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The Grizzly, April 25, 2019

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Coffee shop and brew pub aims to open second location near UC

Commonwealth Hall on Main Street, a former Ursinus dorm, might not be sitting vacant for much longer. Phoenixville’s Steel City, a Soho/Bohemian-style coffee shop, is considering opening a second location in the building next door to Marzella’s.

According to Laura Vernola, who owns Steel City with her husband, Ed Simpson, the business is looking to turn the first floor of Commonwealth Hall into a coffee shop and brewpub-style restaurant, and to convert the second floor into a listening room where live music performances, poetry readings and talks could be held.

“We want to create this space for creative people and people who just want to learn to come in,” Vernola said, “We love that Ursinus is a liberal arts college. We think that the creative vibe that we have here [at the Phoenixville location] with the poetry slams, the writer’s groups, the ukulele groups, we do live music during the week… Our hope is to collaborate with the college, but also with the community. We really want to offer the community somewhere to walk to, somewhere to be creative.”

If the proposal is approved by the Borough Council, Vernola thinks that their business will bring a more creative vibe to Collegeville and the UC campus.

“I think it takes a certain location to capture this cool, creative vibe. So we felt that in or around a college campus would make a lot of sense,” she said.

Cathy Kernen, a member of the Borough Council, head of Borough Business Development Committee, and head of the non-profit Collegeville Economic Development Corp., believes that Steel City coming to Collegeville will help the borough move forward with its plans to revitalize Main Street which they have been working on for over a year now.

“When you work to revitalize a business district, we all fail as a community… That’s what small business in America is like. We have to work together. We can’t work against each other.”

UC President Brock Blomberg hopes that a second Steel City location close to campus will help connect Ursinus with the greater Collegeville community.

In memory of Dorinda Ma, 1993-2018

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This past Sunday, loved ones gathered on campus to honor the loss of and celebrate the life of Dorinda Ma ’16. They dedicated a tree, planted between Olin and the Berman, in her honor. At Ursinus, Dorinda majored in English, worked in the campus safety office, was a sister of Sigma Sigma Sigma, and wrote beautiful, brave poetry. She was passionate about changing the lives of youth through education and after graduation she became an English teacher for Teach for America. Her kindness, compassion, and warm smile brought light into the lives of countless members of the Ursinus community and beyond. Some of Ma’s professors and close friends shared their thoughts and memories of her with “The Grizzly.”

From Dr. M. Nzadi Keita, Associate Professor of English, Coordinator of African American/African Studies:

“I met Dorinda as a first-year student in the fall of 2013 when she took my Intro to Poetry Writing course. Her bouncy, sunny, caring demeanor was a bit disorienting to me at first; soon I realized that she was just being herself. An extraordinarily kind, giving person.

Dorinda approached poetry the way she did many things: with a fearless curiosity, an energetic intellect, and a willingness to find her way. Her ability as a poet was immediately clear. She wasn’t afraid of it. She did not try to conquer poetry by limiting herself to cliched ideas, writing copycat poems, or wrestling her thoughts into stilted rhyme. Her gift came from an exuberant embrace of language, an affinity for significant detail, attention, and a well-trained ear. I teach a lot of poetic form, which students often dislike, at least at first. But Dorinda ran with any challenge I gave and worked to bring something of herself into the poems. I became her academic adviser in the English Dept. One of my favorite memories is our initial advising convo, which lasted about 2 hours. We talked about being from Philly, knowing how to thrift-shop, joked about Central High culture (my sons were alumni, as was she), and had a long, humorous bonding over the similarities between migrant (mine) and immigrant (hers) families. After that, sometimes she’d knock on my door to give me a hug on her way to or from a class on Olin 3.

We kept in sporadic contact via long emails after she started teaching, always with the same subject line: “Long overdue update!” The following excerpt comes from one of them:

“Some of my freshmen are mothers, some have a first grade reading level, and some just love to test my patient nature, but all of my students have taught me more than I can ever teach them. Their academic deficiencies pale in comparison to their consciousness of their lives and the many contributing forces that crush down on them. I am honored to be where I am and to do the work I have done and will continue to do.”

From Chris Wilcox:

“She was always smiling. She had a great outlook on life. When I think of Dorinda, the thing that I think of is her bubbly attitude. She loved life and she loved being here.”

From Khalilah Baber ’16:

“I met Dorinda for the first time entering the summer program called Crigler (summer of 2012) going into Ursinus College. From first impressions...
to create this exciting new venue on Main Street. We’re hoping that it will make the neighborhood around our campus a destination in its own right, drawing families and students to the center of town.”

Many members of the community have already expressed interest in Steel City. According to Kernen, the April 3 borough council meeting during which they announced the plan “was totally full, with standing room only.”

“The general response from the residents and building owners was overwhelmingly positive for both Steel City and the Main Street revitalization,” Kernen said. “One resident said that Steel City was one of the most exciting things to ever happen to Collegeville.”

The members of the community are not the only people excited about this potential new location, however. Students have also expressed hopes that the space will provide more options and isn’t just lower Wismer and the Bear’s Den for hosting events and studying on campus.

“It’d be a cool place to maybe get some work done,” junior Dan Powell said. “I’m excited for live events too.”

Junior Sam Harvey said, “This would give another option for students for something to do on the weekend.”

Vernola agrees that Steel City would offer an alternative to the library and dorm rooms for students looking to hang out or study.

Vernola is hopeful, however, that Steel City will be able to open its second location in Collegeville.

“I think that it’s a win-win for everyone” Vernola said. “If you’re not learning something new everyday, you’re in the wrong business. My husband and I are constantly learning about this business. We take all the feedback from the community on a daily basis and we try to keep this brand going and to keep growing it.”
New history professor makes her mark

Dr. Johanna Mellis came to Ursinus in the fall of 2018 after getting her PhD from the University of Florida. Though she initially came to do a two-year visiting professorship, this spring she was hired as a tenure-track assistant professor, a post she will formally take on in the fall.

Mellis comes to Ursinus from the Environmental Research Station, and co-director of the Robert Greenburg led a workshop for one of our interns to do this kind of work. She has great ideas for our department and for the college, and we’re excited to work with her in the years to come,” said Throop.

Students have also responded well to her. “Dr. Mellis’ classes are always run with great care and foster a collaborative learning environment where students are encouraged to explore their personal interests through the texts we read,” said Cori Cichowicz ’19.

Mellis teaches courses in Environmental history and World History, and her deep abiding interest in history stems from two sources. One of these sources was her own teachers. “Through them, [I learned] understanding people’s motivations is important to understanding how history plays out,” Mellis said. The other of these sources is how history always allows one to discover new things. “I always like to ask people questions, and it’s fascinating to learn about people’s stories and experience that history with them,” she said. This extends into her research, in which she interviews Cold War athletes. Not only is this experience rewarding for her, but also for the people she interviews, since many of them had not had people with whom to share their stories.

Ursinus has been quite a different experience from the University of Florida. One obvious difference is the size. The University of Florida has 55,000 students, which dwarfs Ursinus’ current size of around 1,500 students. The approach to teaching is also quite different, with Florida placing a greater emphasis on old-fashioned lectures. Conversely, Mellis noted that Ursinus is much more about teachers working with students. “Teachers and students are all invested in the same goal,” she said.

She has also been highly pleased with how the students at Ursinus typically do the reading: “here, it’s expected everyone does the reading, and by and large, the students are really invested in the reading,” she said. Mellis also encourages students never to be afraid of taking a history class or be afraid if they are struggling with material. “Talk to the professor about any concerns you might have, and keep talking them as the course develops, that way the professor can help you as a student. If you’re interested in the material, then take the course. It will be a challenge, but the personal growth will be significant,” Mel- lis said. She noted that in one of her courses there were two non-history majors who were struggling, but since coming to talk to her have greatly improved their understanding of the material. Mellis said.

For now, however, in the fall, she will be teaching two courses, a course on World War I and a course on how to conduct oral histories.

Mellis is already contributing a great deal to Ursinus despite her relatively short time at the college. “I think Dr. Mellis has already become a vital member of the Ursinus community in her short time here,” Cichowicz said.

Dr. Johanna Mellis

Ursinus student’s internship takes her to Yellowstone

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Last month, sophomore Jess Greenburg went on a two-week trip to Yellowstone National Park. The trip was part of her internship with the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative (NRCC), which is dedicated to developing future conservation leaders.

Greenburg went with Dr. Richard Wallace, professor of Environmental Studies, director of the Food Studies Program, and co-director of the Robert and Sharley Knaettler Whittaker Environmental Research Station. Dr. Wallace, a board member at the NRCC, helped Greenburg get connected with the organization.

“Jess and I were already working on my research based in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and I thought Jess would be a great fit as an NRCC intern,” said Wallace. “On our Yellowstone trip, Jess and I worked together on our joint research project, which is a continuation of research I have been working on for three years, on the relationship of educational programs in the GYE to the GYE’s species and ecosystem conservation needs.”

Greenburg led a workshop for educators on how to bring more advocacy into their programs. “The workshop was for envi- ronmental educators of different kinds. There were people who work with K-12 kids, there were people who are private nature guides, people who work for the national parks, just a variety of different types of educators… the workshop was about how they can strengthen their environmen- tal education programs to include more advocacy,” Greenburg said.

In many ways, Greenburg said the trip was a growing experience for her. “It was really awesome to be able to work with and help out these professionals. It really built up my confidence because it made me see that I am totally capable as an academic, as an environmentalist, as a sophomore in college. I think that’s especially important as a woman because you kind of suffer from that impostor syndrome a lot of feeling like you’re not as good as the people around you, but being put into that situa- tion where it’s like, ‘OK, lead a whole bunch of professionals, go!’ and then you can actually succeed at doing it. You see that you really are a perfectly capable person,” Greenburg said.

Not many students are able to get the opportunity to go to Yellowstone to do this kind of work. Dr. Wallace, who works with Board President Peyton Griffin, as well as all the interns at the NRCC, said, “Jess has already made a substantial im- pact at NRCC, and Ms. Griffin looks forward to Jess’s continued involvement with NRCC beyond her internship. This is all the more impressive because Jess is the youngest intern in NRCC’s history (almost all of our interns are graduate students).”

Greenburg’s goal is to be a part of positive change. “What we really want is for a greater emphasis on environmental advocacy in both the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and everywhere, because if you teach people to be advocates for the environment, they’ll be better stewards of it, they’ll better pro- tect it, and we’ll have healthier ecosystems in the future,” Green- burg said.
Sesquicentennial celebration continues with the Minerva Term

Students and faculty spent the day taking a class on either documentary theatre or the ethics of genome editing

Both course options at Minerva Term allowed participants to learn and interact with different topics important to each field. Lyczak touched on the significance of genome editing, saying, “With the advent of CRISPR technology, the genomes of every living thing can now be edited to produce desired effects. In this workshop, participants grappled with the implications of these recent scientific advances. Participants learned the science behind this technology, explored the ethics of its use, and discussed the philosophic roots of modern science that led us to this moment.”

“The day involved short readings, video, small and whole group discussion, lecture, panel discussion, and debate,” Lyczak continued. “Each participant worked to draw a line to designate acceptable and unacceptable use of genome editing in humans and to clearly articulate the rationale for their decisions of how this technology should be regulated.”

The Minerva Term is all about learning, and even the professors were able to learn something new. Scudera was able to realize the importance of community within documentary theatre. “As we moved through the day from studying about documentary theater to practicing it by creating short performance pieces, it became clear that the art form is less about performance and more about building community,” explained Scudera. “It is theater at its best — where empathy is sought and achieved, connections are made, and dialogue is started. At a time when our country is becoming increasingly polarized, this art form strives to bring us together.”

Similarly, Lyczak was able to learn something about genome editing, technology, and the reasoning behind it. “I learned that while most of us found it easy to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable use of genome editing, we struggled to articulate the rationale for our thinking,” Lyczak stated. “I found this day-long experience helpful in allowing us to start making progress on understanding our reasoning. I think there is no better way to understand our own positions than to discuss ideas with others.”

Lyczak also found the Minerva Term to be important, not only because of the way it brought together an array of people willing to learn something new, but also because of the dialogue it opened on science. She said, “I think discussions like the ones we were able to have during the Minerva Term could be a way these bodies can solicit feedback and better inform the public on the science and ethics at play.”

After the Minerva Term, Lyczak reflected on her own feelings about genome editing and realized that “as a result of this experience, I feel more comfortable with my discomfort with the technology for editing human embryos…. As a scientist, I am comfortable acknowledging that there are things we cannot know. I believe the impacts of genome editing fall into this category and that makes me hesitant to move forward and make changes that will last for generations to come.”

The Minerva Term was named after Minerva Weinberger, Ursinus’ first admitted female student and valedictorian. It is a testament to the pursuit of education and Ursinus’ commitment to promoting lifelong learning. After its successful first run, hopefully the Minerva Term will become an annual staple on campus.

Fridge of the week

Johnny Myers ’19 has no food in his fridge, but he does have three Wawa gift cards! (He put them in his fridge so he doesn’t lose them.)

Calling all interesting fridges! If you have a refrigerator you would like featured in the Grizzly, please email sicoleman@ursinus.edu
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jmyers@ursinus.edu

On Friday, April 19, the Rainbow Resource Center held the first Ursinus LGBTQ+ Pride Festival. The event had performances, giveaways, and resources for everyone, including commemorative T-shirts, and concluded in a campus march from Olin Plaza to the LOVE statue. The entire program was the result of the combined efforts of people throughout the Ursinus community, including Ace Melendez ’19, president of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, student members of GSA, SUN, and L.A.X, as well as Dean Terrence Williams and Ashley Henderson.

Haunt Pitcher ’19 weighed in on the Pride Festival. “The event is the first Ursinus Pride Festival, which we hope will become an annual event. It’s designed to support and represent the Ursinus LGBTQ+ community and encourage pride in our identities. The event will feature tables by a number of groups both on and off campus, including the Rainbow Resource Center, the Trevor Project, the Montgomery County LGBT Business Council, Feminists in Action, Peer Advocates, UC Wellness Center, Delta Pi Sigma, Alpha Delta Phi, and Pi Omega Delta. These groups will be sharing information about their groups and how they provide services to the LGBTQ+ community both on and off campus. Delta Pi Sigma will be having a clothing drive for Philly AIDS Thrift, and the RRC will be selling Ursinus Pride t-shirts. This will all take place in Lower Wismer.”

“I am a nonbinary, transmasculine, pansexual individual,” said Pitcher. “Primarily, I want this event to serve Ursinus’ LGBTQ+ community, to show that Ursinus is a safe place where we can be ourselves and take pride in our identity. However, I hope that the entire Ursinus community realizes that we are a vibrant and important part of Ursinus, and learns a bit about how Ursinus can support LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as the type of work we’re doing on campus,” said Pitcher.

“At 1 pm, there will be a series of Lightning Talks by faculty and students in the IIE, exploring LGBTQ+ topics and academic course offerings. At 2 pm,” Sankofa Umoja Nia (SUN) will be hosting a presentation on ballroom culture in the IIE, run by Donay Burden. At 3 pm, there will be an open mic/poetry slam in Lower, hosted by Val Axtle and Cyn Ercole. At 5 pm, there will be a pride march from Olin Plaza to the LOVE statue. Everyone is encouraged to join in the fun and celebrate their pride,” said Pitcher.

Ace Mendez, who spearheaded the event, reflected on Ursinus’ history with the queer community. “Ursinus, to my knowledge, has never had a large-scale celebration of pride before. I thought that would be something to strive for in my last year,” they said. “As for what we can do, I think funneling more funding into inclusivity groups on campus would be a large part of what the school can do on an administrative level. I also feel that the school could be doing more in the way of having staff that specializes in inclusivity, because of now, most inclusivity centered events on campus are run and organized by students. Personally I feel like that shouldn’t be entirely valid, and I hope this pride festival becomes an annual event after I graduate so I can make note to have whoever replaces me reach out more in the future.”

Ace also wants the event to launch a conversation on campus about gender and sexuality. As a person who uses they/them pronouns, this is sometimes a difficult conversation to have. “I think this event could help start conversations surrounding gender identity and sexuality. I feel like an event like this should have been done far earlier in Ursinus’ lifetime personally. And as for what can be done, I think funneling more funding into inclusivity groups on campus would be a large part of what the school can do on an administrative level. I also feel that the school could be doing more in the way of having staff that specializes in inclusivity, because of now, most inclusivity centered events on campus are run and organized by students. Personally I feel like that shouldn’t be the case. This event and others like it shouldn’t be something that is spearheaded by students with the help of some staff, it should just be something the college does annually and funds. On a community and student level however, I feel like what should be done is simply learning more about different identities, attending meetings from inclusivity-oriented groups, etc. Engaging with each other and learning from each other should be common practice, and I want to bring that energy forward with this festival. Everyone deserves a place on campus where they can be validated, loved, and appreciated with the support of their peers and their community.”

Ace is also excited at the prospect of the festival continuing after they graduate. “It’s the very first festival, so I’m just hoping that it goes well and that it can be a good jumping-off point in the future,” said Ace. “I don’t expect it to be perfect, I just hope that everyone has fun.”

Ursinus statue decked out for the Pride Festival. Photo courtesy of Suzanne Angermeier.

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Notre Dame tragedy speaks to the necessity of historical preservation

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On April 17th, 2019, the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris suddenly and unexpectedly caught fire. Though the inner spire of the venerable church collapsed shortly after the fire began, its outer structure and its two historic bell towers still stand defiantly intact. I first heard the news of the Notre Dame fire in the secluded Mac lab in Ritter Hall; preoccupied as I was with carefully editing and arranging my opinions on why The 1975 are a bad band, I initially only half-digested what I was hearing. The notion of a building like Notre Dame just suddenly deciding to burn to the ground one day seemed almost absurd – wait, I thought, are they talking about the school or the church? Is that church even as big as I remember it being? It was only when I returned home and scoured social media for pictures and videos of the then-still-roaring blaze did I fully grasp the enormity of what had happened. And, judging by the outpouring of grief and sympathy – mixed with promises to rebuild and preserve – that accompanied the aftermath of the blaze, I was not the only one.

The global response to the tragedy at Notre Dame speaks to our collective fascination with the artifacts of our shared history and the past achievements – be they architectural, artistic, etc. – of our species. It’s not a desire we vocalize often: before this past week, how many people would stop you on the street and talk unprompted about how much they love the Notre Dame cathedral? For most of us, the so-called seven wonders of the world or the buildings and monuments that our culture deems truly significant exist only as abstractions, seen secondhand through a splash page in a textbook or the four-walled frame of a television set. Today, when the great museums of our civilization can be toured from the comfort and safety of one’s own home and all the wonders of the world, man-made or otherwise, are but a Google Image search away, the crypto-Luddites and pop pundits of the world might see fit to pontificate about how those damn iPhones and that damn Internet are ruining people’s appreciation for experiencing these aforementioned wonders in a face-to-face capacity. But, in the wake of Notre Dame, it is apparent that not only have we maintained our attachment to these towering relics of wonder, but the newfound sense of community and comradeship that social media discourse has wrought has intensified our shared sense of awe and enabled us to express it to a degree that we never have before.

My initial reaction upon seeing the pictures from Notre Dame was something along the lines of “My, God, it’s like something out of a disaster movie. You know the type of scene – a rogue tidal wave swallows the New York skyline, a wayward UFO smushes St. Peter’s Basilica. For many people, including me, this sudden intrusion of the chaos of the present onto the idyll of the past came as an unpleasant shock. Per official word, the Notre Dame fire was the result of a freak accident, nothing more. But in the uncertain future, who knows what will happen next? What historic landmarks will be swallowed by rising seas or crumble in scorching heat? How many historic mosques have been – and will continue to be – wiped off the map by million-dollar American drones bearing Hellfire missiles? If humanity really is as doomed as even the smartest among us seem to think we are, what’s even the hope in maintaining the relics of a past that we’re too selfish to learn from?

I don’t know if I have an answer to this last question, but I know someone who does: a figure who, like Notre Dame itself, occupies a larger-than-life presence in the cultural canon in more way than one. In 1973, Orson Welles wrote, directed and starred in the film “F For Fake,” a metafictional docudrama about truth, deception, forgery, art, life, and death among other things. In a scene that briefly circulated across social media in the days following the tragedy at Notre Dame, Welles stands before the cathedral at Chartres and ponders aloud on its significance. Sometimes it’s best to let the past, imperfect though it may be, speak for itself, so I’ll let Orson wrap things up: “Our works in stone, in paint, in print, are spared, some of them, for a few decades or a millennium or two, but everything must finally fall in war, or wear away into the ultimate and universal ash . . . ‘Be of good heart,’ cry the dead artists out of the living past. ‘Our songs will all be silenced, but what of it? Go on singing.’”
The “History! With an exclamation point!” Award: Alex Mumme

The UC Baseball team played the most absurd game I’ve seen in person in a long time when they beat Muhlenberg 22-9 last week. I was upset when I had to watch it, because the Yankees were playing a 6:35 game that night, and this game went so long that I was cutting it much closer than I’d like.

Regardless of how I felt personally about it, the Bears slammed their way into the record books in a few ways.

Juniors Alex Mumme and Dom Fiorentino became the first pair of Bears to both homer twice in the same game.

Mumme set two home run records himself that day, blasting his ninth and tenth dingers of the year to set the single season and career standards, respectively.

Fiorentino continued the record setting 22nd career blast came on a grand slam in the fifth inning, the most exciting form of home run, which invoked my memory of Derek Jeter’s fourth home run, which invoked a close was a little painful. I know one day I will get back into it, because I can’t imagine staying too far.

Baker agreed, “I know I really want to stay involved with the sport some way or another, but for right now it feels good to step away and really reflect. . . if you dedicate time and effort to something that is really important in your life you will be successful no matter what it is.”

Ultimately, these two feel that swimming has been a big part of who they are, and will certainly miss it.

Baker said, “It has shaped me into the strong, dedicated, empowered woman I am today. I will always look back on my memories of swimming with fondness and appreciation. Finding this sport is probably the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I will use what it taught me every day.”

UC Golf ready to make noise in CC

Gabriela Howell
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The Ursinus College Men’s Golf Team received their best score of the spring at the Rosemont Invitational on Sunday, April 14 and is now preparing for the Centennial Conference (CC) Championship that will be held from April 26-28 at Brookside Country Club in Macungie.

Fellow freshman Kyle Quagliero played a huge role in contributing to the Bears’ best of the spring at the invitational. Quagliero shot 74 – including an eagle during a 2-under-par back nine, which helped him tie for 18th with a 36-hole tally of 154.

Quagliero admitted that the team got off to a slow start. “[We struggled a bit] to get back to mid-season form after the cold winter, but I feel that everyone is getting back to the top of their games the past couple tournaments,” Quagliero said.

Freshman John Murray was another crucial contributor to the Bears’ success at the invite, as he had the best round of his career, PR-ing his previous low by 10 strokes.

Murray has achieved individual goals that he set this season, but acknowledges the need for more time to see team goals accomplished.

Murray said, “I have accomplished scoring lower, but my team goals will be accomplished [with] more time.”

Quagliero feels that his game is in a good spot. “[I] can accomplish a couple more goals at the CC Championship next week,” Quagliero said.

Murray said that the team is working hard as the Championship Tournament approaches. He said, “As a team, we are trying our hardest to practice a lot heading into the tournament. We are applying ourselves to the game more than ever.”

Quagliero agrees, “Our mindset as we prepare for the CC Championship is just to believe in ourselves and work as hard as we can leading up to it. This is the most talented team we’ve had in a while, so we just need to believe that we can compete with the other schools.”

Freshman Koi Toomey also had a career-best at the Rosemont invitational and played an integral role leading to the Bears’ success. His mind is in a good place as he approaches champs..

“My feelings are good because of my teammate Liam Bradley; he helps me stay positive,” Toomey said.

Junior Brian Barrett is excited to see what the team can do on the big stage this year.

Barrett said, “This is the closest and best team since I’ve been here. With our roster, I think it’s very possible for us to make some noise [at Conferences].”

Scores as of Monday, April 22

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Baker and Lyons reflect on UC careers

All-American duo completed their fourth and final trip to the national competition in March

David Mendelsohn
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The Ursinus College Women’s Swim Team has been the overlord of the Centennial Conference for over half a decade now. The Bears have not lost a meet within the CC in over five seasons, and won their sixth consecutive conference championship this February.

It takes a full team of competent swimmers to have that level of team success, but Ursinus has been fortunate enough to have several standout swimmers over the years, as well. Two of the greatest performers in the history of the women’s swim team wrapped up their careers at Ursinus this semester and will graduate next month. Their names are Peyten Lyons and Clara Baker.

These two women are currently the first- and second-place record holders in All-America honors, with 19 honors between the two of them. Lyons and Baker have 24 and 21 conference championship gold medals apiece, with four individual program records. Lyons was a member of all five current relay event records, with Baker a member of all four of those as well.

Because of such accomplishments, both qualified for the national level of competition all four seasons at Ursinus. Baker said, “Something that I always feel to be special at nationals is looking around and knowing that I am surrounded by athletes that have worked just as hard as me up to this point. It is a unifying and humbling experience. I love watching all the fast swimming, and feel honored to have been a part of it.”

Being part of such elite teams during their reign at Ursinus, moving on to the national level each season was a big jump in the levels of competition for the Bears, relative to their regular season and conference-level competition.

Baker described the challenge that can come with such a high-level of competition.

“I have learned that nothing comes easy. At a meet like nationals, everyone has highs and lows; it is the nature of the sport that not every swim is going to be your fastest. But I learned how to come back from the disappointing swims, keep up a positive attitude, and trust that my training was enough to get me to where I needed to be,” Baker said.

Lyons echoed how difficult it can be and explains that it is a tough adjustment when you are used to winning fairly easily and then not having success when facing swimmers as good as you are. She learned to not worry as much about the results when facing such elite competition.

“I think what I learned from competing there was to just have fun and enjoy the experience and whatever happens happens,” Lyons said.

Being able to attend each year was an honor in itself, and the women used it as motivation during the preseason and regular season, when the workload ahead may seem daunting.

“(Going to nationals) is always a motivator. Thinking about my competition in the offseason helps me get to the gym. It makes me push in the pool when I feel like giving up. I wanted to become top 8 in the 100 fly, and envisioning myself in that position throughout the season definitely helped me achieve that goal, because I worked like I was already there,” Baker said.

Lyons said, “I think each year I was more and more motivated to qualify. Since our season is so long and grueling I think having that goal in the back of my head at all times really kept me focused to push harder at the times I was lacking the motivation to do so.”

Each year, the NCAA national competition has been in a different location, so Baker and Lyons were able to travel all over the country because of their swimming careers, including stops in Dallas, Texas, Indianapolis, Ind., and Greensboro, N.C. this past season.