

The Advance-Titan

INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH CAMPUSES

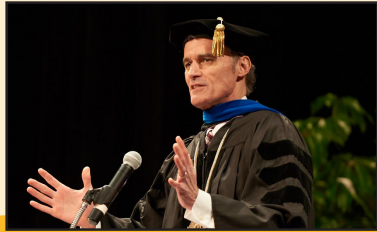
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What's
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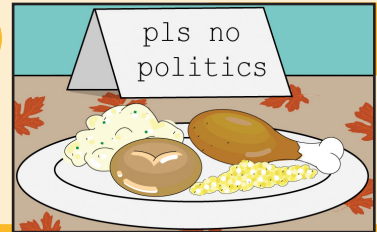
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Courtesy of Steve Frommell / UW O Athletics

UW Oshkosh cross country runner Amelia Lehman celebrates after qualifying for the NCAA Division III National Championship after finishing seventh at the Division III North Regional Championship hosted by Carleton College (Minnesota) Nov. 16 at the Cowling Arboretum.

Lehman qualifies for nationals

By Jacob Link
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UW Oshkosh cross country runner Amelia Lehman qualified for the NCAA Division III National Championship after finishing seventh at the Division III North Regional Championship hosted by Carleton College (Minnesota) Nov. 16 at the Cowling Arboretum.

Lehman finished the race in 22:15.2 to claim the final automatic qualifying spot in the regional competition. Lehman, the 2024 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference champion, will be making her second appearance at nationals after she placed 47th (22:49.9) in the championship meet in 2022.

Lehman, a senior, said that there is a lot that goes into preparing for the national championship race.

"I have been running easy on the off days and trying to stay strong on the hard days," Lehman said. "I am also eating the right amount of food and getting at least eight hours

each night. For preparing mentally, I am replaying that [WIAC] race in my head over and over to give me confidence. I am also journaling and giving myself affirmations saying that 'I got this' and 'I am powerful and strong.'"

Lehman said that when she runs, she is constantly thinking.

"When I am racing, I repeat my mantras over and over," Lehman said. "My mantras this time [at the WIAC meet] were 'this will be tough, but you are tougher,' 'my name is Amelia and I am fast,' 'I am the best one out here,' and 'no one can do what I can do.'"

Lehman said that it was an amazing feeling to win the WIAC title.

"I couldn't believe it," Lehman said. "It feels amazing because I can be a part of the UW Oshkosh legacy. There are so many people that were great runners that ran here, so to be a part of that is special."

Lehman said that she was happy to set a new personal record time of 21:18.2 at the conference meet.

"I knew we were running pretty fast from the get go," Lehman said. "I tried to stay calm and relaxed as much as possible because the more you focus on the time, I personally start to panic."

Aside from Lehman, the UW O women's cross country team placed seventh at the North Regional Championship with 186 points in the 6,000-meter race.

Senior Libby Geisness was named to the All-Region team after finishing 31st at the meet with a time of 23:04.6. Sophomore Gracie Buchinger placed 37th in 23:08.8 while junior Jamie Catania claimed 44th place with a time of 23:18. The final point scorer for the Titans was senior Cyna Madigan, who took 68th place with a time of 23:53.4.

Carleton College's Hannah Preisser won the North Regional with a time of 21:24.1 while UW-La Crosse won the team title after scoring 63 points.

On the men's side, UW O placed 12 at the regional with 349 points

in the 8,000-meter race. The Titans were led by junior Cameron Cullen, who placed 36th in 25:18.4. Junior John Thill claimed 60th place with a time of 25:49.3 while fellow junior Paul Proteau took 72nd place in 26:02.8. Junior Trent Chadwick finished 75th with a time of 26:07.3 while sophomore Jason Skinkis claimed 106th place with a time of 26:54.9.

Mohammed Bati of Augsburg University (Minnesota) won the individual crown in 24:20.6 while UW-La Crosse won the team title with 40 points.

Lehman will be the lone Titan competing in the NCAA Division III National Championship meet hosted by the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology Nov. 23 in Terre Haute, Indiana, with the race scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. at the La-Vern Gibson Championship Cross Country Course. At the same course earlier this year in the Pre-Nationals Meet Oct. 4, Lehman finished in 27th place in 22:12.

Man to stand trial for hit and run

By Jacob Link
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An Oshkosh man has been ordered to stand trial for an alleged hit and run that left one pedestrian dead Oct. 5 at the corner of New York Avenue and Goss Court.

Drake Dodge waived a preliminary hearing Nov. 14 and his arraignment is scheduled for Jan. 13, according to court records.

Dodge, 21, turned himself in to the Oshkosh Police Department at 11:20 a.m. Oct. 5, 9 hours after officers responded to a call of a pedestrian lying in the roadway who appeared to have been struck by a vehicle.

The criminal complaint said that Dodge had been hanging out with friends the day of the incident before returning home.

"He proceeded on New York Avenue and was between Elmwood Avenue and Algoma Boulevard when 'a dude came out' and 'he was just there' and the defendant hit him," the criminal complaint said. "The defendant stated that when he hit this person, he stopped, sat there for a second, and then drove around him and stopped near the stop sign at Algoma. The defendant advised he was freaking out and didn't know what to do. He advised he 'made the dumb decision to drive away instead of call.' The defendant was not able to answer the question why he drove off, but said he'd thought about it ever since it happened."

According to Local 5 WFRV-TV, the victim was identified as 29-year-old Ethan Luaders of Oshkosh, who left behind a five-year-old daughter.

OPD reported that Dodge's vehicle that struck the victim left the scene before police arrived and traveled westbound over the Congress Avenue Bridge. First responders administered life-saving measures to Luaders, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

According to the criminal complaint, Dodge said he had two beers and four mixed drinks between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m., but did not believe he was intoxicated at the time. OPD performed a breath test, but he registered .000. A blood draw was also performed, but no results are cited in the complaint and Dodge has yet to be charged with any alcohol-related offenses.

Dodge will return to court Jan. 13 for his arraignment in the case.

The Advance-Titan

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About the Newspaper
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Correction Policy
 The Advance-Titan is committed to correcting errors of fact that appear in print or online. Messages regarding errors can be emailed to atitan@uwosh.edu.

Advance-Titan
 The Advance-Titan is looking for writers, as well as photographers, web assistants, ad sales representatives and more. Gain skills that will help you land a job! Open to all majors and students on all three UW Oshkosh campuses. To apply or learn more, email atitan@uwosh.edu.



Courtesy of Joe Gow

Gow (right) and his wife celebrate their wedding at the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco in 2014. Gow was fired from UW-La Crosse in 2024 after it was discovered that he had been filming porn with his wife.

Camcorders, sexpos and porn

How Joe Gow went from UW-La Crosse chancellor to unemployed

By Anya Kelley
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Joe Gow and his wife Carmen Wilson walked into a Best Buy in La Crosse, Wisconsin. They were going to buy their first camcorder.

A clerk stood behind the help desk wearing a blue Best Buy polo. “We need a camcorder,” Gow said nonchalantly. The clerk turned to look at Wilson.

“Well, what are you going to shoot with this?” the clerk asked. “Sports?”

“Yeah, like that,” Wilson said.

Really, the couple was about to embark on a new passion project: producing porn together.

Now, Gow sits at his kitchen table. His hair is gray and perfectly coiffed and his expression holds a soft grin. He’s tall and thin, his cheekbones prominent. He is wearing an orange terry cloth top and a silver chain.

Wilson is his opposite. She is short with dark, wavy hair. It looks to be wet, like she’s just showered. She is wearing a maroon UWL crewneck. They are like the light and the dark, the yin and the yang.

“The decision to post some of our videos was mutual,” Gow said. “If one of us was uncomfortable doing this, we certainly wouldn’t have posted them. We just didn’t envision that we would be outed so suddenly and thoroughly by the UW System Board of Regents. Once they learned of the videos, they could have asked me to resign in a quiet fashion — but the Regents chose to make a big statement about the situation. This led to unprecedented media coverage throughout the country and around the world.”

Before the camcorder

In 2006, UWL was looking for a new chancellor. Douglas N. Hastad had resigned after 17 years to become the president of Carroll College in Waukesha.

A 47-year-old Gow had recently moved from Winona, Wisconsin to Lincoln, Nebraska to be the provost of Nebraska Wesleyan University.

“I went down there and walked into a world of a lot of turmoil,” Gow said.

Faculty were at odds, the president had suddenly retired and the university desperately needed an interim president. Even though he was the new guy in town, Gow stepped up and took the interim position.

“Usually, you don’t want to pursue the full-time position because that’s politically very complicated,” Gow said. “But then everybody would say to me ‘don’t you want to be president?’ ‘Oh come on!’ ‘We love you!’”

So he threw his name in the hat, but there was a stipulation. He was also going to open himself up for other jobs.

He was publicly rejected for that presidential position. The board said they wanted someone who had served as a president in the past. The silver lining was that UWL then nominated him for chancellor around the same time — and he was happy to be considered.

In November of 2006, the UW System President Kevin P. Reilly said, “Dr. Joe Gow is an accomplished scholar and an experienced academic leader, and I am confident that he will be an effective and enthusiastic advocate for UW-La Crosse’s future.”

Wilson was the chair of the search committee working in administration at UWL at the time. They were both married to other people back then.

Gow began as Chancellor in February of 2007.

Brothels, strippers and sexpos

It wasn’t until Gow and Wilson had both gone through divorces and Wilson had become the dean at UW-Rock County that their romance began to flourish.

Gow was then in his late 50s and Wilson was in her late 40s. Gow wondered how he would meet a new prospect at this age.

They ran into each other at a system meeting, and he decided to ask her out for dinner. They got married on the Golden Gate Bridge in 2014.

Gow and Wilson discovered they had a mutual interest in adult film early into their relationship. Reflecting back, Gow said it was a nice discovery that enhanced their relationship.

After they bought their first camcorder, they started filming themselves. These were personal videos, never meant to be seen by anyone else.

“It’s really expressive,” Gow said. “It’s kind of like playing music.”

As they began to record their own porn, they were also trying polyamory — an experiment that ultimately failed after emotions became too complicated.

Though the polyamorous relationship failed, they still wanted to figure out a way to bring in other people into their relationship.

Enter the Moonlite Bunny Ranch in Mound House, Nevada.

Nevada is currently the only state in the US that allows some legal prostitution, and on their quest to fully sexually liberate themselves, Gow and Wilson visited. The only word they had to describe the experience was “interesting.”

“We had an encounter with a male stripper,” Gow said. “When you pay people, it’s like enjoy it in the moment and life goes on. Nobody expects there’s any kind of relationship or anything like that.”

That male stripper ended up becoming a keystone in their porn producing journey. If it wasn’t for him, they would have never attended Exxxotica — the largest sex convention in the nation — where they met a professional production company based out of Los Angeles.

At that time, they were still recording off of their Best Buy camcorder, but it was time to upgrade. They contracted with the production company and got to work.

These professionally produced adult videos were still only for their personal collection at the time.

“The other thing we like to do is interview people,” Gow said. “We think that a lot of the performers, you don’t really know who they are as real people. So, we started doing interviews and sex scenes with professional people.”

The camcorder had officially evolved into multiple camera angles, a producer and an editor. That then led to their YouTube series “Sexy Healthy Cooking.”

The first YouTube video was published Dec. 8, 2023. None of those videos contained any explicit content as it would be against YouTube’s terms of service.

“It’s just talking to people about sex that are performers and then Carmen does this great vegan food,” Gow said.

“Neither of us were intending to put anything [porn] out into the world,” Wilson said. “That’s absolutely important to know. This was for us and our own relationship and that was it.”

Gow glanced at Wilson and smiled.

“It would be kind of like making a painting just for you, you know? Just for the enjoyment of doing it [and] we did it together,” Gow said.

He compared it to writing and recording a song, or writing a piece for a newspaper. When someone is proud of the thing they’ve created, they want other people to enjoy it too.

“We reached a point in our lives where we were like, well, what would it be like for other people to see the videos?” Gow said. “Would they like them or not?”

Turn to Gow / Page 3

Gow: Scandal turned former chancellor into celebrity

From Page 2

The beginning of the end

In 2021, Wilson and Gow lived separately. She had taken an administrative job out in Buffalo, New York and Gow was still serving as the chancellor at UWL. Gow decided he would move to Buffalo and they bought a house there.

But a storm was brewing. Wilson's university was folding and the board was facing pressures to close down for good. She ended up leaving that school and accepting a consulting job at another. That job fell through too.

Wilson's struggles in Buffalo happened in the spring of 2023. They were forced to sell their home in Buffalo and take a large financial hit. Over the summer, Gow and Wilson talked about what would come next. They were both ready to be done with administration.

"It's been about 17 years as your chancellor, and I've enjoyed every minute of that, but I want to do other things," Gow said during the fall 2023 opening remarks.

He was going to go back to teaching. Gow was set to finish his role as chancellor at the end of the spring 2024 semester.

"If we were still pursuing academic careers, we would have never put the videos out," Wilson said. "But we were done with that."

A national sensation

It started with OnlyFans and LoyalFans. It seemed like the safest option since all of the explicit content was behind a paywall.

For Gow and Wilson, porn was never about making money. Sure, they had spent plenty in their production pursuits, but making it back didn't matter. They just wanted to get their videos in front of an audience.

There were too many creators on the subscription based sites and their content was buried amongst the sea of amateur artists.

One day in mid November of 2023, they were talking about their audience issues with their editor. The production company he works for is about 50 people and rather profitable in the porn space.

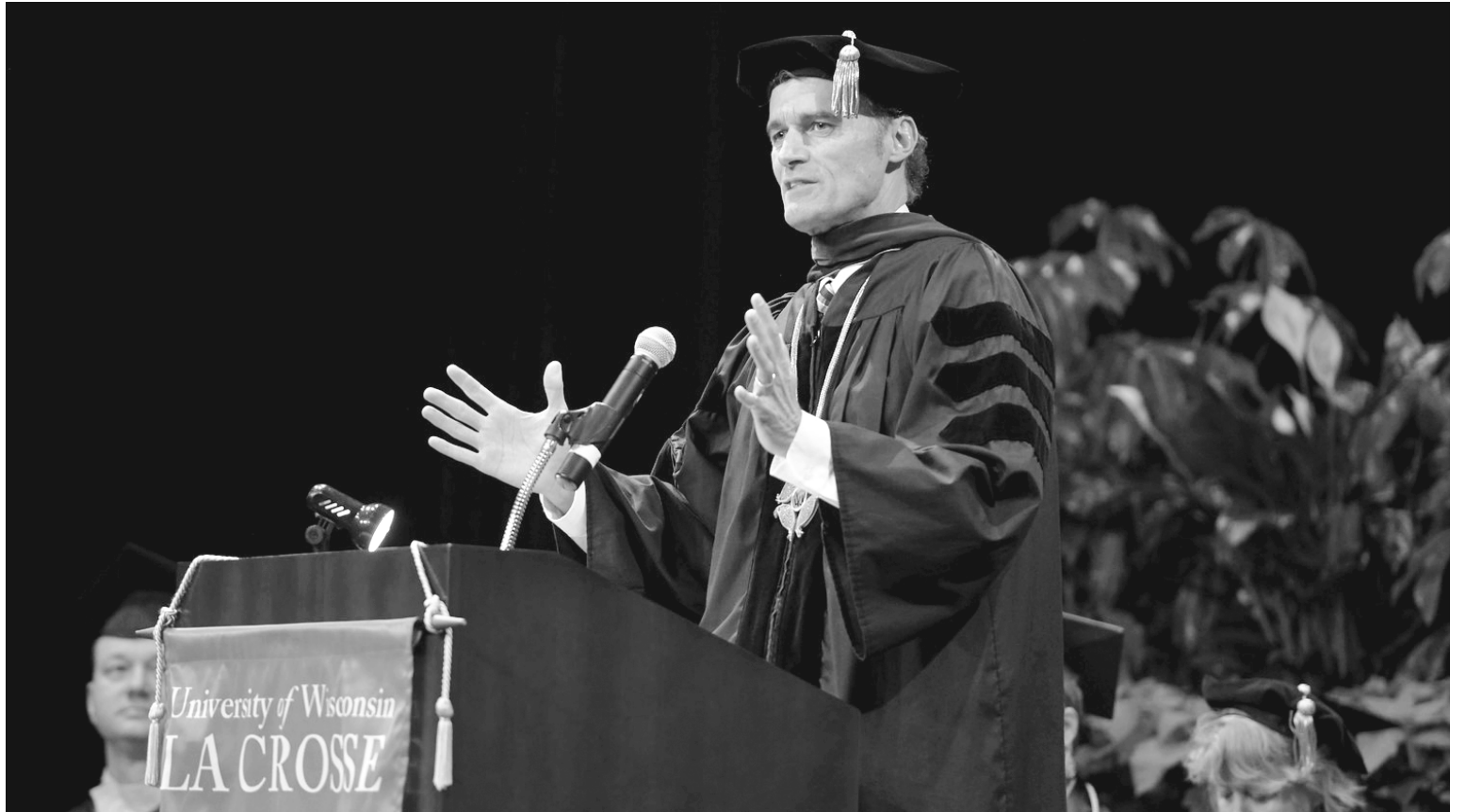
"We have a lot of luck on the free sites," he told them. "Like PornHub and xHamster. Those are very popular."

Gow and Wilson knew it was unlikely that they'd get anywhere as a middle aged couple on OnlyFans or LoyalFans. The free sites seemed like a logical next step.

These videos had everything the average porn viewer might want. Professional lighting, multiple camera angles and even a storyline throughout, Gow said.

"The fact [was] here [is] this older couple who are really married and they're having sex in a loving way. It's not abusive or manipulative, it's very consensual..." Gow said. "That really caught a lot of attention and before we knew it," Gow paused to look at Wilson. "It was like 'how many people watched the video?' 'Oh, 1,000 today.'"

And that number grew and grew until "TheSexyHappyCouple" received a badge on their profile to congratulate them for becoming the second largest creator in North America in December 2023.



Gow speaks during a graduation ceremony inside the La Crosse Center building in 2015. He served as chancellor of UW-La Crosse from 2007 to December 2023.

Courtesy of UW-La Crosse Flickr

Terminated

It was the Wednesday before Christmas.

Gow opened his email to an email he has received from one of the UW System attorneys and a human resource representative. It read:

"Can we talk with you about a personnel situation?"

Gow agreed, thinking this was about someone else on his staff. The adult videos had blown up so fast that Gow and Wilson hadn't had time to process what might happen now that they were very obviously in the public eye.

"This is about you. This is about your videos, and we have the two books too," he was told over a Zoom call later that day. Gow and Wilson had published two books under pseudonyms about how creating porn together strengthened their relationship alongside their videos.

Wilson said that at the time, they were more concerned about the money Gow might be making off of his new side gig. As an employee of the state, he was obligated to report the income he was making off of the videos and the books.

"He said 'no, we've been contrary.' We pay a lot of money to make the videos and the books," Wilson said.

She clarified that their video and book income had never been more than \$1,000/year.

Gow was officially terminated from his chancellor position and stripped of his tenure after a unanimous vote from the UW System on Sept. 27, 2024.

Local celebrities

It's been almost a year since Gow was first fired from UWL. He sits at his dining room table and smiles over at his wife. They had been reflecting on how poorly Wilson had been treated after their videos came to light.

"[Everyone in the industry,] they're people of their word, you know?" Gow said. "... And especially some of the women we've performed with. I mean, these are incredibly strong women that have their own voices, and they're very

clear about their expectations. Very well educated, many of them..."

Gow and Wilson believe that porn will eventually just be another "thing." Gow said one day, it's not going to be a big deal.

"It's the older people that have struggled with this, because we come out of a time when it was really forbidden and [the younger generations] have ready access to it, but this is a big part of our intellectual experiment here is were pretty confident that history will look back on this and say, oh, that couple they were doing something that was brave and nobody had done before and now it is very accepted," Gow said.

He looked across the table at Wilson again. A small frown forms across his face.

"But, there was a price to pay," Gow said as he looked down at his hands. The price was his job and the likelihood of his wife ever getting a job again.

"We're not happy about that, but I think we're proud of the fact that we've done something that nobody else has done, and maybe this gets people talking about human sexual relationships, pornography, vegan food, you know?" Gow said, chuckling at his vegan food comment.

Their public perception has stayed positive around La Crosse. Friends on Facebook and former colleagues have come out to voice support for Gow.

"One of my former colleagues in the psych department who still works there sent me a Facebook message and she said 'there are many, many people who think that Joe should not lose his tenure, but they are too afraid to speak up,'" Wilson said. "And that right there is chilling."

Wilson said that before any of the controversy started, the couple would be stopped for pictures every now and then. Students always seemed to have a positive reaction to Gow.

One night, not long after Gow had been fired, they were eating at a local sushi and Hibachi joint called Shogun.

Inside the dimly lit building, they

had just paid and were on their way out. As they walked past the bar, a group of 10 young women quieted their chatter as they passed. Wilson didn't think much of it until they reached their car in the parking lot.

One of the women had briefly popped her head out of the restaurant to snap a picture of them.

"Let's go back in," Wilson said to Gow. "We'll get a proper picture."

The group was shocked to see them walk back through the doors. Immediately, the one who had taken the photo offered to delete it.

"Give me your camera!" Wilson said. "I'll take the pictures."

The group relaxed when they realized Gow and Wilson weren't mad, they were flattered.

"We want you in the picture, too," another one of the women said to Wilson.

Wilson laughs as she recalls that day. "That was kind of fun," she said. "Typically, that would not have happened."

But now, it happens all the time. In the grocery store, they are stopped and told to "keep up the good fight." At the nail salon, Wilson was in the middle of paying when one of the owners said "I saw you on the news this morning." Wilson told her to expect another segment that night.

"I think you're getting a total raw deal from those people," the woman said.

The support has continued to flow since Gow decided to move forward with suing the UW System.

Free speech champions

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expressions (FIRE) reached out to Gow in early 2024 after learning from public reporting that his tenured position on the faculty might be at risk.

"We were disappointed to see a public university punish a tenured professor for expression clearly protected by the first amendment," Zachary Greenberg, faculty legal defense and student association counsel at FIRE, said.

Gow's case mattered enough to FIRE to take him on as a client. They connected him with Attorney Mike Leitner.

"I was brought into this case by [FIRE]," Leitner said. "I was disappointed that the UW System and UWL were taking such harsh and extreme measures to punish what I and many others believe is fully protected expression."

Leitner has been involved in free speech cases since the start of his career in 1985.

"I have been fortunate enough to work on First Amendment matters more and more often in recent years," he said.

Greenberg said that Gow's case matters because everyone should have the right to express themselves however they want when they are away from work.

"We don't want to live in a society where employees snoop around the private lives of their employees looking for reasons to fire them," Greenberg said. "Free speech cannot thrive if public universities – dedicated to the free exchange of ideas – terminate tenured professors merely because donors and politicians dislike what they say..."

Greenberg and Leitner said that Gow's fight will help protect students and faculty from persecution in the future.

"... We need strong First Amendment rights the most when the authorities seek to squelch controversial and unpopular expression," Leitner said. "The First Amendment prohibits universities, like other public employers, from punishing the speech of faculty members because the university is worried that people will be offended." When Gow entered the world of academia, he liked the notion that when you received tenure, you had the freedom to explore things that are new and controversial, cutting edge. But he never expected that to turn into a full-fledged constitutional battle.

"I think if they had just said 'Okay, we're firing him as chancellor, he's going to retire anyway. Just let him go teach classes,' this would fade away," Gow said. "I certainly wouldn't be seeking out this kind of controversy."

Celebration of Lights returns

Event saw record attendance in first year at EAA location

By Isaac Fischer
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A popular Oshkosh holiday tradition will return to the city as students return from Thanksgiving break.

The Oshkosh Celebration of Lights will be held on the EAA grounds for its 23rd season, its second at EAA after a contract between the Experimental Aircraft Association and the event organizers was signed last spring to hold the event through 2028.

The yearly festival, which runs between Thanksgiving weekend and New Year's Eve, is an Oshkosh tradition with more than one million lights within dozens of displays, including a 100-foot sculpted tree. The event had moved from Menominee Park in Oshkosh to the EAA grounds in 2023 because of the unavailability of the park grounds. Organizers explained that the event started more than 20 years ago after the founder, Tom Stephany, former Oshkosh Parks Department Director, was inspired by a light show in Texas.

Moving the event allowed for a record attendance; more than 22,000 cars visited the 2023 festival, which is 60% higher than the previous year. More than 6,000 kids visited Santa Claus.

"While we made the EAA grounds available in 2023 to



The C-47 Skytrain "General Delivery" is decorated for the 2023 Celebration of Lights on the EAA grounds. The 2024 edition of Celebration of Lights is set to return Nov. 29.

keep the event alive, everyone quickly saw the possibilities that were here," Chris Farrell, EAA's director of events said. "Celebration of Lights was a marvelous display that brought people to the EAA grounds at a different time of year and meshed wonderfully with our own Christmas in the Air open house in early December."

Event organizers also ex-

plained how the event is run by volunteers, with many volunteers contributing to the celebration in previous years. To learn more about volunteering, information is available on the website.

Special offerings during the event include visits with Santa through Dec. 23, horse-pulled wagon rides, as well as community nights. Every Sunday,

thanks to various sponsors, attendees can get in for free.

The Oshkosh Celebration of Lights path will also be part of the route for the 22nd Race for the Light 5K Run/Walk presented by and benefiting Oshkosh Area United Way on Dec. 7 at 4:30 p.m. The route begins at the EAA Youth Education Center and takes runners through the Celebration of Lights display to

the finish line. Online registration costs \$35 and includes a T-shirt and a set of jingle bells. Wear an ugly sweater to receive special kudos.

The event is open every night from 5:30 to 9 p.m. through Dec. 31. Cost is \$20 per carload, but visitors bring in non-perishable food items or (sealed) hygiene essentials and receive a \$5 discount.

The new and improved Black Friday?

By Cassidy Adams
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The thrill of Black Friday has always been unmatched. Hunting for the best bargains entering the Christmas season and a huge rush of excitement when you score a great deal is a feeling like no other. However, with the rise of online shopping, Black Friday shopping has drastically shifted into something unrecognizable.

In the past, people often waited for the Black Friday ads to be released so that they could place targets on the deals that they wanted to wait in line for on Black Friday. Strategic plans were formed to ensure that Christmas gifts were bought at the best price possible.

"I remember my mom and aunt talking about how they wanted to leave the house at 3:00 a.m. to go to Madison for a flatscreen TV when I was younger," senior Maggie Vander Schaaf states. "My mom always told me to wait until I was older whenever I wanted to go, but nowadays, Black Friday is just not the same."

With the popularity of online shopping's convenience,

people are opting to purchase their items online rather than in-store. Why wait out in the cold in the early hours of the morning when you can get the same bargains from the comfort of your own home?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a large effect on the reliance on online shopping for Black Friday as well. Despite being confined to their homes, people still wanted to experience the deals of Black Friday shopping.

An article from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics explains that stores had to use the Internet as a means to reach customers. However, this created a new trend of online shopping during Black Friday and changed the timeframe for which deals remained active.

According to Amazon.com, their 2024 Black Friday deals began a week before the actual day on Nov. 21. Because Amazon starts its Black Friday deals the week before, people are able to shop and take advantage of deals before in-person stores have the chance to connect to customers.

This problem has changed the trajectory of Black Friday

shopping in general. In order for in-person stores to compete with online shops, they are forced to release their deals earlier and earlier each year.

According to both Walmart.com and Target.com, they both have Black Friday deals out in their stores that you can purchase right now. The competition for customers has transformed Black Friday into a week of deals, rather than the tradition of deals only on the day itself.

Black Friday shopping has the power to positively affect small businesses as well. Because there is an influx of people who have traditionally been out shopping on Black Friday, this has

given small businesses an opportunity to form new relationships and gain new customers. However, now that online shopping has emerged as a large competitor, small businesses aren't able to have the same amount of positive impacts.

Black Friday has always held a sense of nostalgia. Peo-



Advance-Titan File Photo
The digital era has started to change the Black Friday shopping landscape in recent years. Many struggle to navigate that change.

ple always seem to have some memory surrounding the holiday, whether it's themselves or somebody they know. Unfortunately, with the transition from Black Friday to essentially a Black Friday week of deals, the magic just isn't the same.

There are bound to be a variety of impacts while navigating this new era of Black Friday shopping. The transition from doorbuster deals that only lasted a day to the dominance

of online shopping can allow flexibility and relaxation during the holidays. However, some will continue to relish in the thrilling memories of in-person Black Friday shopping.

Regardless of how people shop on Black Friday, it's a time filled with the capacity for memories. Although Black Friday has transformed into something different, the day still exists in some form where new traditions can be made.



Scoreboard

Thursday, Nov. 14

Men's Wrestling
UW-Eau Claire - 54
UWO - 0

Women's Volleyball
WIAC Tournament
UWO - 3
UW-Platteville - 2

Friday, Nov. 15

Women's Basketball
UWO - 67

University of Dubuque (Iowa) - 51

Men's Basketball
UWO - 75

Calvin University (Mich.) - 67

Saturday, Nov. 16

Men's Basketball
UWO - 90

Manchester University (Ind.) - 84

Men's Wrestling
Harper College (Ill.) - 32
UWO - 17

Women's Wrestling
Aurora University (Ill.) - 25
UWO - 20

Men's cross country
NCAADIII Regionals
UWO - 12th of 31 (349 points)

Women's cross country
NCAADIII Regionals
UWO - 7th of 31 (186 points)

Men's Swimming
St. Norbert College - 170
UWO - 126

Women's Swimming
St. Norbert College - 148
UWO - 145

Football
UW-River Falls - 28
UWO - 14

Women's Basketball
UWO - 62
Wisconsin Lutheran College - 27

Women's Volleyball
WIAC Championship
UW-Whitewater - 3
UWO - 2

Wednesday Nov. 20

Men's Basketball
Carroll College -
UWO - (Past Publication time)

Upcoming Events

Thursday, Nov. 21

Women's Volleyball
NCAA Tournament
vs Marymount University (Va.)
Marietta Ohio at 10:30 a.m.

Women's Wrestling
vs Carthage College at 5 p.m.

Men's Wrestling
vs UW-La Crosse at 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 22
Women's Basketball
vs Central College (Iowa) at 7:15 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 23

Women's Wrestling
at UW-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, Wisc. 10 a.m.

Women's Cross Country
NCAA Championship
Terre Haute, Ind at 11 a.m.

Men's Swimming
at Lake Forest College (Ill.)
Lake Forest, Ill at 1 p.m.

Women's Swimming
at Lake Forest College (Ill.)
Lake Forest, Ill at 1 p.m.

Women's Basketball
vs Wheaton College (Ill.) at 3:15 p.m.



Isaac Fischer / Advance Titan

UWO's Olivia Breunig (20) and Riley Kindt (11) go up to block a UW-Whitewater kill attempt in the WIAC Championship Nov. 16.

Titans fall in WIAC Championship

By Nolan Andler
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The UW Oshkosh women's volleyball team competed in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference tournament last week, beating UW-Platteville in the semifinal round and losing to UW-Whitewater in the championship round.

UWO started their time in the WIAC tournament in the semifinals due to being the No. 1 seed again. The Titans faced off against the No. 4 seeded Pioneers on Thursday Nov. 14 in a rematch after Pioneers swept the Titans Sept. 25. This time, the Titans got the best of the Pioneers in a five-set win 3-2. Sami Perlberg led the team with 24 kills and Izzy Coon led the team in assists with 34. UWO came back down two sets to one, and in the fifth set, after a back-and-forth battle, the Titans won the set 20-18 with a kill from Perlberg.

UWO fell in the championship

game to the No. 3 seeded Warhawks in a 3-2 battle where this time unlike the Titans win against UWO on Sept. 18 where UWO beat the Warhawks in five sets. UWO held an 11-8 lead in the fifth set, but could only muster up one more point before the Warhawks scored the 15th point to repeat as WIAC tournament champs.

The Titans will shift their attention to the NCAA Division III tournament as UWO heard their name called in the selection show on Monday. Coach Jon Ellmann is excited for the opportunity to play in the tournament.

"It is an experience that some never get to have in their career," Ellmann said. "So for us, we get to cherish the moment to play together again."

The Titans earned an at-large bid to the 2024 NCAA tournament, and they will be traveling to Marietta, Ohio, for the regional round of the tournament.

UWO will hope to replicate the

success of last year's tournament where the Titans beat Greenville University (Illinois) 3-0, Gustavus Adolphus College (Minnesota) 3-0 and the University of La Verne (California) 3-1 to win the regional round and advanced to the Elite Eight for the first time since 2009. UWO eventually fell to Claremont-Mudd-Scripps (California) in the Elite Eight for a fifth-place finish at the national tournament.

Ellmann said that even though most of the personnel is the same as last season, they can't look back at last season coming into this week due to how different the competition is.

"The reality is that every season is so different," Ellmann said. "The opponents are different, even with a large majority of people returning every year is its own adventure."

The Titans will open up the 2024 tournament with a match against Marymount University (Virginia) in the first round Nov. 18. The Saints are coming into the tourna-

ment with a 12-21 record after winning the Atlantic East Conference Championship.

The other seven teams that are participating in the regional are host Marietta University (Ohio) (23-1), University of Chicago (Illinois) (24-10), Centre College (Kentucky) (22-6), Franklin & Marshall College (Pennsylvania) (23-6), Illinois Wesleyan University (22-9) and St. John Fischer University (New York) (21-8).

Ellmann said that an advantage this team will have heading into the tournament is facing the level of competition they had to play at the end of the WIAC schedule.

"We have played one of the toughest schedules this year, and there hasn't really been anything we haven't seen in an ability to score from any position," he said.

The Titans game against Marymount will take place at 10:30 a.m. cst, you can check the results of the game at the UWO athletics website.

UWO football season ends with loss to UWRF

By Nolan Andler
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The UW Oshkosh football team dropped its final game of the 2024 season to UW-River Falls at Ramer Field on Saturday. The Titans, who were ranked No. 19 in the D3football.com top 25, lost to the Falcons by a score of 28-14.

This game was about the defenses, both teams could not cross the 50-yard line on its first drive of the game. Then, during the Falcons second drive of the game, UWRF drove down to the UWO 19-yard line. However, UWRF kicker Justin Scherbel missed the 36-yard field goal, UWO could not take advantage of the missed kick as quarterback Brooks Blount got sacked on third-and-12.

When the Falcons got the ball back, they were able to punch it in this time. UWRF drove all the way down the field and was able to score the first touchdown of the

day behind a 14-yard run to take a 7-0. The Titans were able to respond to the Falcons touchdown. Four straight runs from Titan running back Justice Lovelace set up a 29-yard touchdown pass from Blount to tight end Jon Mathieu, tying it up at 7-7.

The Titans got the ball back after holding the Falcons to a failed fourth down conversion. UWO put together a good drive deep in falcon territory, but found themselves at fourth-and-11. UWO tried to convert the fourth-down with a pass from Blount to wide receiver Trae Tetzlaff, but it was an incomplete pass, and the Falcons took over. UWRF used the turnover on downs to their advantage and retook the lead with a 23-yard touchdown reception from Falcon wide receiver Jonah Mallberg to go back up 14-7.

UWO started the second half on offense and was able to drive down to the UWRF 47-yard line.



Courtesy of Carly Lynch

UWO's Caleb Noennig (29) and Caleb Smith (43) try to tackle a UWRF player during the game on Nov. 16.

An illegal man downfield penalty killed the Titans' drive as UWO was pushed back to their own territory. When the Falcons got the ball back, they were able to score another touchdown with a 30-yard run from their running back, Trevor Asher, to extend their lead to 21-7.

Later in the half, the Falcons scored another touchdown to go

up 28-7 and UWO could answer. The Titans did score a touchdown with a run from Blount to make the score 28-14 Falcons with 3:14 left in the game. The touchdown was too little too late for the Titans as UWRF won the game 28-14.

The Titans ended the 2024 season with a 6-4 overall record and 4-3 WIAC record.

Coach out of water

UWO swim coach fosters community inside and outside the pool

By Angela Satterlee
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Standing behind the blocks of the biggest meet so far this season, UW Oshkosh swim and dive head coach Christopher Culp is strong and focused with a sharp look on his face, scanning the water like a hawk. He whistles at each swimmer, urging them to go faster.

No one can tell that behind his expressions is a funny, goofy, lighthearted man that everyone around him knows and loves. On deck, he is collected and watches every race closely ready to offer guidance and support.

After swimmer Megan Miles completed her 200-yard backstroke, Culp approached her. His disappointment was obvious.

“At my midseason meet, I completely missed the wall on my 200 backstroke,” she said. Miles could sense Culp’s concern when she emerged from the water, tears streaming down her face after a challenging day that included a poor performance in her 100-yard back as well.

“I told him I was struggling and just couldn’t handle the pressure,” she said, her voice trembling.

Culp immediately switched his demeanor, transforming from stern coach to compassionate mentor. He wrapped his arm around her and slowed her tears. “Megan, I understand that you’re under a lot of stress,” he said. “You’ve never done this before, and it’s going to be okay.”

He encouraged her to take a moment for herself and to step away from the pool, to show he completely understood. “Just go in the locker room, take a minute and cry it out because I get it. Just come see me afterwards.”

An hour later, during dinner at the hotel, Culp sat beside her, a warm smile on his face.

“Megan, I’m very proud of you,” he said, and in that moment, Miles felt an overwhelming wave of relief and gratitude.

“I almost bawled my eyes out,” Miles said. “I’ve never had a coach say that to me before. I was always told to suck it up or toughen it out, but not anymore.”

Culp is a coach who knows his athletes strengths. He knows what they’re capable of and when they need a break. He can sense his swimmer’s needs based on their own circumstances. He knows when they need a kick in the ass and when they just need a hug.

He has spent over two decades coaching children, young adults and college athletes, and has two children of his own. However, he prefers coaching collegiate teams, and it all originated from his own college coach he had in the late ‘90s.

“I will never see an athlete as just an athlete,” Culp said. “I know everyone needs different things at different times, and I am happy to be the person to help them each time.”



Jacob Link / Advance-Titan

UWO women’s swim and dive head coach Christopher Culp times swimmers as they practice the 4x100 meter relay Nov. 19.

Influences Shaping Culp’s Coaching Philosophy

Culp’s journey into coaching was shaped by his own college experience. He initially aimed to become a teacher but found himself drawn back to the pool when a new swim team was established at San Francisco State University.

After a two-and-a-half-year long break from swimming, he decided to walk on to the team. The coach, Bruce Brown initially dismissed Culp due to his long hair and 20-lbs weight gain since high school. Culp persevered, ultimately building a strong relationship with his coach, Bruce Brown.

“He pushed me, but he cared more about me as a person than as an athlete,” Culp said. “I started a relationship with him, and he had a team, and I got back into shape. I did very well, but he was really my inspiration to become a coach. I had a lot of great coaches throughout my swimming career, but he was definitely one that had the biggest impact on me.”

After swimming for Brown, Culp was inspired to work for him as his assistant coach for a few years. When Brown retired, Culp took over the head coach position.

“Throughout my career, I had very high-end coaches,” he said. “I had two different Olympic coaches growing up. They were very well renowned and very successful so that people won gold medals and so on and so forth. But Brown had a different impact on me.”

Brown was a figure to look up to, so Culp said he always was aiming to please him.

“I knew that no matter what I did, whether it be good or bad, he was going to love me,” Culp said.

Culp cares about each one of his athletes the same way that Brown cared for him and his team. Whether after a bad practice or meet, the coaching hat comes off and the real Culp shines through.

“I wanted to do right by a lot of the coaches I used to have for growing up,” he said. “I had a ‘fuck you’ attitude sometimes, but at the same time, they were a dictator type of coach.”

His other coaches were experts in the technical aspects of the sport, but they never emphasized a deeper, more personal connection with their athletes like Brown did.

“These coaches knew how to coach in terms of science and so on and so forth, but I didn’t really care to make them happier the way I did for Brown,” Culp said.

A Family and Community Oriented Coach

Culp was prepared to be a dad his whole life because coaching is the only life that Culp had ever known. Working with kids every day requires patience. When he and his wife, Ellen Kenny, had their two kids, they became just as invested with the swim team as Culp had.

Pool decks on swim meet days are typically a hectic environment, and when Culp needs to balance coaching with parenting it can be even harder for him to concentrate on what’s going on in the pool. His 5-year-old daughter, Erin, and 9-year-old son, Neil, run around the pool deck chasing their favorite swimmer and babysitter, Grace Fergus. Fergus tries to walk around the pool deck, but with one child clinging to each of her legs, the task becomes difficult. Still, she’s laughing the whole time.

“Erin is the perfect mix of sweet, goofy and sassy,” Fergus said. “She definitely gets the sweetness from her mother, but goofy and sassy has Culp written all over it. Neil is silly, loud, but very protective. The way he cares for his younger sister reminds me of how Culp will goof around with his athletes but always has their backs no matter what.”

Affordable babysitters are hard to come by, so when Culp realized he could trust the team he’s coached for so long with his children, he began pawning them off whenever Fergus or other swimmers were available.

“Culp reached out to me one day sophomore year and asked if I was interested in babysitting,” Fergus said. “He knew I had worked with kids in the past and thought I would be a good fit.”

His children have also grown up around the swim community, learning the values of teamwork and resilience early on, so the swimmers are the first people he goes to for help with babysitting.

“Typically, we eat dinner together and release energy by having a dance party,” Fergus said. “We always end our night bundled up on a couch with blankets and stuffed animals and watching a Disney movie. The only time they would test me is when a bedtime story turned into 10.”

Culp is appreciative of what his athletes do for him outside of the pool, and his kids enjoy spending time with his athletes as much as they like babysitting them.

“It’s great because they love the swimmers,” Culp said. “They think they’re part of that gang. I get asked three times a week, ‘are the swimmers coming over?’ ‘Are we going to go to the swimmers?’”

This involvement has allowed

Culp to teach his children the importance of community and support, reinforcing the same values he instills in his athletes.

“When I have the team over and the kids interact with everybody, I watch how some of the athletes interact with my kids,” Culp said. “You could tell which swimmers have babysat before, which ones have siblings and which ones love kids.”

Not only can Culp rely on his swimmers to be there for his kids, he has the same relationship with the UWO community.

“The community that we have in Oshkosh and with the team, everyone knows who my kids are, and I know they are safe,” Culp said. “I never worry about my kids because they have so many eyes on them all the time.”

Whenever his children go missing, Culp has the confidence that the people around him would ensure their safety, which turned out to be true in an amusing way.

“I lost my daughter in a football game and I didn’t panic,” Culp said. “Everyone else was panicking, but I’m like, everybody knows who my kids are here. So someone’s got me. And sure enough, they were in the VIP coaching lounge where I can’t even get into it with employees, but they’re in there eating snacks. I had to beg a security officer to go in there and get my daughter, but it was hilarious because she just walks in and does whatever she wants.”

Culp’s Partner in Crime

Culp’s family life and coaching career are interwoven in ways that enrich both. Kenny often attends meets, supporting not only Culp but also the team.

Men's basketball improves to 2-1

By Sam Reader
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After a loss to No. 12 Saint John's University (Minnesota) to start the year, the UW Oshkosh men's basketball team picked up two wins last weekend against No. 9 Calvin University (Michigan) and Manchester University (Indiana), improving its record to 2-1.

UWO's Michael Metcalf-Grassman led the team in scoring in both games after putting up 23 points against Calvin and 29 points against Manchester to improve his season average to 26.7 per game.

"Michael is a tremendous competitor and player," UWO head coach Matt Lewis said. "He had a great freshman season, winning WIAC Newcomer of the year. He invested a ton this off-season."

After a disappointing 10-15 finish last season, Metcalf-Grassman and crew are looking to see improvement this year.

"I think just gaining a year of experience and being more familiar with my teammates has helped so far," Grassman said. "I think our pace this year is much faster, which has helped us a lot offensively."

The Titans defeated Calvin 75-67 Nov. 15 and Oshkosh led in points off turnovers, second chance points and shooting percentage.

UWO took down Manchester the next day 90-84 in a game



Advance-Titan File Photo

UWO guard Carter Thomas (21) dribbles down the court during a home game at the Kolf Sports Center last season.

where Oshkosh had trailed by as many as 18 points, but a second half surge saw the Titans outscore Manchester 62-46.

"The guys continued to believe no matter the score," Lewis said. "Every guy believed we would come back. That belief was the biggest difference from half to half."

Grassman credited his team-

mates for their defense and their staunch efforts on the boards, which led to them out rebounding both opponents.

"We have been defending very well as a team and getting key stops," Grassman said. "Our rebounding, especially in the second game this weekend, has been a big difference maker. We are a very young team, so the more we play

together and get used to each other, the better we are going to get. I'm very excited for the rest of the year.

Oshkosh also had a lot of help from its bench in both games, scoring 23 points against Manchester and 11 points against Calvin.

"Many guys have contributed off the bench, not just in scoring

the ball," Lewis said. "We love our depth and the selfless approach from the entire team."

The Titans hosted Carroll University Nov. 20. Because the game finished past press time, you can find the score at uwoshkosh.titans.com. UWO will take on North Park University (Illinois) Nov. 23 at 4 p.m. in Chicago.

Leadership: *How a team became a family*

From Page 5

"She's been my rock through everything," he said. "When I was overwhelmed, she reminded me of why I love coaching. It's a team effort at home and on deck."

When Culp first met his wife, they were just college sweethearts, both with a passion for swimming. Now that they're older, they've had to make sacrifices for Culp to continue his passion for college swim coaching.

Reflecting on their journey, Kenny said she knows the sacrifices they've made for Culp to pursue his coaching career.

"When he got the UWO job, I was his biggest cheerleader," she said. "We were ready to move anywhere for his dream."

Kenny said that she knew they would move to wherever he got hired, no questions asked.

"It was hard at first to move away from family and friends with our newborn son because I was a new mom, and now we lived in a place where we didn't know anyone," she said. "But I knew we'd be OK because Chris and I have always said our relationship and marriage has been a team and we support one another."

Kenny has seen Culp on his best days, but she's also seen the challenges he faces in the pool.

"I remember him coming home after a tough season, feeling defeated," she said. "It was hard for me to watch him struggle, but

he never lost his passion for the sport or his love for his team. That's what makes him a great coach. He genuinely cares."

Their partnership is built on a foundation of teamwork, with both recognizing the need to support each other's aspirations, he said.

"Having kids, we've kept that same approach. I think everyone changes when they have kids because it's impossible not to," Culp said.

Culp often jokes about how life without his wife would be a disaster.

"I can barely keep myself alive," he said. "Thank God for Ellen."

Challenges of Being a Coach

Culp said he didn't go into the field of coaching to become rich with money. He did it for the richness that comes with the relationships he's made over the years. So when San Francisco State disbanded its swim team, he lost his first coaching job and he didn't know what to do next with his life.

"I panicked when my old swim team didn't have the money to stay afloat," Culp said. "That's who I am. It's not just what I do, it's



Christopher Culp

who I am. I didn't want to stop coaching, and my wife didn't want me to either. She knew it was meant for me, so we needed to look at jobs outside of California."

Despite understanding the financial challenges ahead, Culp said he realized that following his passion would require sacrifice. Even though his job wouldn't give him everything he wanted for his family, he found clarity in knowing that doing what they love was worth the hardships.

"I knew that my job wasn't going to provide the best for our children, but it was a high opening moment for me because I knew we were going to have to struggle to make it work," Culp said. "But this is what I love to do. There's a certain amount of pride that comes with it."

Kenny is a successful registered nurse in Oshkosh and is the breadwinner of the family, which allows Culp to have a job he loves.

"Returning to my high school reunion was an eye-opening experience, seeing classmates who had become doctors, lawyers and high achievers, while I was coaching a college team," he said. "Though I didn't make as much money, there was a certain prestige in what I

did, and I couldn't help but feel flattered knowing that my wife's career supported us while I pursued my passion."

Coaching as a team

Culp has been the head coach at UWO for a decade now, and until three years ago, he was running the gig solo. In 2021, he was able to hire an assistant coach. When the opportunity came, Culp invited a friend to apply that he made back from his old job, Charles Sommer.

Sommer and Culp met in Dallas back in September 2019. They were at the American Swim Coaches Association World clinic, where they met each other through mutual friends.

Sommer and Culp got to know each other a little bit, but never thought they would ever see each other again after that. After all, Culp was coaching in Wisconsin, and Sommer was coaching in California. Now, Sommer says he is happy to be working with Culp at UWO.

"I am proud to say this, and I will continue to say this until something changes, but I am in the best working relationship I've ever been in my life..." he said. "I used to think Culp was far more knowledgeable than I was, simply because he's a college coach and I was just a club coach — and that's true, he is more experienced. But what struck me is that he never makes me feel inferior or less capable."

Their collaborative relationship goes far beyond just professional obligations, creating a vibrant and supportive atmosphere. From their connection with fellow coaches to the strong sense of unity with the entire staff, the work culture feels like one big, connected family.

"I can't imagine working with anyone else again," Sommer said. "The experience of working together toward building a successful team has been incredibly enjoyable."

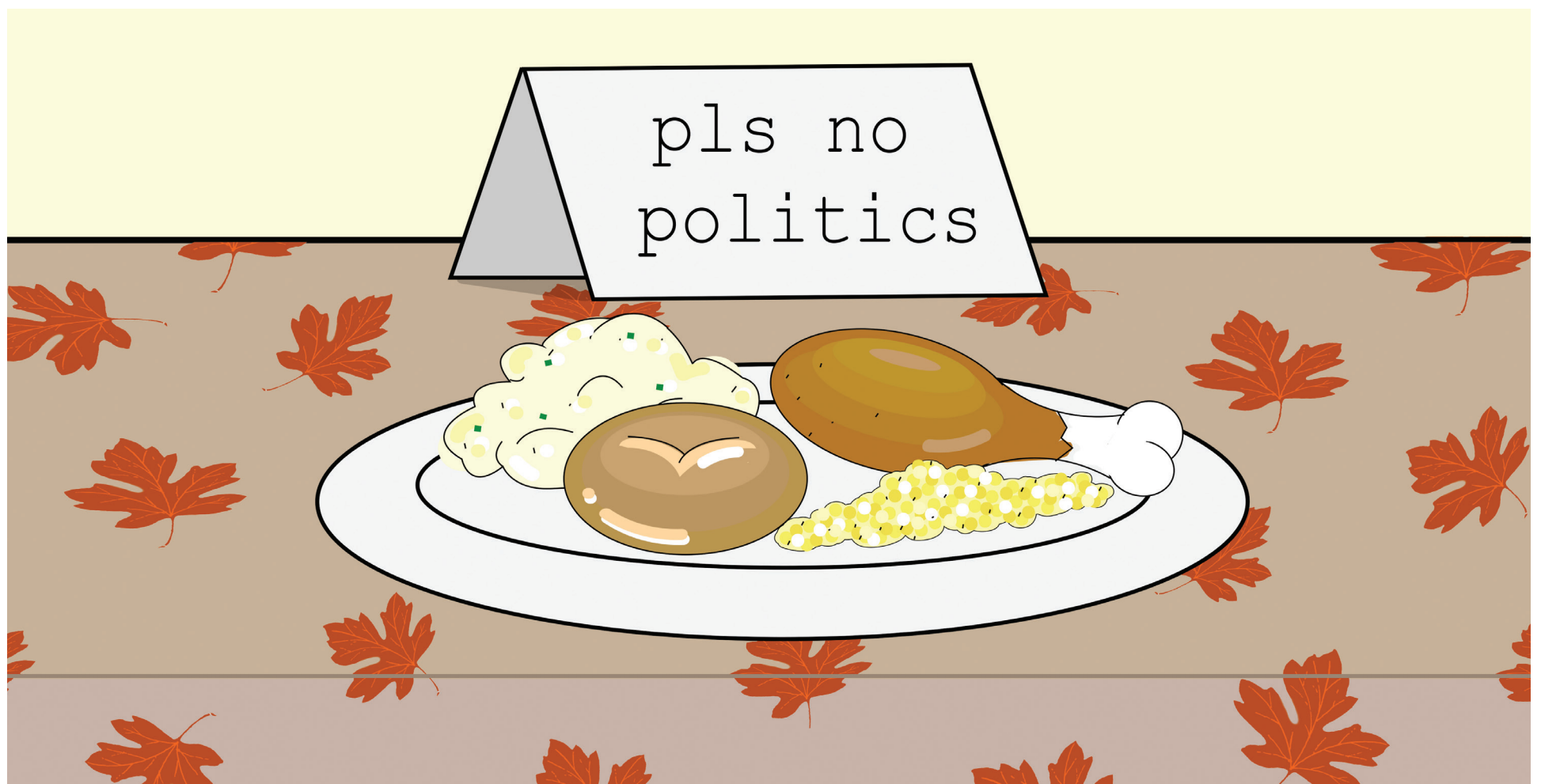
"Our team dynamic, including our relationship with the other coaches, creates a fantastic work environment," he said. "From the athletic director to the assistant coach, there's a strong bond that makes it all come together."

The UWO athletic director, Darryl Sims, said that working with Culp has been a rewarding experience, and that Culp's coaching techniques are valuable to the UWO athletic department.

"He is dedicated and passionate about swimming and constantly brings a positive energy to the team," he said. "His commitment to the athletes and their development is evident in every interaction."

Culp said he is happy coaching at UWO and wouldn't trade his job for any other.

"I can't see myself working anywhere else now," he said. "I know in my heart that this team and Oshkosh is it for me."



Graphic by Cassidy Johnson

Dealing with a post-election Thanksgiving

By Cassidy Johnson
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Whoever decided to put election season right next to Thanksgiving is either America's biggest prankster or a masochist that just wants to watch the world burn. Either way, I have a bone to pick with them.

I have a bone to pick with my family too, and no, it's not the wishbone from the Thanksgiving turkey.

It can be hard to be alone in your beliefs amongst family members, but know you are not alone in this feeling. Many college students feel like the black sheep — or the blue donkey — of their family: including me!

As somebody who has always been politically ostracized in my family, here's some ways to mitigate tension-filled Thanksgiving gatherings and deal with your outspoken Uncle Jim this holiday season.

1. Set boundaries ahead of time

Let your family know early on that you do not want to talk about politics. Setting your boundaries

before they can be violated is a proactive and preventive measure that will hopefully nip any problems in the bud and stop Uncle Jim before he can even start.

Setting your boundaries is also just a healthy and important part of any relationship, and will hopefully prevent or lessen the amount of political talk (at least in front of you) at other family gatherings as well.

2. Humor & redirection

Humor and redirection are great options if setting boundaries is a little too confrontational for you. These strategies give you some control over the conversation in an under-the-draw-leaf-table sort of way.

If setting boundaries doesn't work, you have three options. First, try to reaffirm and remind your family members of your boundaries. If they still don't listen, you may just have shitty family members.

At this point, you can either dip, or try to alleviate the situation in other ways such as humor and redirection.

You can also try to redirect the

situation by changing the subject. Try complimenting your Aunt Shirley on her new shawl, or asking Uncle Jim about the Packers vs Dolphins Thanksgiving game happening that day.

If that doesn't work, humor can be a more effective and confrontational strategy. Humor is great because it allows you to say what you want in a more lighthearted way.

Every joke always has a little bit of truth to it, so you can tell off Uncle Jim in a subtle way while also getting some brownie points from family members for making them laugh, and bruising his ego just enough to send a message without hurting your relationship with him.

Humor can be tricky, so make sure not to be too mean or this strategy may have the opposite effect.

3. Remove yourself

Now I know that you may be wanting to remove some of your family members at the moment, but the better option is to remove yourself from the situation.

This can either be by mentally removing yourself from the situation by talking to other "safe"

family members, disassociating or physically removing yourself from the situation.

Taking a trip to the bathroom, getting a second plate of food (or fifth, depending on where you're at), petting your grandmother's elderly dog and taking a breather outside are all great options for physically removing yourself from the conversation.

4. Goodbye & spa time

If temporarily removing yourself from the situation isn't enough distance, you can also remove yourself from the entire premises.

Go treat yourself to some self-care like an at-home spa day, or, if that's not in-budget, a coffee or a shot of Everclear should also do the trick.

There's no shame in leaving early, and if anything, it will (hopefully) send a message and make your family feel bad for pushing your boundaries.

You can always make up an excuse, but leaving abruptly or early will communicate a lasting message to your family members about your boundaries and expectations

regarding conversation topics at the dinner table and at other family gatherings.

5. Remember family first

Perhaps the most important tip in this whole article is to remember that, no matter how angry you may get, they are still your family at the end of the day.

In many cases, these people have watched you grow up and have loved you since the day you were born. Politics cannot change that.

I understand that this election was especially emotionally charged with abortion and Project 2025 looming over our heads. Trust me, I feel it too.

At the end of the day, the election has already taken enough from a lot of us. What we can't do is let it take even more, and give it more power over our life than it already has.

Thanksgiving is all about gathering with your loved ones and expressing your gratitude for them. Don't let the election ruin this sentimental and special time, and remember that you can always celebrate Thanksgiving with your chosen family.

Embrace the mess in this busy holiday season

By Cassidy Adams
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The holidays are one of the most magical and comforting times of the year, but always tend to coincide with feelings of stress and chaos. We often feel pressure to make the holidays perfect. But the question remains, when did the holidays become about perfection rather than fun?

My favorite Christmas memory was when my family had the ugliest tree. It was so bare of pine-needles that you could see the trunk all the way through, and had sap consistently dripping everywhere. However, when I think back, I remember

trudging to the backyard to cut down a tree during Covid-19 and laughing over the eye-sore clay ornaments that we had made as kids.

The holidays are about spending time with our loved ones, whoever they are, and reminiscing on and creating memories. You're not going to remember the hours of cleaning that went into hosting Thanksgiving day or a family Christmas party. But you may remember the laughter that occurred after almost dropping the turkey or setting off the smoke alarm baking Christmas cookies.

It's okay when things go array

during the holidays. Society has implemented a lingering standard of perfection that induces stress when the standard isn't met. However, perfection isn't achievable and isn't a standard. Focusing on trying to achieve a picture-perfect moment is always going to leave you feeling inadequate after the gathering ends.

Social media has also been a large contributor to this standard of perfection. When you've spent the all your time trying to create a flawless day, everything you've done is going to feel insufficient scrolling through your friends' "perfect" days. In reality,

everybody is stressed and feeling this societal pressure, rather than spending the day filled with fun.

I recommend you to let go of the guilt of attempting a perfect holiday season. Things are bound to go wrong in some aspect, but why allow some inconvenience to spoil your entire day? In this holiday season, let's create some new traditions that embrace the chaos. Instead of turning to anger when a problem occurs, laugh it off and turn on some holiday music. Don't let it get the best of you!

After hours of setting up decorations and untangling all of the Christmas lights, are they

still falling down? It's the effort that counts! Did you run out of milk during the day and you now don't have any to set out for Santa? I'm sure Santa still drinks water or juice. Did you accidentally burn the sweet potato casserole for Thanksgiving? The top may be salvageable and everybody will just be glad that they get to spend time with you.

As the holidays get closer, don't be afraid to embrace the mess. Make an extra plate on Thanksgiving, or grab a couple extra Christmas cookies. The holidays only come once a year and you deserve to feel the magic and love of the holiday season.