



PennState Alumni Association Houston Chapter News

NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 18



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WELCOME!

Get excited! Your annual Penn State newsletter is here! Look inside for great reports on our activity last year as well as outlooks for the year ahead.
WE ARE!



2021-2022 CHAPTER BOARD

President: Matt Smiddy '10
 Vice President: Chad Washington '98
 Recording Secretary: Ralph Crivello '09
 AAC Chair: Gina Gisclair '05
 At-Large: Christine Flynn '98, Kevin Weaver '91, Lisa Kasianowitz '10, Maria Lamagna '13, Hannah Pohlmann '18, Jenna Thomas '15'

Monthly board meetings:

Zoom on the 2nd Monday of each month.

Anyone is welcome to attend! Email psachouston@gmail.com if you want to join!

ENGAGE WITH US!

E-mail: psachouston@gmail.com
 Website: www.PSUHouston.org
 Facebook: www.Facebook.com/PennStateHouston
 Twitter: @PSUHouston Instagram: @pennstatehoustonyp



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Houston Penn Staters,

It is hard to believe another year has passed, but as I look back at our Chapter's accomplishments, I am reminded of how much we accomplished. This was evident by our Chapter again receiving the Elm Level Chapter of Distinction in 2021, the highest level available.

As we emerged from the pandemic, it was great to safely transition back to in-person events, including our football watch parties at The Phoenix. Other activities included happy hours, brunches, community services events, and our first-ever Houston Big 10 Golf Tournament. With your help, through these events, we raised \$10,000 for the Greater Houston Chapter Greg Kelley Scholarship Fund and awarded scholarships to three Houston area Penn State students.

Looking ahead to the upcoming year, I am optimistic that our Chapter will continue to achieve great things. We plan to continue our traditional Football Watch Parties at the Phoenix Pub (1915 Westheimer Rd.) and hope you can share the gameday experience with us.

Finally, I thank the Penn State Houston Chapter Board Members, who have done a phenomenal job navigating the Chapter through another challenging year. We could not do it without them!

As my two-year term ends, I will not seek re-election as President but plan to remain on the Board as Treasurer. Chad Washington, our current Vice-President, has graciously volunteered to step up as President. I fully support his candidacy, which will be voted on at our annual Student Send-Off on Saturday, July 23.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to seeing you at future chapter events!

We Are!

Matt Smiddy '10, President

2021-2022 Treasurer's Report

With your help, we donated \$10,000 to the Greater Houston Chapter Greg Kelley Scholarship Fund over the past year! The return of football watch parties was the primary income driver and raised over \$4,300, reflecting proceeds from the half-time raffle and merchandise sales. Our annual golf tournament also brought in more than \$1,300, the most in recent history.

We had a new source of income in 2021 as the Penn State Texas license plate went on sale, generating \$3,099. While we have not recouped the initial deposit, we are on our way to doing so. Help us achieve this break-even threshold in 2022 by ordering yours starting at just \$35 per year here: <https://www.myplates.com/design/background/passenger/penn-state-university>.

For the 2021 – 2022 fiscal year, we had 116 members, which was more than last year's 87 members, but well below historic highs in recent years. These memberships and associated donations totaled over \$3,500.

As our local memberships are going away, we will rely even more heavily on donations to fund future scholarship contributions. You can donate at any event via check or online. More information on the scholarship and how to donate can be found here: <http://www.psuhouston.org/scholarship.html>.

2022 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROFILES



Brianna Nicole Butler Scholarship Profile

Penn State Houston is proud to feature two recipients of our scholarship program. Please read below and get to know them!

Q: Tell us something unique about yourself.

I really love to write, whether it be fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. It is my own personal therapy.

Q: Why did you decide to undertake your major at Penn State?

I decided to major in veterinary and biomedical science at Penn State because I have always wanted to work with animals and learn about medicine and science. Penn State has a good undergraduate veterinary program that offers many animal experiences and opportunities. I also have a wonderful advisor who has been helpful in working through the VBSC major/degree.

Q: Why did you choose Penn State?

I originally wanted to go to Penn State to play volleyball in middle school, as I liked the program. I decided not to do that but fell in love with the school and the atmosphere. Lucky for me, the school also has a VBSC degree path. Though perhaps I might've attended PSU regardless.

Q: Where is your favorite place on campus, and why?

My favorite place on campus is probably Redifer Commons, specifically City Grill or Fresco y Caliente. The food is great, especially burgers and burritos. (Shoutout to Mrs. Jen for memorizing my burrito bowl order – I love that woman).

Q: Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

Ten years from now, I will be a wee thirty, hopefully, fresh out of vet school and likely in a ton of debt, but happy, working at an animal hospital or clinic and learning, growing, and happy.

Q: What is your favorite ice cream flavor from the Penn State creamery? If you do not go there, then let us know your favorite restaurant in Happy Valley to watch the Penn State football games!

I don't go to the creamery nearly as much as I should, but I will try to do better. I haven't found a favorite restaurant to watch the game, mainly because we pile into a friend's apartment and watch the game there. We do make food, though. Does Seth's apartment qualify? If it does, Seth's apartment is my favorite place to watch Penn State football games.

Maria Slater

Scholarship Profile



Q: Tell us something unique about yourself.

I am a co-author of a children's book titled Triple T: A Pet Love Story. My mother, Benita Slater, and I are both authors of a children's book about a little girl and her pet betta fish. The book is available for everyone through the website I created at www.beescreativity.com. I am incredibly grateful that I was able to be a co-author of a very colorful and engaging children's book.

Q: Why did you decide to undertake your major at Penn State?

From middle school until college, I wanted to be a Civil Engineer. During this time, I took elective engineering classes because I loved the creative and technological projects. After going to PSU Beaver for a visit, I saw how intense and time-consuming the engineering courses were. As an aspiring college athlete, I knew this schedule would be overwhelming. I changed my major to Information Sciences and Technology (IST) because it combines my passions for technology and creativity.

Q: Why did you choose Penn State?

I chose PSU to experience something different than my hometown, Houston, TX. I knew PSU would allow me to make a name for myself in a different environment. I felt like PSU Beaver was the perfect campus. I also loved the class sizes and the networking opportunities.

Q: Where is your favorite place on campus, and why?

My favorite place at PSU Beaver was the Student Affairs and Engagement Office. I was able to serve the campus, and my co-workers were the most supportive group of people on campus. The office also helped the entire campus with events, poster printing, student life assistance, and more! The staff were always willing to go above and beyond for their students. It was a great environment; they helped my campus experience be fun and engaging.

My favorite place at PSU UP would have to be Rec Hall. I always loved how engaging the crowd was, specifically at the volleyball games. Each play, the crowd would yell out what the players were doing. Hearing "P - S - U" or "Let's Go State" at those games showed how excited everyone was. I loved watching the athletes play their hearts out and dominate teams. The infectious energy was all over the court, sidelines, bands, mascot, "wRECKingCrew," and all the fans.

Q: Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

Career-wise, I see myself becoming an IT Manager or a Business Analyst. Both have been my dream jobs ever since switching my major to IST. Right now, I am working at Lockheed Martin as a Full Stack Performance Engineer, and with some diligence, I will be able to transition to my dream job.

Ten years from now, I hope to be married with children. I also want to travel, cook, and bake often. I know that challenges will come along the way, but as long as I stay optimistic and connected with my loving family, I can achieve anything.

Q: What is your favorite ice cream flavor from the Penn State creamery? If you do not go there, then let us know your favorite restaurant in Happy Valley to watch the Penn State football games!

My favorite flavor is Monster Mash! It includes vanilla ice cream, cookie pieces, and a caramel swirl. I fell in love with it at first taste!

Changes to Local Membership Dues

Thank you for belonging to and participating in our Penn State Houston Chapter of the Penn State Alumni Association. We want to let you know about changes affecting membership in our Chapter.

Starting July 1, 2022, Penn State Alumni Association membership at the local (Houston) and main alumni association (university) levels combined membership. That means that our local chapter no longer collects annual dues. Instead, membership in the local Houston chapter is now included as part of your membership in the main Penn State Alumni Association.

This main association membership will not only provide you with access to local Houston Chapter events and benefits, but it will also provide access to any alumni events and benefits around the country hosted by a local alumni chapter or other PSU alumni organization. The hope is that this combined access will make it easier for you to connect with the Penn State community.

If you are a current member of the main Penn State Alumni Association (you currently receive The Penn Stater magazine, and an ID number is next to your name and address), you do not need to take any action.

If you are currently not a main Penn State Alumni Association member, there will be a 6-month complimentary membership period starting July 1 for those who sign up. After the 6-month free period, you can pay for an annual or a lifetime membership with the main Penn State Alumni Association. Otherwise, you will no longer receive the benefits. Note: the yearly membership cost will be half price on CYBER MONDAY in November, so mark your calendars and take advantage of the discount!

Benefits of the main Penn State Alumni Association membership include but are not limited to the following:

- Bi-monthly issues of the Penn Stater magazine
- The Football Letter, a report on each Nittany Lions game from the alumni perspective
- LionPerks, a members-only discount program for national and local businesses
- Exclusive Penn State resources online
- Access to local Chapter events at discounted prices

We encourage you to visit alumni.psu.edu/fullaccess for FAQs and learn more about how bringing together our local chapter and the main Alumni Association membership will benefit the Penn State family, especially here in Houston.

This combined membership model does not mean we do not want to hear from you! Please email us at psaahouston@gmail.com with any questions and/or to update your contact information.



Penn State Student Send-Off Picnic

Please join us for the annual family-friendly Penn State Student Send-Off Picnic on Saturday, July 23, 12 pm-3 pm at 439 Wycliffe Dr., Houston, TX 77079!

This is our opportunity to meet and celebrate with those students in our area leaving for Penn State in the Fall. Bring your swimsuits and towels.

This is a potluck event that requires RSVP at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050F45ACA92DA4FD0-pennstate>

First Annual Houston B1G Invitational Golf Tournament

This year's tournament mixed things up! We focused on changing things and setting our goals higher, which first included finding a new golf course. We visited Northgate Country Club, whose charges were less than we had paid at the Hermann Park municipal course. Unfortunately, all country clubs only schedule tournaments on Mondays. So, we picked President's Day.

We knew that even though it was a Monday holiday, many of our golfing alumni wouldn't be able to attend, so we contacted the Ohio State Alumni Association and offered a dual meet. They were pleasantly surprised and accepted. One thing led to another, and we invited more B1G schools. Penn State, Ohio State, Michigan State, and Illinois fielded the most prominent teams. We also had Iowa, Purdue, and Indiana players making it an actual B1G golf tournament.

We kept everyone involved and happy by giving equal value prizes to the teams that finished in positions 1,5,10, and 15. We had a "hole in one" hole; a "beat the pro hole" and school memorabilia tables with a silent auction. Since we were the host and bore the financial obligations, these items' revenue accrued to PSU. The other schools received the proceeds from the registrations and mulligans.

We received donations that covered the prizes, the hole-in-one fee, and a portion of the food costs. We made more than \$1,368 in profit for our efforts than last year.

After surveying the golfers and the BOD of the associations, the consensus was very positive. Having teams from so many schools was a big hit. The two "cons" were that the tournament was on a Monday, and the country club amenities, mostly the bar, were not open.

What's planned for next year? We're going to look at other venues and see if we can find one that accepts weekend tournaments and has the 19th hole open after the round. We'll also reach out to more B1G schools like Maryland, Rutgers, and Wisconsin. The goal will be to increase participation and money raised for all the schools.

We learned a lot this year and are confident that the Second Annual tournament will be bigger and better.



PSU IN THE COMMUNITY

Volunteer Events Recap

Each year, our alumni association has volunteer events to offer opportunities for members and their families to stay engaged and give back.

On Oct. 16, we volunteered at the Houston Food Bank. Volunteers spent the morning sifting through incoming donations and sorting them into specific donation categories. Volunteers learned that the food bank accepts much more than food – clothing, household items, personal care items, etc. The volunteer event was coordinated through the Houston Astros Foundation.

On April 9, we volunteer at Project C.U.R.E., whose mission is addressing the staggering shortage of medical resources worldwide. Activities could include sorting, packing, and warehousing medical supplies. Most of the supplies were going into pallets to be delivered to Ukrainians.



Young Professionals

The last year continued to present challenges, but we managed to find ways to stay connected! We had a fantastic turnout for our summer happy hour in August 2021 at Saint Arnold's Brewery, including all alumni with a large showing from the young professionals. Although we had no dedicated events in the fall, many alumni attended our watch parties at the Phoenix on Westheimer.

Hoping for a better 2022, we rang in the new year with bubbly brunch at a'Bouzy in January. As we aim to have our Thursday happy hours every other month, we kept with our brewery trend and hosted an April happy hour at Buffalo Bayou Brewing. In June, we checked out a new patio bar in the heights, Patterson Park, to meet some recent alumni.

We look forward to more events and gatherings this next year and welcome suggested activities. As several alumni board positions have become available, we encourage our young professionals to become more involved and consider running for a chair position!



Alumni Admissions

The 2021 alumni admissions college recruiting year was quiet for the local alumni. Most schools have reopened to in-person events, and a select few continued with virtual fairs handled by the Undergraduate Admissions Team. However, now that we have returned to in-person college fairs, our Houston Chapter Alumni Admissions Committee desperately needs more volunteers!

Based on the latest information received from UP, there were 846 applications from the Houston area, with 653 students offered admission to PSU. Sixty-eight have accepted their offers to attend Penn State this fall, which means there have been over 100 more applications and nearly as many offers as last year.

For those that are interested, each fall, the volunteers of the AAC attend Houston area college fairs to distribute material and help answer questions about our Alma Mater. The college fairs are typically held the first two weeks of October and one week in mid-November with events spread across the greater Houston area. Additionally, the AAC follows up with students offered admission through the LionsROAR (Reach Out And Recruit) program and hosts a summer send-off party in July (in conjunction with our annual picnic) for students heading to PSU.

The AAC is always looking for interested alumni who enjoy talking about the great things that Penn State offers. Training for recruiters is held annually each September, and a brief online course must be completed through the university.

If you are interested in becoming an AAC volunteer, email Gina Gisclair, Alumni Admissions Committee Chair, at stormpsu6@yahoo.com or contact one of the board members.

Penn State Football Preview

The Penn State football team enters the 2022 football season with many questions, but due to an incoming recruiting class that was ranked in the top five, the Nittany Lions feel optimistic that they can get back to being a Big Ten title contender this season.

Head coach James Franklin hopes the Penn State offense can click again, especially in the rushing game. PSU has a good stable of running backs returning, including Keyvone Lee and Devyn Ford. But incoming freshman Nick Singleton has all the buzz because he has been named the national high school player of the year. Kaytron Allen is another highly touted back that could contribute.

Quarterback Sean Clifford will be the offense's leader, although the sixth-year player has struggled with inconsistency and injury the last two years. But behind Clifford, Penn State added two five-star quarterbacks in Drew Allar and Beau Pribula. Also, Christian Vellieux is expected to get some snaps after a strong performance against Rutgers last year.

The wide receiver room is arguably the best in the nation, with Sugar Land native Parker Washington as one of the leaders in the room, while Brenton Strange is the top returning tight end.

The offensive line is probably the big question mark for PSU this season. Some returners and transfers hope to be a stronger line to open running holes and protect the quarterback.

On defense, the line looks in solid shape thanks to P.J. Mustipher returning from injury and Maryland transfer Chop Robertson expected to make an immediate impact.

The linebackers look solid, with senior Jonathan Sutherland moving from safety to linebacker, while Joey Porter Jr. looks to lead a talented secondary.

Jake Pinegar will take over place-kicking duties, while incoming freshman Alex Bacchetta is expected to compete for the punting job.

Penn State has another daunting schedule in 2022, opening on the road at Purdue in a Big Ten Conference game on Thursday night, Sept. 1. PSU will again face Auburn in non-conference play, this time down in Alabama. The Nittany Lions will play at Michigan this year but get Ohio State at home. Minnesota is the homecoming game, which will also be the Whiteout game.

To see a schedule of the Penn State Football schedule, visit:
<https://gopsusports.com/sports/football/schedule>.