starbucks a few times a week and said students who enjoy studying in Starbucks shouldn’t have to do so by being paying customers.

“A lot of people like to study in cafes ... I don’t think they should be forced to purchase something just because they want a space to work in,” Salinas, a third-year studying criminology, said. “A lot of times it’s more convenient to study there than coming all the way to campus just so you don’t have to spend money to go somewhere to study.”

Maddy Kinevy, who likes to go to Starbucks once or twice a week, doesn’t entirely agree with the change.

However, Kinevy, a fourth-year studying aerospace engineering, said she understands that Starbucks is able to make its own decisions regarding how it operates.

“I think Starbucks is a very rich corporation and I don’t know if it’s completely fair for them to

demand that people come in and buy things,” Kinevy said. “I guess that’s their choice because it’s their company, so I respect their right to make that choice.”

Ashlyn Boehr said she can see why students would be frustrated by the policy change, even if she herself understands why Starbucks did it.

“I feel like it’s kind of fair. Whenever I’m visiting a coffee shop to study, I always get a small coffee because it just makes sense to me,” Boehr, a third-year studying biobehavioral health, said. “I can also understand some frustration because most people live in apartment

complexes and they need to get away from their neighbors, and the closest thing is a coffee shop.”

Tarin Johnson said he thinks the new policy may cause students to seek out other locations.

“If people were using it

to just go and hang out and do their work without buying anything, I can see why that would be a problem,” Johnson, a third-year studying political science, said.

“I don’t think it would be a huge impact because there’s other places you can go. I don’t feel like it’d be the end-all, be-all of those students.”

Similarly, Robert Ruhl said he understands why students who enjoy Starbucks may try to visit similar locations to study.

“If you like to go to a coffee shop, hang out and do work, and they’re definitely not letting you do it, I’d definitely find a different one,” Ruhl, a third-year studying electrical engineering, said. “If you like that environment, you wanna find a similar one.”

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## MLK Day of Service

### Students uplift community through volunteering

By Nandini Sanghvi  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Students gathered Monday morning at the HUB-Robeson Center to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through a day of service organized by the MLK Jr. Commemoration Student Committee.

Student volunteers gave back to the local community by contributing to food banks, environmental cleanup efforts and educational outreach programs.

Students checked in at Alumni Hall for breakfast before the service projects began. From mothers in Ghana to children in local State College hospitals, this year’s day of service reached a substantial demographic, according to co-director of the event Brooklyn Jones.

Organizations students worked with included the Youth Service Bureau, The Jared Box Project, the Jana Marie Foundation, Circle K x Project Linus and the Institute for Promoting Health, Education and Technology.

At 9 a.m., Day of Service Co-directors Mustapha Salau and Brooklyn Jones stepped on stage for a welcome message and played a video about the life and legacy of King. The chair of the Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest then announced the competition winners who will be performing at the Poetry, Prose and Performance Tribute Wednesday.

After speeches from Executive Co-directors Claire Klaye and Sydney Crews, students were asked to disperse to their assigned volunteer groups, each of which completed different activities.

About 75 volunteers worked with The Jared Box Project to make activity kits for hospitalized children. Filled with items such as toys, books and snacks, the kits were assigned to specific hospitals including the Mount Nittany Health Center.

Established in honor of Jared McMullen, who was diagnosed with a critical brainstem tumor



Stella John/Collegian

Sydney Crews addresses student volunteers before they start their service activities in the HUB-Robeson Center on Monday, Jan. 20.

in 1999, the Jared Box Project aims to “put smiles on the faces of kids in hospitals,” according to Communication and Outreach Coordinator Alissa Mall.

The first Vice President of the Penn State Student Black Caucus Bryana McClinton highlighted the unifying power of coming together to volunteer on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

“I think it extends our community as humans by showing that in our dark world, there are still caring people,” McClinton, a fourth-year student studying criminology, said. “Ultimately it’s people for people.”

Working with youth to promote mental wellbeing, the Jana Marie Foundation works with students to make kits to be distributed to schools in and around Centre County.

Students working with the Jana Marie Foundation packed mental health awareness kits filled with cards, wikki stixs, sensory sands and other fidget toys for students at schools.

Meanwhile, volunteers working with Circle K x Project Linus created handmade blankets for hospitalized children at local hospitals. Students reflected on the profound impact such community service can have for not just

people in need but also the volunteers themselves.

“MLK Day brings together a lot of cultural support and unity,” David Lyons, a second-year studying cybersecurity analytics and operations, said. “I think that the idea that we’re all doing this for a good cause uplifts the community. The direct impact is a lot more effective than we realize.”

Students reconvened at Alumni Hall at 11 a.m. for “lunch and reflections.” After a short break, Salau introduced the events planned for the remainder of MLK Week.

The event ended with the commemoration committee announcing the winners of a raffle conducted earlier.

Jones reflected on the success of the event, noting that it had attracted twice the number of volunteers compared to last year.

“We had about 550 students this year despite it being such a cold day,” Jones, a fourth-year studying criminology and psychology, said. “The fact that students are willing to do service is a prime example of them being able to show up for what they believe in.”

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# ‘Striving for the top’

*UPUA leaders share goals for spring semester*

**Tyler Nolt**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

As the Penn State community enters into the second half of the school year, the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) is looking back at a successful fall semester.

According to UPUA President Zion Sykes, last semester’s focus was on making UPUA more inclusive of other organizations.

“The main goals were to shift what the UPUA has been in the past, in the sense that we’ve been doing a lot more collaborations,” Sykes, a fourth-year studying global and international studies and political science, said. “I feel like UPUA in the past was a bit more internal ... We definitely have been making changes over the years to make it more inclusive of other organizations.”

This semester, Sykes said leadership is building upon their past goals and that UPUA wants to maintain the level of excellence it’s established.

“(Our) overarching goal is just striving for the top, not letting anything falter when we’ve made such great progress,” Sykes said.

Furthermore, Vice President Rasha Elwakil said UPUA plans to uphold its level of excellence by making sure that they’re continuing to better represent the Penn State community.

“The main UPUA goals that we



Kate Hildebrand/Collegian

**Members of the Penn State University Park Association** march during the Homecoming Parade on Friday, Sept. 26, 2024 in State College, Pa.

have really been delving into, and will continue to ... is ensuring that our representatives are showing up to the events of the communities that they are representing,” Elwakil, a third-year studying geography, said. “We don’t even have to ask twice for people to go to these events ... which we think is very important because how are you supposed to advocate for issues that you don’t even know are there?”

Fletcher Port, the speaker of the assembly, resonated with this goal, having represented student body populations in the

thousands ever since secondary school.

“This is my 10th year doing student government. I’ve done it ever since sixth grade,” Port, a third-year studying mechanical engineering, said. “It’s put me in places where I could meet people and hear about other stories that were just so incredibly interesting.”

However, due to the structure of UPUA — similar to the U.S. government — not every goal for the semester comes from those in the highest leadership positions. Each of the five committees in

the Legislative Branch will have their own focuses. The committees include Student Life, Campus Operations, Government and Community Relations, Justice and Equity and Academic Affairs.

“Our members are required to sit on two of those committees ... It’s mostly because of the fact that everybody’s passions are going to be a little bit different,” Port said.

Elwakil gave her insight into what some of these committees were thinking and what the student body can expect from them this semester. “Campus Operations is really trying to take a

sustainability lens, while also focusing on how can we fix current infrastructure and ensure that it is accessible,” Elwakil said.

This includes working with Centre Area Transportation Authority and making sure the bus system is suitable for the number of students who utilize them.

“The Committee of Governmental and Community Relations really last semester focused on increasing awareness and education around the election period and so now they’re really striving to continue that education and awareness,” Elwakil said. “We saw such a great turnout last semester, people showing up to these events and really taking an interest in that.”

Elwakil shared that the Committee on Academic Affairs was interested in the university’s 19-credit surcharge and advocating on behalf of students who it may disproportionately impact, such as teaching assistants.

Despite the numerous focuses of UPUA, its leadership is confident they’re going to have a successful semester.

“Although there might be different goals, like between different people in the different branches, I’d say that overall, we work together very well, and we try to advance each other’s goals,” Sykes said.

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## Liberal Arts Building opens at Penn State

**Alli Satterfield**  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State recently unveiled its first new liberal arts building in over 50 years: The Susan Welch Liberal Arts Building.

The building is named after Susan Welch, the dean of Penn State’s College of the Liberal Arts from 1991-2019. The 143,000 square foot building “is an innovative hub of social science teaching, research and outreach activity,” according to the college’s website.

The new facility houses labs, classrooms, offices and workspaces for the departments of anthropology, political science, public policy, sociology and criminology.

The untouched lab space is one

of the best parts of having a new building for Anne Pisor, an assistant professor in Penn State’s anthropology department.

“It’s really good,” Pisor said. “When the college says that this is our first new building in 50 years, I think that underscores that it was time for a change.”

Being housed in the Carpenter Building until this November was less than ideal for Pisor, a studying anthropologist. The new building allows for scholars to continue their work in newly furnished environments, while also encouraging students to study in new, collaborative areas.

From couches on the entry level to seats with a PSU view upstairs, the Welch Building offers students a variety of places to get work done.

Mason Fetrow isn’t a liberal

arts student, but stumbled into the new building looking for a quiet place to study. He enjoyed the quiet spaces and generous seating options that are available in the new building.

“The other buildings around here don’t really have places to sit,” Fetrow, a second-year studying computer science, said. “I think when they built this new building, they had that in mind. That’s why I like hanging out here.”

Many students, like Fetrow, initially came across the building by accident. This includes Nicole Grebe, who came across it while searching for a study space.

In addition to its seating, Grebe, a third-year studying nutrition sciences, liked the aesthetic of the building.

“It seems very nice,” Grebe



Samantha DiCamillo/Collegian

**The new Susan Welch Liberal Arts Building** is covered with snow on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

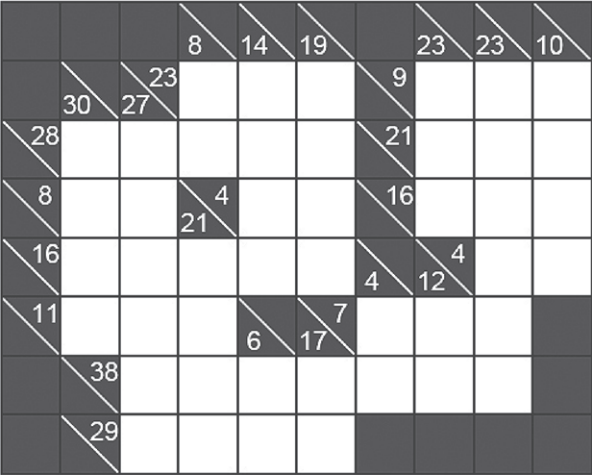
said. “I like the modern aspect of it.”

The first floor of the building will also house the Matson Museum of Anthropology. Reopening in its new location in 2025,

the museum aims to serve the broader global and Penn State communities.

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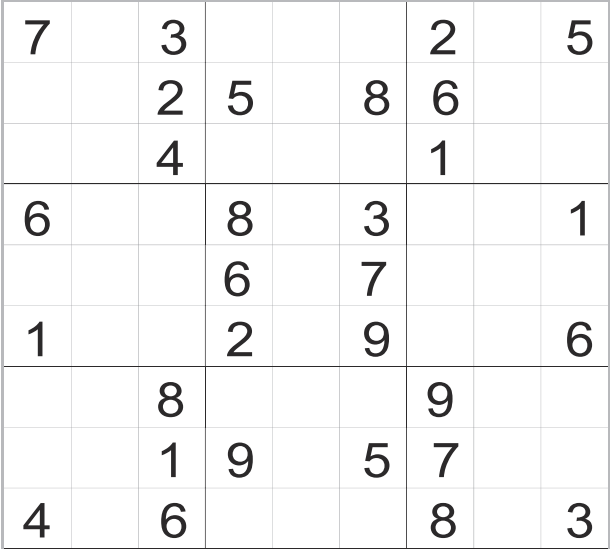
### Kakuro



The rules are easy:  
A number above the diagonal line in a black square is the sum of the white squares to the right of it.  
A number below the diagonal line is the sum of the white squares in the sequence below it.  
You may only use the digits 1 to 9, and a digit can only be used once in any sequence.

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### Sudoku



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### Word Search Sherlock Holmes

C U F M R S H U D S O N U U A V U A  
N O I T C I F V I C T O R I A N Z A  
U R S M O P S K T W L P L E B Q D V  
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Baker Street  
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Detective  
Disguise  
Dr Watson  
Elementary  
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Fiction  
Genius  
Hansom Cab

Holmes  
Inquest  
Inspector  
Logical  
London  
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Scotland Yard  
Sherlock  
Tall  
Victorian  
Violin

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#### The Center for Arts & Crafts

### Spring Art Classes

Classes start the week of  
**January 27- Drawing, Colored Pencils, Junk Journaling, workshops, and more!**

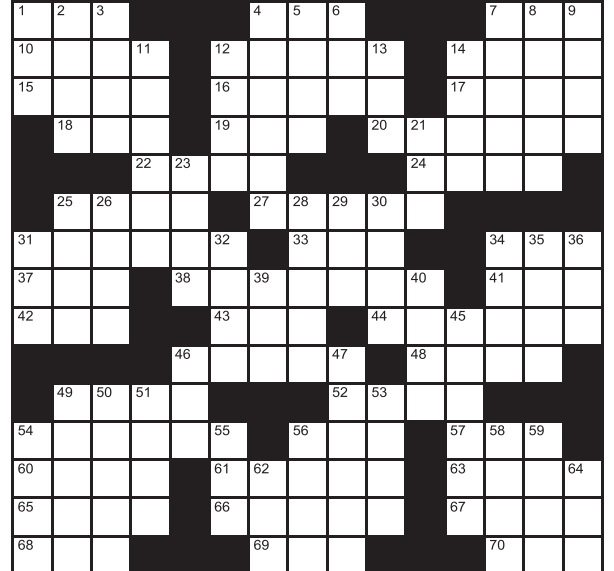


**Register in  
3 Ritenour  
Building**



Must have valid Penn State ID to register

### Crossword



#### Across

1 \_\_\_\_ loss for words  
4 Amigo  
7 On the \_\_\_\_  
(fleeing)  
10 Burial chamber  
12 Hits the send  
button  
14 Earned  
15 Marcel Marceau,  
for one  
16 Stan’s partner in  
comedy  
17 Mrs. Peel of “The  
Avengers”  
18 Parking place  
19 Pub offering  
20 Bowling target  
22 Where the Vatican  
is  
24 Get rid of  
25 Rush job notation  
27 Commotions  
31 Legendary giant  
lumberjack  
33 Captain’s journal  
34 Figured out  
37 401(k) alternative  
38 Guides  
41 Astonish  
42 Joke  
43 Prefix with angle  
44 Young raptor

#### Down

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goods  
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9 Nasty  
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46 Daisylike bloom  
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MY VIEW | TERESA PHELAN

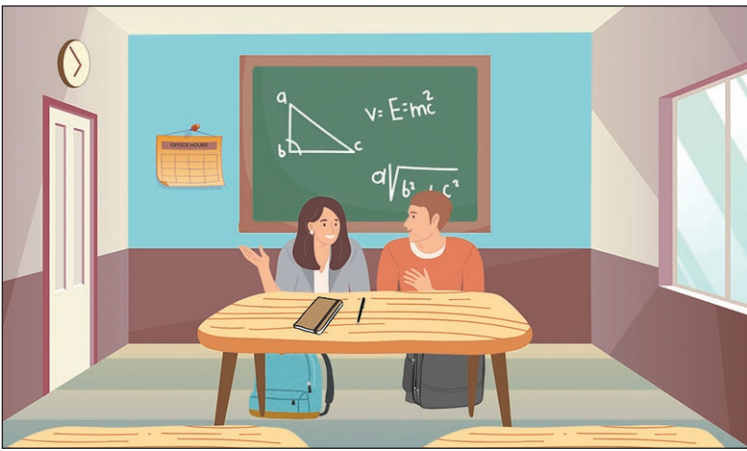
## Find ‘class only’ friends

In life, there are all sorts of friends. Best friends, work friends, frenemies, and possibly the most important, class friends. We all have them — the person we sat next to during the first week who became our built-in lecture buddy. Maybe this is someone you’ve never met, or a familiar face who has seemed to pop up in your major classes throughout the years.



Phelan

No matter the prior relationship, this person is critical in getting the most out of the class and is the greatest resource for success. Many factors go into being a productive, successful student, and having a “class only” friend is as important as office hours. They don’t have to be your very best friend in the world, but not having one will make things a lot harder come test



Graphic by Rohan Karunakaran

**Two students** sit in the back of the classroom and chat, becoming “class only” friends for their lecture.

time. Probably the most obvious reason for making class friends is hidden in the fact they’ll be your greatest resource when you’re not even in class. I’m not advocating for you to skip class, but it’s inevitable, and when the day does come, you’ll be able to ask your new-found friend for all the notes and material you missed. This

shouldn’t be a system that’s abused, but it’s a tried and true backup plan. Be prepared for a bunch of scribbles on paper, or a couple of bullet points on a Google Doc — not everyone’s notes can sum up the day’s lesson, but it’s definitely a starting point when trying to supplement your notes. This system goes both ways

— both parties need to be willing to share notes and hold each other responsible for attending class. Even in classes where the professor posts their lectures on Canvas, they may mention things in class that are crucial but nowhere to be found online. This is where a “class only” friend comes in handy; they’re your inside scoop. By week three or four of the semester, start thinking about expanding the class friend into a group of four or five. At this point, tests and projects will have started, and you’ve created a perfect study group. Use this to your advantage — meet up to study, work, talk or do whatever is necessary to get the most out of the time spent together. Whether it be a group project or an unfortunate sick day, there’s no harm in having a small group that can be of help at the press of a button. Remember earlier when I said they don’t need to be your best friend? Well, I lied... sorta.

Of course, at the beginning of the semester, this person is a stranger, so things may be awkward at first. But don’t count out a real friendship just because they started as a class friend. You might see them again in other classes, or they might become a future roommate. Either way, it’s important to nurture the friendship, even if they were deemed as a class friend only. I’ve bonded with my class friends over annoying tests and the weather being too cold, and sometimes they’re super receptive and others are just there to share notes, all of which are OK. It’s not too late to introduce yourself and start establishing a network of “class only” friends.

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Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | EMILY GOLDEN

## A college senior’s last firsts

Although this year has come with many final firsts, the last drive up from winter break made it all feel real — my last semester at Penn State. I’m graduating in four months, and I can’t help but think back to freshman year me celebrating all her firsts. First football game, first spring break, first day of classes and even my first dining hall meal. Maybe not all of those are meant to be celebrated, though. As cliché as it is, everyone always told me how time would fly and to just live in the moment. They told me to appreciate all the memories I made, the friends I met and the classes I learned in. I honestly never believed it until the time has passed and all the years of anticipation are finally here. Did I live in the moment? I



Golden

tried my best to. But did time fly? Faster than I ever could’ve imagined. College is such a unique and pivotal time, and although it includes some not-so-happy firsts, the experience is about the journey and not just the destination. It’s bittersweet. A place I’ve spent the majority of the last four years turns into just a memory in 15 short weeks. I honestly never thought I would get here, however, not in a depressing way — in the way that freshman year me wouldn’t believe how fast the past few years have gone. This school and community have given me so much and taught me so much about myself. From smaller-scale firsts like my first time trying my favorite coffee shop or my

first time taking the bus, to landmark firsts like finishing my first semester or writing my first Collegian article. It’s funny to reminisce on how minuscule these firsts felt in the moment. Things I’d never imagined would still occupy my brain four years later are moments I’ll remember forever. Not all of these firsts were necessarily good or happy, however, they’ve undoubtedly shaped me into who I am today. My first time not doing great on an exam pushed me to study even harder for the next one. My first time getting sick without my mom around showed me how independent I can be. My first time experiencing anxiety taught me how to be resilient. Each year has brought on

new firsts that are starting to slowly become lasts. Time is becoming our first indicator that college really is almost over. It has caused me to reflect on recent years and look into my future, wondering about what post-grad life has in store for me. My first job. My first real apartment. My first post-grad friend. My first time in a new city. I am by no means wishing time away, however, I know that so many firsts have yet to come. Yes, this is my first column of the semester. But yes, it’s also my last first column. There are so many emotions right now. The biggest one — nostalgia. When I look back on my college experience, I won’t harp on the lasts but will cherish the precious firsts.

**Emily Golden** is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a fourth year studying digital and print journalism with minors in Hebrew and global and international studies.

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# Everybody loves Natisha'

*Former Penn State assistant brings big personality to Lady Lions, WNBA*

By Noah Aberegg  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Natisha Hiedeman has experienced basketball in many environments throughout her life, including at Marquette, on the Connecticut Sun and the Minnesota Lynx.

However, Hiedeman's greatest moments have come from her time coaching in Happy Valley due to her long-lasting relationship with coach Carolyn Kieger.

"My home is going to be wherever Coach Kiegs is at," Hiedeman said. "She gave me my first opportunity to be a coach, and she coached me."

Before Kieger, Hiedeman played basketball at Green Bay Southwest High School, where she also was a four-time school record holder in track and field. Despite her track and field success, Hiedeman committed to play basketball at Marquette, where she spent the next four years under Kieger's tutelage en route to becoming a Golden Eagles legend.

"She played for me, obviously, for four years at Marquette, so you know that her and I are very close. We always have been," Kieger said. "I really trust her work ethic, I trust her communication skills and what she has to inspire ... She's always been someone who just ignites a room."

Four years later, Hiedeman emerged from Marquette ranked third in points, seventh in assists and fourth in steals in school history.

"We enjoyed watching T as a collegiate player and believed she had a future as a pro because she played the game with great energy and passion and exuded a toughness that defines good players," Minnesota Lynx head coach Cheryl Reeve said.

With praise in college from WNBA coaches, Hiedeman declared for the 2019 WNBA Draft, where she was selected 18th overall by the Sun — a team she spent five years on, eventually becoming a starter.

Through her first four seasons in Connecticut, Hiedeman saw continued improvement until her breakout in Year 4, where she averaged a career-high 9.1 points in 31 starts.

Following her fourth season with the Sun, Hiedeman was reunited with Kieger at Penn State,



Courtesy of Minnesota Lynx

**Penn State women's basketball assistant coach and Minnesota Lynx guard Natisha Hiedeman sits on the bench in the Target Center.**

where she was brought on as the director of player development.

"I feel like I always wanted to be a coach, like even when I was younger, growing up, I was always trying to make up plays and draw plays," Hiedeman said. "So when (Kieger) gave me the opportunity to come coach with her — me and her have a really good relationship — I thought it would be a good opportunity for me to experience."

With the Lady Lions, the former Marquette star helped run drills like she was used to in her college and professional experience, but also saw a different side of coaching she took for granted as a player.

"As a coach, you're doing a lot more stuff I never even knew coaches were doing, like watching film, scouting, planning practices, being in the office," Hiedeman said. "And then you have 15 players and you're taking care of all of them too at the same time."

For Hiedeman, taking care of those 15 players was one of the most memorable parts of her coaching experience.

"I really value relationships," Hiedeman said. "Just to be able to create the relationships I've created is really important to me. I don't want to just coach you because I'm there at this time. I built those relationships to keep forever."

While serving as the director of player development, Hiedeman didn't just spend time with the Lady Lions but was still an active

WNBA player coming off her best season yet.

"Thankfully, (Kieger) let me practice with the team, so I was practicing with the team a lot. And then, aside from that, she was also taking the time to work me out as well, either after practices, during practices or before practices," Hiedeman said. "And honestly, pretty much the whole staff respected that I was still an athlete, so they're all taking a lot of time out of their day as well to help me, whether that was putting me through drills, rebounding or whatever."

Just weeks before joining the Penn State staff, Hiedeman helped lead the Sun to their fourth WNBA Championship appearance. While the team ultimately fell short, Hiedeman had her best season as a pro, averaging 9.1 points, 3.3 assists and 1.2 steals per game, which were all career highs.

"Everybody loves Natisha, everybody has great relationships with Natisha," Kieger said. "She is a people-oriented person, and she just loves genuine relationships, and that's something that's infectious and you want to be around, so I knew that was going to be really important for us."

In Hiedeman's first season in Happy Valley, the blue and white went 14-17 — its best record in five years.

After spending her offseason with Penn State, Hiedeman returned to Connecticut, where she started in all 40 games for the first time in her career.

"It's challenging at times, just the wave of emotions that you can feel from playing basketball," Hiedeman said. "Me being a current player, I feel like I was still feeling a lot of those things."

In 2023, Hiedeman returned to Happy Valley, this time as an

assistant coach, continuing to help Lady Lions basketball while growing herself as a professional.

"A lot of energy was poured into me, a lot of support," Hiedeman said. "I think the excitement of just having me around really made the game fun for me. Basketball is my job now, so being able to kind of take a step back from playing and help others in a different way, I think, definitely just helped my career."

In her second and final season with the blue and white, Hiedeman took what she learned from her first year coaching to become much more of a mentor for the Lady Lions, both the young freshmen and older veterans.

"Coming from a guard standpoint, being able to pick her brain a lot throughout the season, whether it be during games or practices, translates from what she's saying to us and having it translate onto the court," former Lady Lion Ashley Owusu, the 33rd pick in the 2024 WNBA draft, said. "Just being able to talk to her, to lean on her and just be able to hit her brain and ask her questions was very important."

Even though she was just another member of the coaching staff, Hiedeman stood out above many others as a helping hand who was always there for the team.

"I know she reaches out to (guards) Moriah Murray and Jayla Oden to give them positive encouragement or tell them great job," Kieger said. "Our student-athletes absolutely look up to her and get inspired by her. They absolutely love her and the feedback that she provides them."

Down the stretch of the 2023-24 season, Hiedeman saw professional potential in graduate guards Owusu and Makenna Marisa and began coaching them

in a professional setting both on the court and in a WNBA career perspective.

"Just being able to talk to me about the process from the time you get drafted to the time you get to training camp. I spoke to her a lot about not just the WNBA itself, but also just basketball," Owusu said. "She talked to me about the process of 'you get drafted, and then you have to buy into training camp, the whole offseason, the whole preseason.'"

Following Penn State's best season since 2013-14, Hiedeman was traded to the Minnesota Lynx.

With two seasons of coaching under her belt, Hiedeman started seeing the court differently with the Lynx.

"Anytime a player gets to see the game through a coach's lens, it helps them view the game more clearly as a player," Reeve said. "(Natisha's) coaching opportunity was really valuable to her growth as a player."

While her season with the Lynx wasn't her best statistically, Hiedeman used that coach's lens to bring the team within five points of a WNBA title, falling short to the New York Liberty in five games.

"We have loved (Natisha) as a Lynx, as she adds such great energy with her consistent positive demeanor and her passion for competing with and for her Lynx teammates," Reeve said.

Just six years into the WNBA, Hiedeman will likely have several more years of professional play, both in the WNBA and overseas during the offseason. No matter where she plays, her time as a coach has provided her with insights she never would've gotten otherwise.

"I would say coaching helped me slow down the game, see and think from a different perspective, a different view," Hiedeman said. "So I would say that was probably the biggest takeaway, just really slowing down the game and understanding if this is happening, this happens, or if this happens, you need to do this."

Even though Hiedeman only spent two years in Happy Valley compared to many years in the WNBA and at Marquette, Penn State will always remain one of her closest connections.

"I'm still crazy connected to Penn State," Hiedeman said. "I'm definitely in contact with everyone and I gotta check up on my girls, make sure they're doing good in a good headspace, doing everything they need to be doing."

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## Buckeye down

*Strong team defense leads way to efficient offense, leads the Lady Lions to upset over No. 9 Ohio State*

By Sam Krasowitz  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State returned home to the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday following a trip to the West Coast that resulted in losses to two of the top teams in the country.

The Lady Lions gave up a combined 178 points in those two losses.

The script flipped for Carolyn Kieger's team Sunday, as it rode a strong defensive performance to upset No. 9 Ohio State, 62-59.

The blue and white won the rebounding battle 39-21 — an effort led by Gracie Merkle's 10 rebounds — closing defensive possessions without allowing second-chance opportunities.

"They're very aggressive on the offensive glass, and holding them to two offensive rebounds was phenomenal," Kieger said.

Penn State forced 13 turnovers, creating havoc in the halfcourt as well as with its full-court pressure implemented periodically throughout the game. Guards shined in that regard, with steals from Jayla Oden, Gabby Elliott and Talayah Walker.

Walker filled the stat sheet Sunday, adding six points on 60% shooting, five rebounds, two as-

sists and a block to her timely steal. The freshman guard gave insight into the team's defensive improvement.

"We needed to talk more. We told each other that we have to lock in and execute every possession, especially during last-minute plays," Walker said.

The defensive effort created offensive production for the Lady Lions, as they scored in important moments by running in transition and breaking Ohio State's full-court pressure.

The Lady Lions shot 48.1% from the field, with transition layups helping create 34 total points in the paint. They shot 46.7% from 3-point land as well behind Moriah Murray's bounce-back performance.

Murray shot 4-for-8 from deep — the most 3-pointers she's taken since Dec. 15 against Kansas. Kieger has regarded Murray as one of the best shooters in the Big Ten this season and wants Murray to continue to believe that as well.

"Hopefully it instilled a lot of confidence in her because no one in that locker room has lost faith in Moriah," Kieger said. "We know she's the best shooter in the big ten, and she brings so much else to our team

than her shooting ability."

Defense and efficient shooting from the entire team led the way to ending Penn State's seven-game losing streak and earning its first top-10 win since 2012.

The contest against Ohio State was the third top-10 matchup in seven days for the Lady Lions, which Kieger noted following the game.

"That's our third straight top-10 game in a week, and we felt like we were getting better every day over the past three weeks, so this one was coming," Kieger said.

Penn State will close out January with two more ranked matchups, starting on the road against No. 22 Michigan State on Wednesday.

The Lady Lions will have the



Esteban Marengo/Colegian

**Guard Gabby Elliott (0) laughs with her teammates and coaches during the singing of the alma mater after their game against Ohio State in the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025.**



# SPINNING SUCCESS

*Whirl Pong evolves from class project to student-run business*

By Emily Lin  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

What began as a fun idea at a Penn State tailgate has evolved into a thriving business. Dillon Fink is the creator of Whirl Pong — a reimagined version of cup pong with a spinning challenge that adds a new level of excitement to the classic game.

“It’s perfect for tailgates, parties and creating a fun atmosphere at any university where college students can enjoy playing,” Fink, a second-year studying mechanical engineering, said. Since the brand launched a year and a half ago, Whirl Pong has grown rapidly, forming partnerships with local businesses to bring the game to new audiences. One of its latest collaborations is with The Basement Nightspot in downtown State College, which hosts Whirl Pong tournaments where students can compete for cash prizes of \$200, exclusive lineup passes and more prizes.

“I’ve always wanted to be an entrepreneur,” Fink said. Fink’s entrepreneurial journey started long before Whirl Pong. At 14, he launched his first business, selling paracord bracelets on Etsy. Fink credits much of his inspiration to his father. Growing up, Fink watched his father navigate a career in e-commerce and Fortune 500 compa-



Courtesy of Dillon Fink

**Dillon Fink** stands in front of Old Main with a Whirl Pong set. Fink originated the concept in ENGR 310, an entrepreneurship class at Penn State.

nies like Procter & Gamble. But what left the biggest impression wasn’t his job title — it was the choices he made. “I know he sacrificed a lot in his professional career,” Fink said. “He turned down higher-paying jobs so he could spend more time with us. He showed me that success isn’t just about money — it’s about valuing what truly makes you happy.”

That philosophy stuck with Fink and became the foundation for how he approaches Whirl Pong — not as a quick cash grab, but as an experience designed to bring people together.

Fink said he first came up with the idea during his freshman year while tailgating at an event called Gameday Ventures. As he and his friends enjoyed playing cup pong, he noticed that many other students at nearby tailgates were glued to their phones, uninterested in traditional games.

“They didn’t look like they were having fun,” Fink said.

Determined to create a more engaging experience, he began researching ways to make tailgating games more interactive. The concept truly took shape when he enrolled in ENGR 310, an entrepreneurship class at Penn State. “The course encouraged us to pursue a business idea, so I used the class time and university funding to buy materials on Amazon, prototype different variations of the game and test them out at tailgates,” Fink said.

Through customer feedback and trial runs, Fink fine-tuned the concept, ultimately deciding to redesign the base of the model, shaping it into its final form.

But Whirl Pong wasn’t an overnight success. Like many entre-

preneurs, Fink started small, relying on support from those closest to him.

“My first customer was actually my grandma,” Fink said. “Every entrepreneur goes through that phase where you lean on family and friends, even if they don’t necessarily want your product. They’re just there to support you. I’ve always appreciated that.”

Beyond just being his first buyer, his grandmother also played a role in the business’s early logistics. With limited storage space, Fink had to get creative about where to keep his inventory.

“I like to joke that she’s my storage manager,” Fink said. “Because, for a few months, I had to store boxes in her basement.”

Despite moments of doubt and the challenge of balancing his mechanical engineering coursework with running a business, Fink never lost sight of his vision. He also credits his determination, confidence and the support of fellow entrepreneurs at Penn State for helping him push through.

“I know that if I surround myself with the right people, stay disciplined and stay confident, there’s no reason why I can’t succeed,” Fink said.

Sean Hartman was one of the first to join Fink’s team as Whirl

Pong’s videographer. “It’s focusing a lot on what’s trending on TikTok,” Hartman, a third-year studying photojournalism, said, emphasizing the importance of social media in their strategy.

The turning point came when Fink and Hartman decided to take a more hands-on approach to marketing. They set up a table outside Penn State’s Thomas Building, challenging students to play Whirl Pong for a chance to win money — all while capturing the action on video.

This simple yet engaging stunt not only generated fun content for TikTok, but also drew positive responses from students. For the first time, Fink saw Whirl Pong gaining real visibility on campus.

“It was so cool to see the amount of people that play and get their reactions,” Fink said. “I remember months later so many people would come up to me like, ‘oh my gosh, I saw you right in front of Thomas Building!’”

Fink has expanded his marketing strategy, running ads on Amazon and experimenting with digital marketing, which helped push sales forward.

Professor Frank Koe, who taught ENGR 310, recognized Fink’s passion and initiative.

“I think he’s exceptional, and I’m not just saying that,” Koe said. “Not many freshmen come into a 300-level class they’re not technically supposed to be in, but Dillon did. He was extremely attentive, followed the course closely and already had a natural entrepreneurial drive before he even walked through the door.”

Looking ahead, Fink said he envisions Whirl Pong expanding to SEC and Big Ten schools, securing college licensing deals and eventually reaching six figures in revenue. But he knows that entrepreneurship is all about taking it one step at a time.

For aspiring entrepreneurs looking to launch their own game, Fink’s advice is simple.

“Have fun and try new things,” Fink said. “If you have fun, that means that probably other people will have fun with it too. So you just got to be able to show that.”

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Courtesy of Dillon Fink

**Students** play Whirl Pong. The turntable slowly rotates the cups, making for a challenging spin on the classic game.

## The hottest hot chocolates

By Sienna Pinney  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Baby, it’s cold outside. With the snow falling and the ice humbling all of us on our walks to class, it’s finally hot chocolate season.

Whether you’re a fan of whipped cream and marshmallows or prefer your hot chocolate straight up, there are a lot of options to try in State College.

Here’s where I’d go to sip... and where I’d skip.

For the sake of fairness, these are all plain cups of hot chocolate, no frills. If you can’t get the basics down, why bother?

### Skip

Irving’s has a lot of good things to offer: bagels, smoothies, wraps, you name it. What it doesn’t have: good hot chocolate.

To put it lightly, Irving’s hot chocolate is the LaCroix of the hot chocolate universe. It’s more water than flavor. I’ve also never actually received a cup that was hot...

Starbucks is convenient, with locations across campus and downtown. What it isn’t: the best source of hot chocolate.

The recipe for a quality cup of hot chocolate doesn’t begin with a mass produced syrup. The syrupy taste and watery consistency doesn’t spark joy. However, it’s convenient.



Sienna Pinney/Collegian

**The Irving’s Sign** hangs outside the cafe on Monday, April 24, 2023.

Webster’s Bookstore Cafe has a lot of great qualities, but its cup of hot chocolate doesn’t appear on the list.

The best hot chocolate is creamy and rich, but Webster’s falls flat with a watery taste and syrupy sludge at the bottom of the cup.

There are too many good beverages in this world for you to waste your time on the bad ones. Skip the bad and head straight to the good.

I have written sonnets and odes to Panera, but unfortunately, the hot chocolate is just not it. It’s giving Swiss Miss. I’ll stick with the iced drinks, even if it means having freezing hands all winter.

### Sip

Duck Donuts is home to all things rich and decadent, including the hot chocolate. It’s thick, creamy and has just the right amount of chocolate.

If you’re not a fan of the sweeter hot chocolates, this may not be at the top of your list. However, it always comes at the perfect temperature, and I’ve never reached the bottom of the cup feeling sad.

Grab a doughnut and cup of liquid joy and enjoy.

Dunkin’ may not have the best doughnuts in town, but it does have my favorite cup of hot chocolate.

I know, I know. I said mass produced and syrupy when it was Starbucks’ turn. Dunkin’ has unlocked the secret and I don’t need to know what that is, because it’s delicious.

The hot chocolate is thick, rich and creamy. The first time I tried Irving’s hot chocolate, I was so disappointed I walked down the street to Dunkin’ to get the good stuff.

While most other Dunkin’ drinks taste slightly different on every visit, the hot chocolate is always consistent and delicious.

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Joe Klein/Collegian

**Groove band Ham On A Stick** performs during 100 Days Till Movin’ On on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

## ‘Bigger and better than ever’

*Movin’ On builds hype for spring concert*

By Claire Huss  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Movin’ On hosted its 100 Days Till Movin’ On 50 Spotlight Series event on the HUB-Robeson Center Monumental Stairs Wednesday afternoon.

In the past, Movin’ On has welcomed headlining artists such as Flo Milli, Sexy Red and Jack Harlow as well as student performers. This year marks Movin’ On’s 50th anniversary since its first festival in 1975.

The event at the HUB featured student performers, trivia about Movin’ On and members of the club running a table to provide more information about the festival.

Jonah Enoch, the director of events for Movin’ On, explained how they recruit both student and local bands for the festival.

“We reach out to a lot of different clubs with local bands, put out flyers, Instagram posts and talk to student fans,” Enoch, a third-year studying telecommunications, said.

Enoch added that to spread the word about Movin’ On, the organization hosts many events

throughout the year before the festival in May.

“This year we have the Spotlight Series in the HUB, acoustic road shows in the dining halls and Battle,” Enoch said.

Local band Ham On A Stick was the first performance at 100 Days to Movin’ On. The band featured three of its five members on guitar, bass and vocals to an audience of students. In its allotted time, the band performed three songs showcasing the range of its music.

Band member Jack Warner said the band is excited to perform at Movin’ On for the first time this year.

“This is our first Movin’ On,” Warner, a third-year studying agribusiness management, said. “It was fun performing for a crowd in the HUB today.”

Ham On A Stick formed last semester and has been taking advantage of the different opportunities Movin’ On provides to student performers throughout the year, Warner said.

“When you see our shows, they’re never gonna be the same. Everything is unique every time: different genres, songs — all to

create a unique experience,” Warner said.

In addition to the duets, soloists and bands that performed, Movin’ On members also promoted the Penn State Basic Needs Hub.

The Basic Needs Drive through Movin’ On accepts clothing, hygiene products, cleaning products and nonperishable goods. The drive began at 100 Days Till Movin’ On and will continue to accept donations through March 3.

Alexis Michels said although she is involved in many clubs at PSU, Movin’ On has quickly become her favorite.

“It’s incredible to have an opportunity to be a part of a club, make such good friends, then go meet The 502s,” Michels, a second-year studying secondary English education, said. “Interacting with people and seeing how things behind the scenes actually works is so awesome.”

As for the 50th year celebration of Movin’ On, Michels said she has high expectations.

“It’s gonna be bigger and better than ever,” Michels said. “Come to Movin’ On.”

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