

The Albion Pleiad



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March 31, 2025 / Women's History Month / Online Monday, Wednesday and Friday at albionpleiad.com

Photos: The Intersectionality of Womanhood

Bella Bakeman
Editor-in-Chief

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Associate Director of the Office of Belonging Rivkah Gamble said that it's a great thing to have a Women's History Month. "Even though I don't always identify as a woman, the body I live in, people will see it that way," Gamble said. "In any space I'm in, the woman is there with me" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Springfield, Ohio, sophomore Maddie Crosby said that since starting testosterone, she has felt more like herself. "I think my gender identity is largely in conjunction with my identity as a lesbian," Crosby said. "I think I've tried to stop looking for acceptance or validation. I feel like, I know I'm part of Women's History Month because I know it, you know" (Photo illustration by Gabriela Popa).



First-year Nadia Burke from Mount Pleasant grew up knowing her dad was a transgender woman, which she said shaped her understanding of gender and being "powerful" in your identity. "I always knew, nobody else in my family did, I don't know how they didn't catch on," Burke said. "I wasn't aware not everyone was okay with that" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Associate professor of psychology Tammy Jechura has been working at Albion College since 2004. "Being a woman in STEM is really important because I want to try and guide other young women," Jechura said. "It's really exciting to give opportunities to other young women" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Sarah Kozal, Kansas City, Mich., sophomore loves being a woman in sports and when she's writing. "I want to try to become a screenwriter if I can, especially because it's such a male-dominated field and I want to show them I'm 'that girl,'" Kozal said (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Nomin Bilegdemderel Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, senior said she thinks being a woman means being "very kind and supportive" to others. "I think especially within the STEM field, girls, you know, stick together because they're so rare," Bilegdemderel said. "I think that's one of the things I really love" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Vanessa Rigney, Albany, N.Y., junior has known she was a transgender woman since she was young. "It's meant the world for me to be able to express myself more freely and be more true to myself," Rigney said. "This campus has been amazing when it comes to that" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Haileystar Castaneda and Houston sophomore said it's "wonderful" to be surrounded by so many powerful women in her family and at Albion College. "Seeing how far women have been able to go and get their doctorates, especially seeing so many women of color here on campus, it's just like 'ugh! We can do it! There's hope!'" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).



Albion senior Kyndall Lewis said she shaved her head in November because she's always wanted to. "It's just a thing that grows on my body," Lewis said. "I've never valued my hair as much as everyone around me has" (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).

Women's Wrestling on Progress, Perseverance; Paving the Way for Female Athletes



Jackson senior Jayla Oberst wrestles in a match against Trine University on Feb. 13 in the Kresge Gymnasium. Oberst said she has grown "tremendously" during her time on Albion's women's wrestling team (Photo courtesy of Marissa Smego).

Bella Fabrizio
Staff Writer

When Albion students are looking for some entertainment, watching the women's wrestling team pin down the competition is always an option.

On March 8, the team ended their 2024-2025 season at the National Tournament in Iowa.

The tournament marked the end of wrestling's fourth season as an official sports program at Albion College. The team was put together by head coach Adam Wilson, who was hired in 2020 to bring back men's wrestling – which had been disbanded for over 40 years – and establish Albion's first-ever women's wrestling program.

Jackson senior Jayla Oberst was a member of the women's wrestling team during its first season in 2021. As she finishes up her last semester at Albion, Oberst said her journey has been "really special," adding that "all of the firsts" she's had with the program "are really meaningful."

This year, Oberst made history as Albion's only wrestler – man or woman – to qualify for Nationals three times.

"To have that under my belt feels really nice," Oberst said. "It makes me feel like I've proven myself."

Even though Albion didn't have an established wrestling program, that didn't dissuade Oberst. Wilson's passion for wrestling helped her realize that Albion was the right place for her.

"He was basically the reason I came here," Oberst said. "You could tell what his vision was and how much love he had for the sport."

Grand Haven junior and fellow wrestler Lynsey Light chose Albion because of Wilson's "mission statement" for what he wanted the team to be.

"He's building something," Light said. "I knew I wanted to be a part of that."

The Pleiad reached out via email to Wilson on March 17, 18 and 19. He did not respond in time for publication.

The women's wrestling program was "still so new" in 2021, Oberst said. Due to only having three female athletes on the roster their first year, the team was forced to forfeit at many weight classes throughout the season.

Despite the challenges of having so few members, Oberst said she was incredibly close with the other two women on the team.

"All three of us lived together in the same dorm," Oberst said. "We were kind of like a little trio."

Fowlerville junior Hannah Arledge, who joined the roster in 2022, said that she and her teammates are encouraged to "come together," which strengthens their bonds.

"All of them are going to be at my wedding," Arledge said. "I don't know if it would have been like that somewhere else."

She added that the wrestling program helps its athletes achieve individual goals while encouraging the team to work as a collective.

"I think that's what really separates our program," Arledge said. "It's so individual, but we always come together."

The program's growth over the last four years has been very impressive, Oberst said. Not only has the roster grown to include 12 women, but Albion has gone from "underdogs" to "the school that people want to beat" in a short time.

"We came from nothing, and now we make it to national tournaments," Oberst said.

The recent inclusion of women's wrestling as an official NCAA sport has given female wrestlers across the country more opportunities to compete. According to Oberst, the possibility of an NCAA championship has played a role in shaping the wrestling program's goals.

Wrestling at Albion has been "life-changing," for Light, she said. The support and coaching she has received have helped prepare her for "future success."

"Everything I've done for wrestling has just made me into a better person," Light said.

For Arledge, staying true to herself while "leaving a mark" on Albion is the goal.

'A whole new generation of (first-years) are going to come in. I'm excited to be a proud alumna and watch the program continue to grow.'

"You could be the best wrestler in the world, but if you're not a good person, none of it matters," Arledge said. "You can't lose sight of who you are just because of the things you've done."

In just four years, the women's wrestling program at Albion has grown into a full team, and Oberst said they're just getting started. Though her time as an athlete at Albion is over, she is proud to have helped lay the foundation for future wrestlers.

"A whole new generation of (first-years) are going to come in," Oberst said. "I'm excited to be a proud alumna and watch the program continue to grow."

Continued on back.

Women's Wrestling



From left to right, Sam Parcell, alumna '23, Jackson senior Jayla Oberst and Summer Mauk, alumna '22, pose for a photo at a banquet. Parcell, Oberst and Mauk were the first three athletes on the women's wrestling team at Albion in 2021 (Photo courtesy of Jayla Oberst).

Continued from front.

Understanding the changes Albion's women's wrestling team is making is very important, Arledge said. Her main focus is on creating "better circumstances" for the next generation of female athletes.

"Doing anything we can now to give them the best opportunities possible is the ultimate goal," Arledge said.

Light said she plans to leave Albion next year with a legacy worth remembering.

'We came from nothing, and now we make it to national tournaments.'

"I'll know it the moment I step off the mat," Light said. "I'm leaving behind something I can be proud of."

Who's Your Scully? Women in STEM Reflect on Their Role Models

What do Dana Scully, Ms. Frizzle and Romana have in common? They're all characters who have inspired many women in STEM, including those at Albion College.

"The Scully Effect" refers to Dana Scully, a character from "The X-Files" (1993-2018) who was "an FBI agent and the intellectual equal of her partner." A 2018 study showed that among women who knew of the character, "63% say Scully increased their confidence that they could excel in a male-dominated profession."

This phenomenon, along with other women in media, have influenced Albion STEM scholars, but they weren't only inspired by fiction. Students and faculty cited mentors, parents and more as getting them into their field of interest.

Media Influences

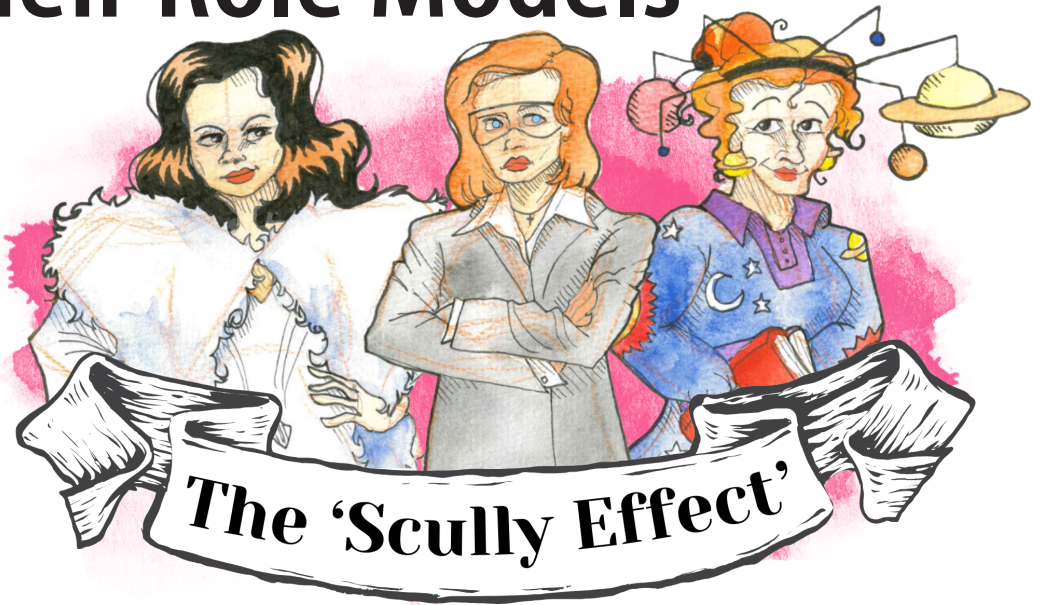
Chemistry major and Madison, Wisconsin, senior Dana Parker – who was named after Dana Scully – grew up watching "The X-Files," "Big Bang Theory" with Amy Farrah Fowler and "Bones" with Temperance Brennan.

Parker said her name originated from her parents watching "The X-Files" when they were dating. She added that she "grew up around a lot of science" since her "parents are both scientists."

"When I think about 'The Scully Effect,' I would have to say I am the second generation of my family to be influenced by Scully," Parker said.

Livonia junior Kaelyn Ruiter, who has a double major in chemistry and physics, grew up watching "Doctor Who." They loved the character Romana, who was "a time lord," they said.

"She was smarter than the doctor, always correcting him when he gets things wrong,"



Romana from "Doctor Who," Dana Scully from "The X-Files" and Ms. Frizzle from "The Magic School Bus" depicted to represent "The Scully Effect." Women in STEM have been inspired to enter their careers because of characters like Scully, and at Albion, many cited real-life inspiration, too (Illustration by Bonnie Lord).

Ruiter said. "She was really someone I looked up to. As a kid, I would go to school dressed like her and everything."

However, she said "The Magic School Bus" was big in her childhood, and she was inspired by Ms. Frizzle.

"She was a female who taught science and made science fun," Reeves said.

Associate Provost and kinesiology professor Heather Betz said she found inspiration in Scully herself, adding that she was "a huge fan of 'The X-Files,'" in addition to medical television shows.

"ER" was really the first sort of real-life medical show on television, and they had some very strong female characters on that show," Betz said. "You started to see more of it on television, in addition to in the classroom."

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'When I think about 'The Scully Effect,' I would have to say I am the second generation of my family to be influenced by Scully.'

Visiting assistant professor of chemistry Jennifer Reeves said that she didn't grow up in the Scully era.

Redefining Gender, Reshaping Minds: The History of WGSS at Albion

Killian Altayeb
Assistant Managing Editor

With two full-time professors and 21 classes in the major, professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies (WGSS) Tricia Franzen said the WGSS Department at Albion "opens people's minds," allowing students to use department classes "as the inspiration to make the changes that will make life better for all of us."

The establishment of the WGSS Department at Albion College was not accidental. According to Franzen, the process of

establishing the WGSS department was set off after the founding of the National Women's Studies Association in 1977, when "the Great Lakes College Association had major retreats and meetings starting in the late '80s, early '90s."

For 157 years after its founding, Albion didn't have a formal women's studies program. The first women's studies course was co-taught by two political science professors and offered as part of a Women's Studies Concentration rather than a standalone major, Franzen said.

The program initially functioned through a faculty, staff and community committee, Franzen said, which later led to the establishment of a gender category requirement at the college in 1991.

Emeritus professor of WGSS Judith Lockyer, who was hired in 1985 as an English professor, said that legitimizing the department took "a proposal to hire somebody in women's and gender studies" and "a lot of haggling."

'The main thing was to convince them, to make them see, to help educate them, that studies in scholarship in women's and gender studies were important.'

In 1992 Franzen was hired as the director of both the Anna Howard Shaw Women's Center and the Women's Studies Concentration. As the department grew, Franzen secured a tenure-track position, and the department shifted from focusing solely on women's studies to incorporating gender and sexuality studies.

"We had the intro class, we had feminist theory and then we had whichever classes I taught," Franzen said.

Challenges Facing the WGSS Department

In its early years, Lockyer said that faculty struggled to recognize women's and gender studies as an "actual study."

"The main thing was to convince them, to make them see, to help educate them, that studies in scholarship in women's and gender



Students gather around a table at Albion's women's center in 1992. Students who wanted to major in gender studies would do it through "individually designed, independent majors, interdisciplinary majors," Franzen said (Photo courtesy of Albion College Archives and Special Collections).

studies were important," Lockyer said.

Once established, Franzen said the WGSS Department faced skepticism, particularly around the inclusion of feminist perspectives and LGBTQ+ issues.

"There was a lot of questioning, particularly about using the word feminist, or including lesbian," Franzen said. "As that field expanded and became more inclusive, there was a progression."

Director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center for Gender Equity Lisa Winchell-Caldwell, alumna '06, who graduated with a major in WGSS said that although a long-standing issue is "perceptions about the department," the curriculum applies to other interdisciplinary fields that do not have a single, clearly defined career path.

"People don't see how those studies relate to other practical careers they may be interested in, or they don't understand fully what those multidisciplinary departments do," Winchell-Caldwell said.

WGSS Beyond the Classroom

Today, Franzen said the WGSS Department continues to be shaped by student interest and advocacy.

"Particularly on issues of gender and sexual identity, students come in, and they push us – they want to see these classes," Franzen said.

In addition to coursework, student-led initiatives have played a key role in shaping the department's influence on campus.

Lockyer said student organizations such as Break the Silence – now known as LGBriTs – were central to these efforts, giving "people the right to speak and not have to defend their identity all the time."

Students were also instrumental in transforming the Center for Gender Equity, from "a very part-time entity to now being a full-time entity," Franzen said.

The "partnership" between the Center for Gender Equity and the WGSS Department is dynamic, with initiatives ranging from guest lectures to shared planning efforts for speaker series and learning opportunities, Winchell-Caldwell said.

"We talk about things like the experiential learning opportunities for students, ways for students to work with my office and majors and minors within the department to meet together," Winchell-Caldwell said.

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