

WCBA FIRST STOP IN DOWNTOWN YOUNGSTOWN PARKING ASSESSMENT

The Youngstown City Council approved the reinstallation of 18 parking meters near the Williamson College of Business Administration on North Phelps Street. Photo by **Kamron Meyers/The Jambar**

KELCEY NORRIS

A reevaluation of downtown Youngstown's parking is on the horizon with the amount of parking meters set to increase in front of the Williamson College of Business Administration on Youngstown State University's campus.

Charles Shasho, the city's deputy director of public works, said the city will be assessing a comprehensive look at the different parking options, and this is only the first step of the process.

"Fifth Street, Front Street, Federal Street, Commerce Street and Rayen Avenue will all have some pretty significant changes," he said. "There will be a little less parking on the street, but in the end, it'll be much more efficient and safer."

The Youngstown City Council approved the reinstallation of 18 parking meters near the business college.

Shasho said the reinstallation of the meters has been a long time coming.

"When they built the Williamson College, the meters were actually removed because they were in the roadway, and now we've started to put them back in," he said. "We should've put them back in immediately, but they were removed temporarily 10 years ago."

The meters will be located on North Phelps Street, a previous

convenient spot for free parking.

The meter prices used to be 25 cents for 75 minutes of parking, but according to Shasho, the rate is set to increase to \$1.50 for two hours.

"Twenty-five cents ... is really not a typical parking rate and it's usually a higher rate than that," Shasho said. "Lincoln [Avenue] is \$1.50, so we went up to that."

Danny O'Connell, director of support services at YSU, said the reinstallation of the parking meters is a good decision on the city council's part.

"Having spots that turn over every two hours are a big benefit to the students and anyone who needs to visit Williamson," he said. "If you're running in and out for a class, having a chance at one of those meter spots for two hours is a heck of a deal."

O'Connell said the city's reevaluation of Youngstown parking as a whole is a step in the right direction.

"I travel a lot, and anywhere I go that has a vibrant downtown like ours has more expensive meters," he said. "I think to keep up with the times and to keep the traffic flow going, we needed to review that."

In O'Connell's opinion, the two-hour rate for parking at the meters is not very costly.

"Campus parking is \$5 a day, and the price they're talking about with these meters is more than reasonable," he said. "Rule of thumb: If the local parking is \$5, then the meter parking should be at least \$2.50 an hour."

O'Connell said the addition of the parking meters discourages students from leaving their vehicle parked too long for fear of being ticketed.

"To have someone park in a spot and stay there for days, it just doesn't make sense," he said. "That's not what the neighborhood was designed for."

Joseph Chapman, a sophomore telecommunication studies major, commutes daily to YSU and believes the city should not be adding more meters on North Phelps Street.

"Even though city hall believes it's for the best, I think that targeting the students of YSU is a bad look for the city," he said. "There must be a better location in the city to increase the prices. Students already have plenty of financial burden."

Chapman said he usually finds a spot on North Phelps Street because there is no extra charge in addition to the YSU parking permit.

"I will still try to park for free," Chapman said. "I have my ways of avoiding using a meter and they probably won't change."

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SGA SPIRIT AWARD RENAMED AFTER REBECCA BANKS

Rebecca Banks (center) poses for a photo with YSU Student Government Association President Caroline Smith (right) and SGA Executive Vice President Justin Shaughnessy (left) after the SGA Spirit Award was named after Banks on Feb. 12. Photo by **Alyssa Weston/The Jambar**

ALYSSA WESTON

The Youngstown State University Student Government Association body unanimously passed a bylaw amendment on Feb. 17 to rename the SGA Spirit Award as the Rebecca Banks Spirit Award.

The award is named for YSU graduate student Rebecca Banks, a nontraditional student who within the last decade has had consistent involvement in YSU student organizations such as Rookery Radio.

Additionally, in 2014, she was crowned YSU's homecoming queen in honor of her son Bruce Banks who died in a drowning accident in 2012.

In an earlier article, the 58-year-old told *The Jambar* she considers many YSU students her daughters and sons, which has helped comfort her after her son's death.

SGA annually presents the Spirit Award to two people for "outstanding enthusiasm for the work of the Student Government Association."

Justin Shaughnessy, executive vice president of SGA, was inspired to rename the award after Banks during the fall 2019 semester after having a conversation with Banks and Caroline Smith, SGA president, at the opening of Maag Library's

family study room.

"This was the first time that I actually one-on-one spoke with Rebecca. ... But you see her everywhere. She's involved in everything," he said. "And so, we talked to her for about 30 to 40 minutes, just about all the things that YSU is doing."

After the conversation, Shaughnessy and Smith knew they needed to do something out of the ordinary to honor Banks' contributions and dedication to YSU.

The initiative was kept a secret between Shaughnessy, Smith and the rest of the SGA executive board until the end of Monday's SGA meeting when it was put to a vote. Before then, not even the voting body or Banks knew the award was going to be renamed.

Shaughnessy said he invited Banks to the meeting and told her she "wouldn't want to miss it" to ensure she would come, but he wanted to surprise her during the meeting.

Because it was kept a secret, Shaughnessy said there was a chance the bylaw amendment wouldn't get passed by the SGA body, but he was confident the body would recognize Banks' dedication to YSU just as he and Smith had.

"Caroline and I talked about it. And I'm like, 'You know, I've been here for four years, and I've never met one person that didn't like Rebecca.' ... I had confidence that we would

pass this," he said.

Smith described Banks as an inspiration to campus.

"I don't think there is anyone who has demonstrated as much spirit for the YSU community as [Banks has]. This award was a long time coming," she said.

After the announcement, Banks thanked SGA for the honor and said YSU has brought her "the world."

"[YSU's] opened up so many things to me, and going to all these events, I'm always promoting like, 'Come with me, come with me. It's fun. You'll learn something new. You'll make friends,'" she said. "I just thank you so much. I'm very honored and humbled."

According to Shaughnessy, the SGA Spirit Award was one of the only annual SGA awards that wasn't named after somebody.

"Another thing that was, like, really important to us is that there were guidelines for this award. But it's always nice to have somebody or something to compare it to," he said.

"That was important for this award, especially since it's about spirit, about involvement," Shaughnessy added. "We should have somebody that embodies that description, you know, to guide our decision [for future award recipients]."

NEWS BRIEF

TEMPORARY RESTRICTION FOR UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED TRAVEL TO CHINA

Youngstown State University has issued a temporary restriction for all university-sponsored travel to China, according to an email from the Office of Academic Affairs.

This comes after the U.S. Department of State issued a level 4 travel advisory, asking people not to travel to China as international concerns grow regarding the coronavirus,

termed COVID-19.

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends travelers avoid nonessential travel to China.

"We strongly advise all students, faculty and staff to follow that recommendation and to avoid all nonessential travel to

China," the email stated.

The university said it continues to closely monitor the situation.

There have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ohio as of Feb. 18.



RELAY FOR LIFE AIMS TO INCREASE FUNDRAISING GOAL IN 2020

Taylor Nabb (left), Noah Romero (middle) and Devan Snyder (right) sit in the lower arcade in Kilcawley Center to fundraise for the upcoming Relay for Life event on April 18. Photo by Kamron Meyers/The Jambar

AMANDA JOERNDT

Relay for Life of Youngstown State University is in full swing promoting and engaging the community in its yearly event, raising money and awareness for the American Cancer Society.

The YSU chapter hosts its Relay for Life event with an achievable fundraising goal in mind. Last year, the organization exceeded its fundraising goal two times with \$48,000 raised.

Approximately \$4.1 billion has been invested in cancer research since 1946, and 8.5 million free rides have been provided to various cancer treatments, according to the American Cancer Society's website.

Additionally, the American Cancer Society's website states there have been 71,850 cancer cases in 2020 so far.

Devan Snyder, a sophomore biology major, is the co-event lead for Relay for Life and said in order to meet the large goal, fundraising opportunities happen around campus often.

One such opportunity is Paint Your Campus Purple, which helps engage the community for the upcoming Relay for Life event April 18.

"On Monday and [Tuesday], people were able to sign the rock if they're in the fight against cancer," she said. "We also are selling 'Waddle for a Cure' T-shirts, and we sold some of them a while ago, but we have a lot left over so we're selling those at the table in Kilcawley."

Snyder said the Relay for Life event is a nationwide initiative and one of the American Cancer Society's biggest fundraisers.

"We have a bunch of teams there who are fundraising, and all of the money raised prior and at the event goes straight to cancer

research and a bunch of services the American Cancer Society offers to patients and their families," she said.

Along with reaching its \$68,740 fundraising goal, the YSU chapter is hoping to sell more luminarias and place them around the track during the event, according to Snyder.

"It's just a bag that people can buy and donate money. ... It'll be decorated in honor for anyone who has or is battling cancer," she said. "At the event, we'll have a silent lap honoring those luminarias, and people will just be walking around the lap crying."

Katie Biller, a senior human resource management major, is the recruitment committee chair and said being a part of Relay for Life during her undergraduate years has helped her learn life skills during the event preparation.

"All of the time management has helped me stay focused and this year, I've really been using my time way better. ... It's really just been rewarding," she said.

According to Biller, she joined Relay for Life to be a part of "something bigger" than herself.

"I didn't realize exactly how much I was getting into, but I'm so thankful I did," she said. "It was really just pure cooperation and just between the people I've met."

Biller said the organization has undergone a transformation from her first year on the committee to now, her last semester.

"They were in the gym in Beeghly Center, and we were really small, didn't really have a game plan," she said. "It was crazy to see us raising \$15,000 to \$18,000 to almost \$50,000 now."

Gabriella Orenic, a freshman pre-med biology major, said even though everyone participates in Relay for Life for a

different reason, the teams are all fighting for the same battle.

"We are fighting for a cure, but we all have our different stories and come from different reasons," she said. "It's nice to be able to raise money and feel like we're making a difference."



Students can sign their name on the rock in the center of campus to raise awareness for the American Cancer Society. Photo by Kamron Meyers/The Jambar



A Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley distribution truck was backing into the facility located at 2805 Salt Springs Road, filling the truck for food drop-offs. Photo by **Kamron Meyers/The Jambar**

ABIGAIL CLOUTIER

Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley reached a record of food distribution in the Youngstown area with 11.5 million pounds of food distributed to over 100 member agencies in 2019, according to Becky Page.

Page, director of development at Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, said the organization received an enormous amount of food from the United States Department of Agriculture in 2019.

“[Food] is purchased by the USDA and is divided up between 200 food banks across the country that have a USDA contract,” she said.

The food bank distributes 45,000 pounds of food daily and offers delivery options to organizations that cannot facilitate pickup.

Although Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley does not directly distribute food to those in need, it helps operate mobile and school pantry programs.

Page said mobile pantries transport food to residents in rural areas of the community that do not have direct access to the food bank.

“We operate mobile pantry programs, which help serve people in the more rural areas that don’t have transportation to get to an agency,” she said. “We are up to 41 school pantry programs ... in 20 school districts.”

The food bank also distributes soap, detergent and sanitary products and offers food education resources to its member organizations.

Kim Brock, agency relations and programs manager at Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, said some people want to learn more about using fresh produce daily.

“We worked together in-house to come up with some really simple things. ... This is how you boil a potato, bake a potato and make mashed potatoes,” she said. “It’s just strengthening that understanding of what is available and how to use it.”

According to Brock, the organization is looking to expand its school programs.

“I see probably our greatest area of expansion right now is probably in our school program,” she said. “It’s just a fantastic way for students that may otherwise kind of fall through the cracks to get the assistance that they need.”

The food bank is always looking to add to its list of 160 member agencies, according to Brock.

“We want to make sure that our agencies are strong enough so that we can be sure that the food is going to be stored and distributed in a way that’s going to maintain the integrity of the food,” she said.

Food distribution is provided for Columbiana, Trumbull and Mahoning counties. In Youngstown, the Boys and Girls Club, the Beatitude House and St. John’s Episcopal Church receive food distribution.

Dustin West, site administrator at the Beatitude House, said it receives food from Second Harvest Food Bank on a weekly basis.

“We offer this so no one really goes hungry. I know people fall on hard times and need help, so we’re here to make sure that people at least have something to eat,” he said.

In 2018, Youngstown State University’s Poverty Awareness in Youngstown Organization donated nearly 4,000 pounds of food to Second Harvest Food Bank, and members of the organization volunteer at the food bank regularly.

Currently, the food bank is not looking to expand its donation range beyond 11.5 million pounds, and its increased distribution was due to national tariff regulations allowing food to be distributed.

NEWS BRIEF

WOMEN RETIREES OF YSU TO OFFER SCHOLARSHIP

The scholarship committee of the Women Retirees of Youngstown State University is accepting applications through March 1, 2020, for the 2020-21 academic year.

The scholarship is awarded to a full-time, junior female

student who maintains a minimum 3.0 GPA. The recipient must be a U.S. citizen and be enrolled in a degree-seeking program. Information about the scholarship is available at ysu.edu/finaid/scholarships.

Application forms may be printed from the website or picked up at the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships located on the second floor of Meshel Hall at YSU.

RENOVATIONS AND UPGRADES COMING TO YSU

JORDAN BOITNOTT
JAMBAR CONTRIBUTOR

Several renovations and upgrades will occur at Youngstown State University this year. The largest improvements will be for the pedestrian bridges on campus.

The roof will be replaced at Stavich Family Bridge, which connects the Wick Avenue parking deck to Meshel Hall and the rest of campus, and the roof will also be replaced on the bridge connecting Cushwa Hall and Moser Hall.

Rich White, director of planning and construction at YSU, said projects are planned at times to affect as few people as possible. The majority of the renovations will take place over the summer between the middle of May and middle of August.

“Typically, we try to do things over the summer just because it’s less disruption with not as many students around,” he said.

White said students in summer classes will experience some



The roof will be replaced at Stavich Family Bridge, which connects the Wick Avenue parking deck to Meshel Hall and the rest of campus, over the summer. Photo by **Jordan Boitnott/Jambar Contributor**

inconveniences.

“They might have to walk around to another entrance ... particularly with the bridges. We are going to close the bridges down while we work on them, so they will have to go around or either cut through the buildings,” he said.

Joey Pezzano, a junior engineering major, said he has witnessed continual construction during his time as a student.

Wick Avenue was under construction for over a year and completed in November 2017, while a block along Wick Avenue between Lincoln and Rayen avenues has seen much renovation, including the addition of The Enclave student apartments next to Chipotle and Mercy Health Wick Primary Care at YSU.

“The biggest change was Wick Avenue because I commute here. Wick Avenue being closed [had] a big effect on my driving. I think things have gotten better, adding a lot of new food places like Chipotle,” Pezzano said.

He also takes summer classes and said he is going to be affected by the Stavich Bridge roof replacement.

“I park in [the] Wick deck and I take a summer class, so the bridge being shut down, not being able to walk on it, is going to take a little bit longer to get to campus. But it is not going to be detrimental,” he said.

According to White, other renovations will include roof replacements on many buildings around campus.

Additionally, Ward Beecher Hall will have structural repairs to the basement, while restrooms around campus will also be improved.

New lighting will be installed in the pool in the Beeghly Center Natatorium, and many of the doors in Maag Library will be replaced.

A sprinkler system will also be installed in Fedor Hall. Stambaugh Stadium locker rooms will be upgraded.

While the renovations will improve many facilities and buildings on campus, they will cost between \$25 to \$27



The roof will be replaced on the bridge connecting Cushwa Hall and Moser Hall. Photo by **Jordan Boitnott/Jambar Contributor**

million, according to White.

He said the university receives money from the state and other outlets to fund renovation projects.

“We typically get biannually, every two years, \$25 million from the state. Some of the projects going on were locally funded or funded by grants,” White said.

John Hyden, associate vice president of facilities maintenance, provided an update on the Fifth Avenue project.

“There will be a center island, turn lanes, bus pull-offs, which will make it more pedestrian-friendly,” he said.

The project will most likely be finished in the “late, late fall” of 2020, Hyden said in a Dec. 5, 2019, Jambar article.

The construction process should be better than Wick Avenue, according to Hyden.

“There’s no deep work and it’s all basically on the surface,” he said in the article. “It’ll be dusty, inconvenient, hopefully not quite as confusing.”

Hyden said he spoke with Facilities Maintenance and Support Services to ensure traffic control will run smoothly.

ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YSU STUDENTS

TINA KALENITS

Youngstown State University students can take part in the John Burgan Entrepreneurship Prize of \$2,400 dedicated to help create a business startup or keep a student-run business afloat.

Patrick Burgan, CEO of Burgan Real Estate, said he wanted to continue what his father did for him several years ago through establishing the entrepreneurship prize. When Burgan was 10 years old, his father, John Burgan, loaned him \$2,400 to pursue his business idea of selling wristwatches.

According to Patrick Burgan, that business was successful. He later bought his father’s business, Burgan Real Estate, in 2004, six years before he graduated with a general studies

undergraduate degree from YSU.

Joseph Angelo, entrepreneurship director at the Williamson College of Business Administration, said he will be facilitating the interface between the student proposals and the Burgan family.

“We’re looking to identify a college student who’s got an idea that they’re interested in implementing, something that’s viable and generates some excitement,” he said.

The panel of judges will include Angelo, John and Patrick Burgan and other faculty and individuals from the business college, according to the college’s dean, Betty Jo Licata. Students will present their ideas to the panel.

“It’s a catalyst to encourage creativity. And it removes some barriers that might make them hesitant. The reward encourages

[students] to reach outside their comfort zone to try something new,” Angelo said.

Licata said Patrick Burgan called her several months ago and was interested in establishing an award in honor of his father.

“We are excited to support the entrepreneurial dreams of our students, and whether they choose to stay in the Valley or not, we want to support them in pursuing new business ventures, creating new jobs and creating wealth in the community,” Licata said.

Patrick Burgan said he wants to continue this prize for as long as the university will let him.

The award was open to all current YSU students, and the proposals were due Feb. 14. Angelo said the process will take until the end of the spring 2020 semester.



YSU STUDENTS UNITED DISCUSSES RACE AND ETHNICITY

Junior biology major Avery Howard moderated the discussion about race and ethnicity at the YSU Students United panel Feb. 12. Photo by Kamron Meyers/The Jambar

ALYSSA WESTON

YSU Students United hosted a student-led discussion on race and ethnicity Feb. 12 through a collaboration with MALAINA, a Youngstown State University Honors College organization, which stands for Middle Eastern, African American, Latino, Asian, international, Native American and Alaskan.

YSU Students United discussions aim to create a conversation about a topic that is often considered controversial and bring students together to see how they're more alike than different.

Noor Khalayleh, a senior psychology major, helped organize the YSU Students United discussion and said the main goal of every discussion is to bring diversity to the conversation.

"When we think of diversity, we immediately think of race and ethnicity. That's the default. So we wanted to establish that, yes, there is a discussion on race and ethnicity, and that needs to be talked about, but also at the same time there's much more to diversity than just race and ethnicity," she said.

Khalayleh said being able to have a conversation and understand differences shows students that their differences are what brings them together.

Students were placed at tables in Kilcawley Center's Chestnut Room and given various questions about race and ethnicity to discuss.

Members of either YSU Students United or MALAINA were at each table to keep the conversation on track and to ensure all participants were being respectful.

Additionally, Avery Howard, a junior biology major,

moderated the discussion.

After each series of questions, students were encouraged to stand up and share how they answered the question with the entire room.

"I think the people who chose to share and broadcast their opinions really kind of made the other people who were maybe too shy or felt like their opinion doesn't matter really sit back and think, 'Wow, that was a good point' or 'Maybe I should say this.' So it provoked even more conversation later on during discussion," Howard said.

Hannah Shively, a sophomore music education major, attended the event and emphasized the importance of events that foster conversations between students from different backgrounds.

"This is an opportunity where we have a safe platform to talk about not only our differences that we're all bringing to even our individual tables but also the differences that we can bring to the university as a whole," she said.

In Shively's opinion, Youngstown is a hub of racial, religious and economic diversity.

"I think that we have a lot of opportunities around us, and I wish I was doing more to bridge those gaps. But, having events such as these [YSU Students United discussions] and even international coffee hour ... those who are intentionally surrounding ourselves with people who are different from us, that's a really good start," she said.

Howard said the successful turnout of the event was necessary because it's important to hear different viewpoints.

"The conversation that YSU Students United has, their

different topics even on mental health, about race, about religion, these are topics that people are so afraid to talk about. And with discussion comes education and not just education but awareness," he said.

YSU Students United will host its next discussion April 8. A topic is yet to be determined.



YSU students pictured attending the YSU Students United panel in Kilcawley Center's Chestnut Room. Photo by Kamron Meyers/The Jambar

EMBRACING YOUR CURVES: PLUS-SIZE BOUTIQUES IN YOUNGSTOWN

FRANCES CLAUSE

For some women, deciding where to shop for trendy clothes that fit isn't an issue. But for plus-size women, this can be an obstacle, depending on the store.

Lakeesha Moore, owner of Big Girl Swag Mobile Boutique, aims to make Youngstown a place where women who wear plus-size fashion can feel that the fit and style of clothing is made just for them.

"I've always been a plus-size girl, and I've always had trouble finding clothes to wear," she said. "As I got older, I started to find things I liked, and they were always online."



Owner Lakeesha Moore poses in front of the Big Girl Swag Mobile Boutique bus that stops at various Youngstown locations. Photo courtesy of **Lakeesha Moore**

Moore said if she brought these clothes to the community, people could share her positive experience with fashion. But customers won't find typical dresses and T-shirts in her boutique.

"You'll find statement pieces, things that you'd like to wear out or something that you know is going to turn heads. There are dresses [in my boutique], but it will have a nice sleeve or a sheer middle part because we all like something extra," she said about the style of clothing she carries.

The boutique bus has been rolling around Youngstown since Feb. 1 and includes sizes XL through 6X. A fitting room in the back enables customers to try on pieces before they buy them.

But fashion isn't the only empowering element inside the boutique. Images of plus-size celebrities, ranging from Lizzo

to Missy Elliott, decorate the interior of the bus.

"Just because we're big and like to dress nice doesn't mean we promote obesity," Moore said. "We should still have the same choices a smaller person would have [to wear]."

Moore encourages plus-size women to not be afraid of a "pop of color," a two-piece outfit or sheer fabric.

"If you put it on and you feel confident in it, then wear it," she said.

Mykaela Wagner, a graduate student in biology at Youngstown State University, wears her clothing confidently and is always looking for more items to add to her closet. For casual styles, she visits Target, Torrid or Maurices.

One local shop carries most of these brands and aims to make the shopping experience cheaper for its customers.

Love Thy Curves Plus Size Consignment Boutique, located at 6900 Market St., is a store Wagner always leaves satisfied.

"I love coming here because it's the same type of stores like Torrid, but it's not going to be at the Torrid prices," she said. "And the staff is super nice every time I've been here."

Love Thy Curves' philosophy is to create a warm, inviting place to shop and a comfortable space where people can embrace their curves in a judgement-free zone, according to the store website.

Owner Nicci Bell knows firsthand how struggling to find clothing that fits affects plus-size women.

"It's a big self-esteem killer," she said. "When you're used to not being able to find what you like, you don't want to go shopping, you don't want to leave the house, you don't want to go out with people because you're looking at yourself like



Mykaela Wagner, a YSU graduate student in biology, tries on clothing in Love Thy Curves Plus Size Consignment Boutique. Photo by **Frances Clause/The Jambar**

you're just not worth it."

However, Bell believes the fashion industry has come a long way in making trendier items for plus-size women.

"Now, we have some crazy prints, good florals. ... We don't necessarily look like we're wearing draped curtains anymore," she said.

Wagner believes accepting your body, whether you're plus size or not, is a struggle that can be conquered.

"I think it's important to take the time to really just get those negative thoughts out of your head and love yourself for who you are and fitting your idea of beauty, not someone else's idea of beauty," she said.

To stay updated on the latest plus-size clothing, visit Big Girl Swag by Keesha and Love Thy Curves on Facebook.



Love Thy Curves Plus Size Consignment Boutique aims to create a judgement-free zone where people can embrace their curves. Photo by **Frances Clause/The Jambar**

DEDICATION: YSU SENIOR TWEETS AT ELLEN DEGENERES EVERY DAY

RACHEL GOBEP

Persistent and dedicated are two words that can be used to describe Justin Shaughnessy.

Shaughnessy, a senior criminal justice major, has one goal in mind: getting Ellen DeGeneres to follow him on Twitter.



Justin Shaughnessy is a senior criminal justice major and has a love for Ellen DeGeneres. Photo by Rachel Gobep/The Jambar

How does he plan to do that, though?

According to Shaughnessy, he will tweet at her every single day until she follows him back.

It began with a simple tweet on Jan. 19, 2019, that read, “I think I’m going to tweet @TheEllenShow everyday until she follows me.” He hasn’t missed a day since — Shaughnessy has almost reached 400 consecutive days of tweeting at DeGeneres.

“I won’t stop. My account will turn into an Ellen fan page before [I give up]. But if you go to my timeline, it’s all just Ellen tweets and then a random tweet. I’m in too deep,” he said.

DeGeneres currently has 79.6 million followers and follows 27.6 thousand people, but Shaughnessy thinks he can accomplish his goal if he continues to be persistent.

“I saw she was following a lot of people, and I was like, I

just want to have the ability for her to see my stuff on her timeline, be able to [direct message her]. I thought that would be cool,” Shaughnessy said.

He said if DeGeneres followed him on Twitter, he would cry.

“That would be amazing. Everybody keeps saying, ‘Maybe she’s watching. You’re going to be on the Ellen Show,’” Shaughnessy said. “I just want a follow. That’s the minimum I want.”

He said he’s gone as far as purchasing a video message on Cameo, an app that lets fans book a personalized video shoutout from athletes, celebrities and social media influencers.

In the video, RiFF RAFF, a rapper from Houston, asked DeGeneres to follow Shaughnessy on Twitter.

His love for DeGeneres stemmed from watching The Ellen DeGeneres Show with his mom every day after she got home from work.

Shaughnessy said he appreciates the positivity DeGeneres radiates, specifically at the end of her show when she encourages people to always be kind to one another.

“Also, a lot of her stuff is also news related, too. It’s not

usually, like, bad news. It’s the good stuff, you know, what you don’t see on CNN or MSNBC. ... So, it’s just a nice way to end your day,” he said.

Although some have joked with Shaughnessy and even threatened to block him on Twitter because of his daily tweets to DeGeneres, he said there is one friend who has supported him through his intriguing objective — Dave Jakovina.

He has retweeted every single tweet Shaughnessy has posted since day one.

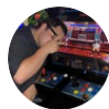
Jakovina, a senior political science foreign affairs track major, has known Shaughnessy since he was about 12 years old, and they graduated from Austintown Fitch High School together.

The pair now are in the same fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon. Jakovina described Shaughnessy as a “lifelong friend.”

Jakovina said he believes Shaughnessy will accomplish his goal because of the dedication he has to tweeting at DeGeneres every day.

“It’s been over a year now, but the day will come,” he said. “Who knows, maybe he’ll get called to be on her show.”

📌 Pinned Tweet



Justin Shaughnessy
@_shag_nasty_

I think I’m going to tweet @TheEllenShow everyday until she follows me.

Day 1: @TheEllenShow follow me pls

4:00 PM · Jan 19, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

6 Retweets 42 Likes

Screenshot of the first time Justin Shaughnessy tweeted at Ellen DeGeneres. He has continued to tweet at her for almost 400 days in a row, hoping for her to follow him on Twitter.



Frank Nolasco, an adviser in Cliffe College of Creative Arts and Communication, explains course curriculum to Domenic Weser, a junior telecommunication studies major. Photo by **Brianna Gleghorn/The Jambar**

BRIANNA GLEGHORN

Change is coming to the academic advising structure at Youngstown State University, requiring some adjustments within each college.

According to the National Academic Advising Association, academic advising is seen as a learning process and “requires a pedagogy that incorporates the preparation, facilitation, documentation and assessment of advising interactions.”

In a strategic planning questionnaire given to YSU students and faculty, a question asked, “From your experience, what are some of the barriers to Academic Excellence, Student Success and Mutually Beneficial Community Engagement?”

The questionnaire’s results showed that advising appears to be a struggle for students in different colleges, leading them to question the availability and limited resources provided.

Martha Pallante, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, said her college is looking to require mandatory advising beyond students’ first year.

“We are looking to make some changes,” Pallante said. “We discussed and as a college have agreed that we would like all students to do at least two check-ins after 30 credit hours.”

She said students who have completed 45 to 60 hours and 75 to 90 hours would have to keep their adviser updated to ensure they are on track to graduate.

“We just think it’s a really good idea that people don’t wait until they’ve got 90 hours to start,” Pallante said. “We know for a fact that students who do see advisers stay on track to graduate quicker.”

The college is beginning to focus more on the students who are experiencing academic issues, according to Pallante.

“We’re asking the students who’ve been, for example, readmitted to the college after an academic suspension, to visit with our counseling intern here in the office two or three times a semester, to make regular appointments to keep them on track” she said.

Pallante said there are steps being taken to make mandatory advising a part of the advising structure in her college.

“We’re waiting to find out how we make the change to that mandatory advising,” she said. “I’d like to see it in place by fall the very latest. I think that’s the thing we can do that can make the biggest impact right now.”

Charles Howell, dean of the Beeghly College of Education,

said his college is encouraging advisers to discuss success strategies with students.

“They’re not just telling them what classes to take but also giving them suggestions about how to improve their academic record and be more successful,” he said.

While some colleges are in the process of making changes to their advising structure, the Cliffe College of Creative Arts and Communication has completed some recent changes.

Frank Nolasco, an academic adviser for CCAC, said his college switched its advising structure several years ago to include a new suite where all advising is conducted.

“Many students have faculty who are mentors and help them with things like that,” he said. “But if you have specific questions about what classes you should be taking, you definitely want to see an academic adviser here.”

Nolasco said he worked at a different university where advising was mandatory.

“Every student had to come through, and there was a pin on your account, and you couldn’t register no matter if you’re a freshman or if you’re a senior,” he said.

According to Nolasco, there are two sides to every advising structure.

“Do you let them be an advocate for themselves and earn and own their education? ... Or do you kind of hold their hand and make sure that they get out of here in four years?” he said.

Nolasco said it is important to schedule an appointment before registering for classes to stay on track with the program.

“A lot of times students wait till after registration and the classes they want are full, or they don’t get the time of the day as they desire,” Nolasco said. “It kind of puts them behind schedule on their four-year plans.”

Brien Smith, provost and vice president for academic affairs at YSU, said while hiring more advisers could be an option, there are other alternatives that can be overseen.

“Hiring more advisers is something that we would like to do,” Smith said. “Investing in talented individuals doesn’t come at zero cost, and so we often have to look at ways that we can invest in more advisers or alternate ways of making sure that students’ needs are met.”

He said while faculty advising can help provide enough advising for every student, the optimal option would be to have professional advisers.

“If I had an unlimited check, I would do it that way,” Smith

said. “I think there are other options, but we need to meet students’ needs when they have the need, and that’s the challenge.”

Claire Berardini, associate provost for student success, said teaching should be an essential part of advising.

“I would think if we approached advising like that, the first year of college would be a lot of teaching students how curriculum is formed and how their sequence and how all of this works,” she said.

Berardini said once students are confident in knowing their curriculum, the advisers can help them with more things like internships and jobs.

“It really is that one connection that a student can have,” she said. “Hopefully they feel comfortable talking about pretty much anything. And if they need help, we can provide a resource for them. That’s what we want to do.”

Mariana Rizzo, a freshman early childhood education major, said she believes she doesn’t have enough time during her advising appointments to understand her courses properly.

“In my honest opinion, I think it’s confusing,” she said. “The advisers are so fast to get us out that by the end of the appointment I’m not sure how my classes even work.”

In Rizzo’s opinion, there should be more explanation in the appointments about the curriculum.

“Instead of calling to schedule, something online and faster would be better,” she said. “Calling takes forever to reach anyone to even make an appointment.”

Although students can schedule advising appointments over the phone, several colleges use Handshake to schedule appointments.



Advising at Youngstown State University goes through the dean’s office of every college, with several colleges having their own advising suite. Photo by **Kamron Meyers/The Jambar**



RACE TO FIRST: HOW MISINFORMATION SPREADS

A YSU student reads a story about Kobe Bryant's death on his cellphone. Photo by **Preston Byers/Jambar Contributor**

PRESTON BYERS JAMBAR CONTRIBUTOR

The chair of the Youngstown State University Department of Communication said he's puzzled about the need to be first in the age of social media.

Since journalists can publish a story online anytime, Adam Earnhardt said the race to be first is pointless.

"I'll never understand why there's still this desire to be first among journalists because it really doesn't matter anymore," he said. "It matters more who's right. A lot of journalists — especially old-school journalists — are still in the mindset of, 'Got to be first.'"

One of the most recent examples of this came Jan. 26 when NBA legend Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others died in a helicopter crash in Calabasas, California.

In the hours following the crash, Matt Gutman, ABC News' chief national correspondent, wrongly reported that Bryant's four children were involved in the fatal helicopter crash, which led to public outcry on social media and, eventually, his suspension.

In general, news coverage surrounding the fatal crash was spotty and inaccurate. Some preliminary reports, like Gutman's, stated Bryant and his four daughters were all killed, while others said Bryant's wife, Vanessa, and former teammate Rick Fox were also on board. And for much of the day, only five were reported dead.

Ultimately, corrections were made, and the world learned a valuable lesson: It doesn't matter who reports something first if it's not accurate.

Kati Hartwig, YSU coordinator of social media and digital marketing, said the fast-moving nature of Twitter, a place where plenty of news is broken, may exacerbate journalists' push to be

first to stories.

"There's a struggle to be first, especially on Twitter, where it moves so quick," she said. "And if you're not the first to report, you don't go viral. So it's this constant need to be first to report it that gives us those gaps in the actual story."

One of the most effective solutions in order to get accurate information, according to Hartwig and Shelley Blundell, assistant journalism and communication professor at YSU, is to follow credible media sources, such as the YSU social media accounts for which Hartwig is responsible, that post quick, clear and accurate messages to followers.

"A better strategy for people who are using social media to get information, particularly in breaking news or crisis situations, is to look for official channels as much as possible," Blundell said. "Origin and authority count a great deal when getting that kind of information."

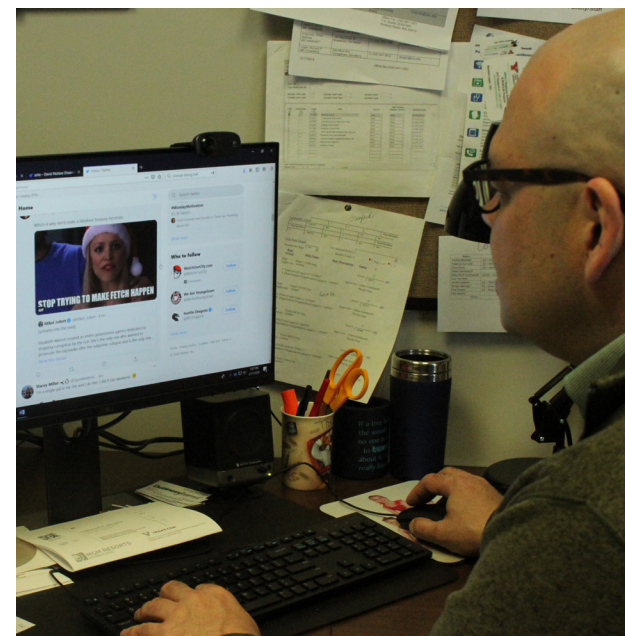
"People also should look across platforms and information sources to see where things are similar and to see where they differ before they start sharing things unilaterally," she added.

Some users have called for Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to combat misinformation spread on the respective sites. While none of the three have completely stopped false or misleading information, Twitter has taken steps toward doing so.

In January, Twitter implemented a system in which users can report misleading information about an election. Twitter also has collaborated with the U.S. Census Bureau to address misinformation about the census in April.

Some argue that in addition to the platforms, the responsibility of policing misinformation lies with the users themselves. Blundell believes that those who use social media are liable for their use of it.

"If you go to Home Depot and you rent a jackhammer, you'll [be given] a bunch of warnings and instructions. But ultimately, when you take that tool home, how you use it is up to you. I feel the same way about social media," she said.



Adam Earnhardt, chair of the Department of Communication, scrolls through Twitter in his Bliss Hall office. Photo by **Preston Byers/Jambar Contributor**

FINDING AND LISTENING TO YOUR INNER VOICE

MAC POMEROY

My hearing is trash. This statement is not being dramatic or mean to myself. I genuinely have really bad hearing. Normally, this doesn't bother me too much. I am a writer, so silence is bliss. However, sometimes this gets in the way.

I do have hearing aids, probably some of the best that exist. Unfortunately, technology only has come so far. Background noises, echoes and general crowds still get in the way. It's safe to say I genuinely will never hear the same as everyone else.

This causes me to struggle with verbal communication, especially with people who speak at certain pitches and speeds. I often find myself asking people to repeat themselves. Realistically, I don't do this as often as one would imagine, and even so, those around me are very understanding. But it still feels rough.

Sometimes, I feel like I am dumb because I struggle with something that should be easy. My hearing also causes me to second guess my own speaking. As a whole, verbal

communication is something I struggle with.

I am definitely far from alone on this. You don't have to have hearing problems to struggle with speech. Hell, even those without disabilities or medical conditions have trouble with conversations due to things like anxiety about finding the right thing to say.

Speech is a normal part of everyday life. It's as basic and human as eating, breathing or sleeping. So when you find yourself struggling with it, you can start to feel less than human. You may question your own intelligence and feel disconnected from those around you.

I hope what I've stated so far has been enough to back up what I am about to say: Struggling with communication does not make you any less intelligent than anyone else. Communicating in ways other than speaking in the English language is just as valid and important.

I was much more upset and insecure regarding my communication skills when I was younger. It felt like people

were not always willing to be patient when I needed something repeated and dismissed me as a whole. It's hard to feel smart or worthwhile when others treat you this way due to something out of your control. But then a few years ago, I saw a moment on television. A woman was crying because her family was making fun of her English skills, explaining that she was very bright in her own language. That moment stuck with me, and it made me think.

While my issue is not language, it is still related to communication. So I may not be perfect at speaking, but my words show best when writing. This has given me hope to keep trying, and now despite the minor frustrations that pop up, I am no longer afraid of communicating.

So if you find yourself having trouble communicating in a verbal way, think of what communication really means. Find your "language," or a way that works better for you. Regardless of how you speak or listen, you have words of your own. Find your way to tell your story.

ACADEMIC ADVISING CAN MAKE OR BREAK A STUDENT

When students step onto a college campus, not only do they have to juggle the changes they will soon encounter, but they must do the one thing that can make or break their college career: schedule classes.

This is where advising comes into play. And, yes, some argue that college students are adults and should be able to take care of scheduling classes themselves, but that just isn't the case.

Scheduling classes can be daunting for a first-year student, and it can be especially problematic for a senior. A misstep in scheduling classes can mean the difference between graduating in three, four, five or even six or more years.

A report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement in 2018 found that effective advising might have a larger effect on returning students, which directly impacts graduation rates.

Additionally, students who receive more time with advisers and have more in-depth conversations throughout their sessions are more engaged.

Advising is the core of student success in college, and the report showed the elements that should be discussed throughout advising include raising aspirations, setting goals, developing academic plans, registering for courses, helping students help themselves and focusing on the big picture.

Although some see advisers as the people that only register them for courses, good advising should include these elements to help a student understand the purpose of classes and how they will relate to future job aspirations.

One example of Youngstown State University employing this is in the Beechly College of Education.

Charles Howell, dean of BCOE, said the college is

encouraging advisers to discuss success strategies with students.

"They're not just telling them what classes to take but also giving them suggestions about how to improve their academic record and be more successful," he said.

This is a great example, and it should be followed universitywide because seeing a student as a whole person and pushing them to succeed should be the main goal of advising.

Additionally, advising should be required for all students at Youngstown State University because although college students sometimes think they know what's going on, they don't. But it's not always their fault.

Between assessing general education, major, minor and upper-division credit requirements, students can easily get lost. And the lack of advising can mean more dollars and time spent at a university.

Martha Pallante, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, is looking to make advising beyond a students' first year mandatory in her college.

She said the college is looking to have students complete at least two check-ins with an adviser after they have taken 30 credit hours, and administrators in CLASS don't think it's best for a student to wait until they have completed 90 credit hours to check in with an adviser.

"We know for a fact that students who do see advisers stay on track to graduate quicker," Pallante said.

Imagine thinking that you're on track to graduate just to realize at 90 credit hours that you didn't take the correct courses. This is why meeting with an adviser is so critical.

According to a 2011 survey by the National Academic Advising Association, colleges in the United States have an average of one full-time adviser for every 367 students.

YSU breaks advising down between colleges, and there are 17 full-time advisers, not including faculty members who also provide advising.

As of the fall 2019 semester, there were 12,155 students enrolled at YSU, which means there is one full-time adviser for every 715 students at the university.

Overall, it would be extremely beneficial for the university to hire additional advisers, and Brien Smith, provost and vice president for academic affairs at YSU, said hiring more advisers is something the university would like to do, but other alternatives could be considered.

"Investing in talented individuals doesn't come at zero cost, and so we often have to look at ways that we can invest in more advisers or alternate ways of making sure that students' needs are met," he said.

Advisers know the ins and outs of programs and courses, while students don't have the same knowledge. Advising is not mandatory for all students, but ultimately it should be.

THE JAMBAR
— EDITORIAL —

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YSU BASEBALL WINS TWO IN HOUSTON

PRESTON BYERS

With two extra-inning victories against the University of Houston, the Youngstown State University baseball team has a winning record for the first time in nearly a decade.

After falling to the Cougars in the season opener Feb. 14, YSU found its first victory the next evening in large part due to a three-run home run in the top of the 11th inning by sophomore Steven D'Eusanio. Freshman infielder Andre Good hit two home runs in the third game en route to an 8-6 win.

The last time the Penguins had a winning record was March 13, 2010, when YSU defeated Walsh University to improve to 6-5 on the season. This is also the first time YSU has started the season 2-1 since 2001.

Penguins coach Dan Bertolini said despite the lack of field time in Youngstown, he and his team fully expected to depart from Houston victorious.

"Anytime we go anywhere, we expect to win, and I think that was the mentality of our guys," he said. "We have a talented group, and we expect to play good baseball and win baseball games."

Before Houston, the Penguins under Bertolini, who is in his fourth season as head coach, had a combined 1-8 record in season-opening series.

In the first game of the series, Houston jumped ahead with a two-run lead in the first inning after three hits off YSU's junior starting pitcher Colin Clark.

Clark allowed one hit in the next four innings as the Penguins erased the Cougars' lead and took one of their own.

Houston's bats warmed up in the sixth inning, however, and after a two-run sixth inning and a three-run seventh, the Cougars secured the 7-3 win for their first victory of the season.

In games 2 and 3, YSU fell behind again in the early innings. Unlike the season opener, though, the Penguins mounted successful comebacks.

D'Eusanio led the way at the plate Feb. 15, recording three hits and a game-high five RBIs. The following day, a pair of freshmen, Good and Braeden O'Shaughnessy, combined for seven of YSU's eight RBIs.

On the mound, Clark was credited with the loss Feb. 14, while redshirt senior Gary Cliff Jr. and junior Dalton Earich earned wins during the 11- and 10-inning duels, respectively.

Junior pitcher Collin Floyd, who started for YSU's 6-3 victory Feb. 15, was named the Horizon League Pitcher of the Week after a seven-inning, two-run performance.

The team is battling some minor injuries and illnesses after the first series, according to Bertolini.

"We're a little bit banged up," he said. "We got some sickness



Dominick Bucko and Cameron Murray during the Penguins' team photo day. Photo courtesy of YSU Sports Information

going around. We got a couple guys with some minor injuries — nothing serious that's going to hold them out. But that's going to be all year. That's baseball."

The Penguins will head to South Carolina, where they will face the College of Charleston in a three-game weekend series Feb. 21-23.

YSU SOFTBALL OFF TO HOT START

NATHANAEL HAWTHORNE

The Youngstown State University softball team put on a clinic in its first game of the season against the University of Maryland Eastern Shore by beating it with a score of 17-2 at the Gardner-Webb AmericINN Lodge and Suites Tournament.



Taylor Boeckmann bunts for the Penguins during their fall series of games. Photo courtesy of YSU Sports Information

The Penguins currently sit at a 3-2 record. Senior infielder and pitcher Maddi Lusk described the record as the best the Penguins have started in her four years at YSU.

"But we always could improve. It can always be better, but it's a good start and we can build from here," she said.

Lusk said the win against Eastern Shore was a confidence builder for the team.

"For [our] first game this season we were able to go out and produce," she said. "We've actually started off really strong offensively, probably the best we've started in the past couple years."

The next two games would bode well for the Penguins. They went on to beat Canisius College 5-1 and Eastern Shore 5-1.

The team dropped the next two games against Gardner-Webb University and Canisius, 3-5 and 10-15, respectively. Penguins coach Brian Campbell said he believes the tournament and a 3-2 record is a good start for the team, specifically for the offense.

"We've scored 40 runs for the weekend in five games and a .300 batting average as a team. ... When you look at the three areas of the game, the offense, defense and pitching, I think our offense came away really good," he said.

Lusk led the offensive surge for the Penguins. Currently, she holds a .556 batting average, and she belted two home runs and had a triple and three doubles in the five-game stretch that ran from Feb. 7-9 in Boiling Springs, North Carolina.

Junior infielder Nikki Saibene and junior outfielder Yazmine Romero also helped the team's cause by posting .615 and .421 batting averages, respectively, and adding 16 hits combined.

On the defensive side of the diamond, the team played solidly and only made a handful of errors.

In the first three games the team won, Lusk, junior Elle Buffenbarger and sophomore Kayla Rutherford combined to give up only 11 hits, eight walks and strike out 23 opposing batters.

"When you have an offensive turn out what they did this past tournament, it's something that does take some pressure off of the defense and pitching," Campbell said.

During the offseason, the team spends almost all its time in the Watson and Tressel Training Site. According to Campbell, that lent a hand in how well the offense performed.

He said when the team does have the opportunity to be outdoors, it concentrates on defense and pitching. When the team is indoors, however, hitting takes precedent.

With the momentum of the last tournament, the team is looking forward to the games and the rest of the season. Lusk said throughout the season, the team needs to keep putting runs on the board.

The Penguins head to Hampton, Virginia, on Friday for a five-game series in the 2020 Pirate Classic tournament.



MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL NEAR THE END OF REGULAR SEASON

Penguins guard Geoff Hamperian celebrates on the bench after the team makes a big play. Photo courtesy of **YSU Sports Information**

CHRISTINA SAINOVICH

Freshman guard Maddie Schires made four 3-pointers, giving her the record for the most 3-point baskets made by a freshman in Youngstown State University history, when the women's basketball team hosted Cleveland State University at the Pink Game on Saturday.

The women's basketball team showed out during the game, and after going back-and-forth with their rival, the Penguins dominated the second half, winning 84-72.

Penguins coach John Barnes said the win was instrumental for the rest of the season.



Youngstown State University freshman Maddie Schires set the freshman record for most 3-pointers in a season in the game against Cleveland State University. Photo courtesy of **YSU Sports Information**

"We're trying to get on a run to get some momentum," he said. "Hopefully get us a chance to host a tournament game."

Junior McKenah Peters, still fresh off an injury, scored 18 points in the contest to lead the team.

Freshmen Jen Wendler and Quinece Hatcher tallied 14 points, and junior Chelsea Olson was consistent once again with 12 points, six assists and six rebounds.

YSU surpassed its season-high conference scoring total in the win.

Saturday's victory was the first in six games for the Penguins, who have faced more than their fair share of injuries this season. The win puts them at 12-13 overall and 5-9 in the Horizon League.

Barnes touched on the win and how important it was for the team.

"We needed a win in the worst way," he said. "Obviously, we hadn't won in a while, and that takes a toll on the players, the coaches. It's just tough when you're putting in the work and you're not winning games"

The women will host the University of Detroit Mercy on Friday and Oakland University on Sunday. These will be the last two home games of the season for YSU.

The men's basketball team completed its Michigan road trip with a win at Detroit Mercy and a loss at Oakland.

On Thursday, the team beat the Titans, 76-72. Junior Garrett Covington had 16 points in the win while shooting 8-12 from the field. Junior Naz Bohannon continued his outstanding play with 13 points and eight rebounds.

Detroit Mercy made a late push, going on a 10-0 point run in the last two minutes of the game. This cut YSU's lead to just

two, but the team was able to hang on for the win.

Saturday's game at Oakland was a different story. The Penguins trailed for most of the contest, falling 72-64.

Senior Devin Morgan recorded a game-high 20 points, and Bohannon put up his sixth double-double of the season. Their efforts weren't enough to push past the Golden Grizzlies.

Penguins coach Jerrod Calhoun said offense was a problem in the Oakland game.

"We did not make any shots. ... Both times we played Oakland, we didn't score the basketball," he said.

Bohannon said the team is trying to learn from its loss and move forward.

"We told the guys that we had the opportunity to get our 16th win and punch a postseason berth right then and there. It obviously didn't happen. We've got to wake up and be ready to play the whole entire game," he said.

After the road trip, YSU is tied for third with the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in the Horizon League with an overall record of 15-12 and a conference record of 8-6.

"Coach [Calhoun] called it 'the gauntlet' yesterday and even after the game," Bohannon said. "I just tried to get the guys to understand the importance [of] it. We've got four games. We can go out with a bang."

"We can win all four, go 19-12, and everybody will be talking about us. Or we can lose all four and be 15-16. Everybody will talk about us in a negative way."

This week, the team returns home to host Wright State University on Thursday and Northern Kentucky University on Saturday in its final home games of the regular season.



NOT DUNN YET: SENIOR FORWARD APPLIES FOR MEDICAL REDSHIRT

Mary Dunn has applied for a medical redshirt to give her a chance of playing next season. Photo courtesy of YSU Sports Information

BRIAN YAUGER

If all goes as planned, Youngstown State University hasn't seen the last of Mary Dunn in a basketball uniform.

Dunn's season ended in November when she tore her right meniscus in the game against Eastern Michigan University, where she scored 30 points against the Eagles. She had averaged 17 points in the four games she played.

The condition of the 6-foot-3-inch senior out of Washington, Pennsylvania, was up in the air for a while but was confirmed to be out for the year. Dunn is already eyeing a return to the court next season by applying for a medical redshirt.

"I'm really excited," she said about the chance for one more year. "Initially, I was really upset [about the injury] and it took me a while to get over that, but I really do believe that it's all in God's plan. I'd get a second chance at [my senior year], so hopefully it gets approved."

The process for applying for a medical redshirt is pretty cut and dry. The NCAA needs documentation of the injury and the games missed to determine if the injury actually was season ending.

"We can't apply for it until after the season ends," Dunn said. "It's basically just like a journal of everything to prove that it was season ending, which my injury was, and you have to play in eight or less games, and I only played in four."

Recovering from a meniscus injury isn't easy. Dunn was a little behind her planned schedule but now realizes she needs to take it slow and make sure she's fully recovered before she gets back on the court.

"I mean, initially, it was a little slower than I wanted it to because my first goal was to come back this year, but that ended up not working out," Dunn said. "So now, I'm just taking it day-by-day and getting back to 100% soon."

The recovery process is arduous, but Dunn sees the light at the end of the tunnel quickly approaching.

"It just takes time. I think that's the biggest thing," she said. "I'm going to start running next week, which will be really awesome because then I can start feeling like myself again. My goal is to be 100% by April."

The benefit of returning next year is that Dunn will have one more year to play with the junior class she's spent so much time with, especially McKenah Peters and Chelsea Olson. The Penguins roster next year has her even more excited about possibly returning.

"We'll have everyone back plus three new players, which will be super awesome. ... With the experience that the younger players are getting plus us who would be seniors, as long as it gets approved, it's going to be a really good year," Dunn said.

The time off the court has given Dunn the chance to reflect, and she has altered her after graduation.

"As long as [the medical redshirt] gets approved, I'm going to come back here next year and play, and I'm going to get my master's in professional communications," Dunn said. "I'm not sure if I want to play overseas or not. That's in my options, but I'm not 100% sure. I want to eventually get my doctorate in communications and become a professor and researcher."

Dunn has always been a leader, but she has enjoyed being able to lead without stressing about how well she's playing.

"I definitely think that I've always been a strong leader, but there's always been a part of me that's worried about the way that I'm playing, which is what you have to do in sports, like you have to hold yourself accountable," she said.

"Being able to fully put myself into the team and eliminate what I'm doing, how I'm playing and have the same attitude every day, I think really helps and shows that if I want to be a coach, I could definitely do that," Dunn added.

This time on the bench has made Dunn consider the possibility of coaching when she's decided to call it a career.

"I would prefer playing for sure," she said. "But eventually I'm not going to be able to play anymore, and I think that at least, like, getting a grad assistant position or something, so I can do it for a couple years would be awesome."

Whatever the next year holds for the Penguins' post, you can guarantee she'll be facing any adversity with a smile on her face and the determination to push past it.