

The Albion Pleiad



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Photos: Class of '25 Shows us What They're Taking From Albion College; Leaving Behind

Killian Altayeb
Assistant Managing Editor



Renner sits in his place of work, the Bonta Admissions Center. "Now that I'm leaving, I have a home in admissions, I have a home at the Dow, they all resemble different parts of me," Renner said (Photo illustration by Gabriela Popa).

As graduation approaches, Albion's seniors are packing more than boxes – they're packing memories. In this series of photos, members of the class of 2025 reflect on the things they're taking with them into the future – and the pieces of their college lives they're choosing to leave behind.

Drew Renner: Hello Sunflower Seeds, Goodbye Baseball

Brighton senior Drew Renner isn't packing many physical objects as he prepares to graduate, but what he is taking, he said, holds a lot of weight.

"A lot of the items that I'm bringing are intangible," Renner said. "A lot of it is gonna be the experiences, the memories that I've developed over the last four years here, starting all the way from Wesley into this year, where we're wrapping up our baseball season here."

The tangible items Renner's taking with him include sunflower seeds.

"Sunflower seeds are one of those things where if you have seeds, everyone's coming to you," Renner said. "Whenever I see them, I'll always reflect on my baseball days."

The thing Renner's leaving behind? Baseball.

'I always said once I'm done, I'm done, I'm never picking up a baseball again.'

The binder, which is passed down to each new choir president, is "obviously being left behind for future presidents so that they can run the choir in a helpful and meaningful way," McKee said.

"I think the binder definitely signifies my growth and leadership," McKee said. "As a (first-year), I was very quiet and didn't really ever say a lot, and I didn't think I would ever be president of choir, but here we are."

As for the water bottle?

"It probably has way too many stories to tell," McKee said. "One of my best golf tournaments that I had, I had my water bottle with me."

Now, heading toward graduation, McKee said she's also leaving behind something less tangible – a fear of the world.

"It's something that my friends and I bonded with a lot over here, and it's definitely something I will still be using afterwards," Babatunde said.

As for what she's leaving behind? Her mailbox key.

"It was the only key that I never really added with the other keys," Babatunde said. "I think it was to not misplace it, and knowing that if I do, I will have to pay a big fine."

But beyond the physical, Babatunde said she's also parting with something deeper, a fear.

"Going to a new environment, you don't see the same people you see every day, so there's a fear of not losing self, still knowing who I am afterwards and continuing the journey," Babatunde said.



'It's kind of cheesy, but it's gotten me through a lot. It's been with me through pretty much everything.'

McKee sits in Goodrich Chapel with her water bottle and choir binder. "The binder just kind of shows my growth as a person, my character, my leadership skills and abilities that I've been able to develop over the past two years," McKee said (Photo illustration by Killian Altayeb).

"I'll definitely keep up staying in athletics, but I always said once I'm done, I'm done, I'm never picking up a baseball again," Renner said.

Renner added one of the most important concepts he's leaving behind is a fear of failure.

"Leaving here, failure is just one role that I found didn't work correctly," Renner said. "I think there's that idea of doing everything perfectly correct the first time, but it's not realistic anymore."

Miranda McKee: Hello Water Bottle, Goodbye Choir Binder

Troy senior Miranda McKee is keeping the water bottle that's been with her since junior year of high school – and leaving behind the choir president's binder.

"It's kind of cheesy, but it's gotten me through a lot," McKee said of the water bottle. "It's been with me through pretty much everything."

"Coming into college, I was like, 'oh my god, once I graduate, I'm gonna start freaking out,'" McKee said. "Now we're here, and I think it's okay, I'll be alright, I'll make it through."

Joy Babatunde: Hello Notebooks, Goodbye Mailbox Key

Chicago senior Joy Babatunde is bringing her kinesiology notebooks and a deck of cards, two items she said remind her of the "great connections" she's made, academically and socially.

"I've kept my notebooks over the years because of my major, and I knew that I will need them," Babatunde said. "They've actually stuck with me, definitely all throughout."

The deck of cards, she said, carries a different kind of significance, one rooted in friendship.

Damion Gehres: Hello to Being, a 'Giant People Can Stand on,' Goodbye Cow Costume

Elsie senior Damion Gehres, who has been a member of Albion College's wind and percussion ensemble and Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) throughout his time on campus, said one of the things he's taking with him is the goal of being "the giant people can stand on."

"My high school band experience sucked. I did not plan on actually doing this once I got here," Gehres said. "But then I was like 'screw it, I'm gonna do it for a year, see if I like it.'"

Four years later, he's at the center of a notecard tradition – a system in which members of the ensemble write positive notes to each other. Gehres said the tradition started when a graduating senior suggested they "do something nice for the (first-years)."

"I have mine from the past because one of my friends gave me one that was literally two full notecards," Gehres said.

After performing his first solo on April 11, Gehres is preparing to leave behind his role in the ensemble.

"This could potentially be the last percussion thing," Gehres said. "It just feels nice actually having people believe in it."

As for the tangible item he's leaving behind? A cow costume.

"I didn't have anything to fit one of my fraternity parties, so I'm like 'screw it, I'm gonna wear it throughout the entire party,'" Gehres said. "People loved it. It was a funny idea, and I think it would be a good idea to keep it as the mascot of the house."

Read more at albionpleiad.com.



Babatunde sits in the KC Belonging Lounge with her notebooks and a deck of cards. "The objects will definitely remind me of the times I've had here," Babatunde said (Photo illustration by Killian Altayeb).

Graduating Student-Athletes: 'It Really is a Privilege to be Here'



Albion College senior student-athletes Anja Kelly from Lake Odessa, Robbie Dameron from Macomb, Michael Pruchnic from Macomb and Miranda McKee from Troy all showcase their sports. The athletes showcase the depth and dedication of Briton athletics (Photos courtesy of Robbie Dameron, Anja Kelly, Miranda McKee and Michael Pruchnic).

Seiji McSwain
Staff Writer

Imagine being so deeply invested in a sport that you've played your entire life – then suddenly, you're playing in what might be your final season. For senior athletes, that's not just a thought, it's reality.

As seniors move into the next stage of their lives, memories of their greatest athletic moments are what they have to share. Anja

Kelly, Lake Odessa senior, said her most memorable time as a student-athlete at Albion happened her sophomore year, when the Britons beat Hope College on Jan. 14, 2023.

"It was 100% my favorite memory," Kelly said. "We were so excited, obviously we were the underdogs, so it was nice to come out on top, and it was at home."

Other athletes' memories are more general team rituals, and not necessarily a specific moment. One aspect of Macomb senior

Michael Pruchnic's athletic career he said he will miss the most is walking down to the field before every home game.

Being able to "ground himself in the moment" is something that Pruchnic didn't understand at first, but during this last season, he said he realized that these times will be his last in Sprinkle-Sprandel Stadium.

"The past three years, you're like, 'what is this?'" Pruchnic said. "Then, my last season I was like man, this is my last time being on this field, and I just gotta take everything in."

While these athletes experienced great moments, their careers did not come without hardships. Being able to balance the "triangle" of college life is something student-athletes, like Kelly, encounter.

As an English major with a secondary education concentration, Kelly said it can be "hard" to balance academics, basketball and sorority life.

"My coaches were really flexible with me, like if we had workouts planned, I would ask for time set aside to go to a classroom, so they're really helpful with that," Kelly said.

Music major Miranda McKee, Troy senior and golfer, has also had challenges balancing her athletics and academics.

"Being a music major is pretty demanding; there's a lot of extra steps," McKee said. "I miss a lot of practices because of it."

Navigating the demands of being a student-athlete isn't easy, but McKee said she credits the support system around her for helping her stay grounded and focused.

Having teammates as mentors is something that has built camaraderie amongst the team, Pruchnic said, adding that his team has meant everything to him and that they are people who "will be at my wedding."

The entire athletic culture on campus also plays a big role in the student-athlete experience, whether that be going to other sports' big games or seeing other teams at their own games cheering them on, Pruchnic said.

"If there's a big game coming up, ev-

erybody's gonna come together and they're gonna be at those games cheering you on," Pruchnic said.

Kelly echoed a sentiment similar to Pruchnic's, highlighting the tight-knit culture among Albion's student-athletes. For her, one of the most memorable aspects of being a student-athlete isn't just the competition — it's the community.

"I've had so much fun going to other sporting events to support, and having other teams come to ours as well," Kelly said. "Everyone knows each other, and everyone's supportive of each other."

For Kelly, the skills she's developed playing sports will be applied to her future endeavors.

"I've had to learn how to advocate for my teammates and myself and that's gonna be really important to do in a classroom, advocating for my students," Kelly said.

As for Robbie Dameron, Macomb senior, who is entering the chiropractic field, he will "take the same fundamental(s)" he developed while playing lacrosse with him to graduate school.

"Everything about what I've learned here is what, I think, is the right way to do it," Dameron said.

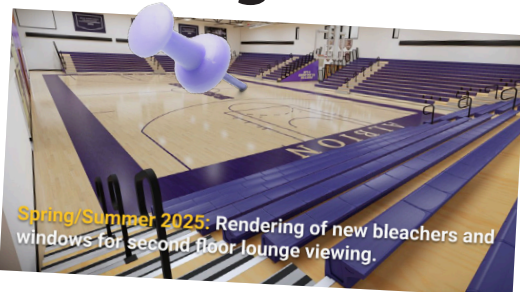
The legacy seniors leave behind is something that Dameron "hopes" to have an impact on his team years after he's gone.

"I definitely hope people realize what hard work and dedication get you, like in your grades and lacrosse," Dameron said. "I hope my teammates always remember me as a really hard worker."

As the year progresses, student-athletes may get caught in the difficulties of being an athlete, but Kelly reminds them to take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

"There's so many people that would have loved to play a sport in college and they didn't have the opportunity to do so," Kelly said. "This really is a privilege to be here and to be able to play a collegiate sport."

President Webster Talks Upcoming Summer Renovations to Kresge, KC; Wesley



Spring/Summer 2025: Rendering of new bleachers and windows for second floor lounge viewing.



A mock photo of Kresge's soon to be spectator lounge, newly furnished and painted. The gym will have an updated spectator lounge space, where students, staff and faculty can view games below (Illustration courtesy of Wayne Webster).



A digital rendering of a newly renovated floor in the KC, depicting new furnishings, flooring and paint. The 4th floor, where students often study, will see entirely new renovations, including changes in furniture, flooring and lighting (Illustration courtesy of Wayne Webster).



A digital rendering of the KC's living room after renovation, consisting of changes to its flooring, window and furnishings. The KC's living room is a space where students, staff and faculty meet and host events (Illustration courtesy of Wayne Webster).

Ashanti McKnight
Staff Writer

As the school year comes to an end, several highly trafficked areas on Albion's campus are preparing for substantial changes. Renovations are scheduled for a range of facilities, including Kresge Gymnasium, the KC, Wesley, the Ludington Center, Upper Baldwin and Goodrich Chapel.

Read more at albionpleiad.com.

Opinion: Learning How to Say Goodbye to the Class of '25



The fall 2024 editorial board of the Albion Pleiad, posing for a photo in their office. Two staff members, Editor in Chief and Berkley senior Bella Bakeman and Co-Marketing Coordinator and Detroit senior Rhiannon Slotnick graduate this year after being on staff with the author, Alma junior Bonnie Lord, for three years (Photo courtesy of Krista Quesenberry).

Bonnie Lord
Managing Editor

Starting college isn't easy. You're on your own in a new place, taking on new responsibilities and you don't go home at the end of the day anymore because it is your home. But once I knew who my friends were, it got easier.

For me, and many others, many of these friends are older, fresh-faced mentors who remembered well the perils of their first year and helped steady us through ours.

I am a junior this year, and many of those steady hands – those familiar faces – are now graduating seniors. For those of you in the same camp, you might be thinking the same thing:

I have never known this place without them.

In the hope of waving them off with no regrets, I want to dedicate a few words to them and their role in my life. Goodness knows, we need to say it while we can, before the world calls them somewhere else and our paths become harder to cross. Ultimately, we will never all be in this place together again. Sure, there will be alumni events in the future. I certainly plan to keep in touch with my senior friends, but this chapter, these three years we have spent together in classes, trips and projects and living just around the corner, is coming to an end.

I have been here before, though.

When I was a junior in high school, the seniors above me graduating was a bizarre moment to realize. I didn't realize I had been living in the before until I was in the after, and my social atmosphere was completely different.

Worse still, I had to follow them.

Any person who has graduated from a secondary education will tell you, "it goes so fast," and it only gets faster.

Change is inevitable, regardless of whether or not we are prepared for it. Graduation has always been the goal – we came here knowing it would eventually end.

So, how do we say goodbye to our beloved mentors, bosses, classmates and friends?

First, we should thank them. I mean this literally: write letters, give gifts, show up to their final projects and presentations. Even a thoughtful email or quick text could be the difference between a lifelong friendship and a nameless face in the photo album. Sink your nails into them and never let go.

Second, let them have their moment. Four or more years of stress, work, wins and losses have led to this event. They are accomplished, hardworking and finally, finished.

Take the win, seniors, you've earned it.

And for us, who are left behind? Think of it as training.

The sad reality is that we will keep losing people – sometimes suddenly, through a big move, a transfer, a death or a disagreement. Other times, it will happen slowly, unintentionally drifting apart until we are fundamentally different people.

But there will always be new people.

A year from now, we juniors will be someone's seniors, leaving the helm to the next wave of students. We will sail away, meeting new ships in the night, finding new islands of life experience to land on – maybe our predecessors will be there. Someday soon, a year's difference won't feel like a difference at all.

Until then, seniors, know that you made your mark and we're right behind you.



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