

Are We Really Penn State University?

by Rich Danner

Although I may only be a freshman of two months duration here at the Penn State Hazleton Campus, I have quickly come to see the many inherent evils of the Penn State system. Unfortunately, they are many and I have only encountered some, but from my present experience as a university student, I am quite dismayed at what I have found and am beginning to question myself as to why I even came here.

First of all, I had no choice in coming to Hazleton. My high school guidance counselor failed to process my application and transcript in time to make the University Park deadline, which is in all actuality three days after prospective freshman applications are mailed out in late August. The University's inane policy of "first come, first serve" is totally ridiculous as it gives no regard to the needs of its prospective incoming students, who might require or desire certain facilities limited to University Park and not their second or third choice branch campuses. In my case, I fenced for six years and wanted to fence in college, but the only fencing team for Penn State is at University Park. But because there wasn't any proverbial "room at the inn," I now can no longer fence for either a school or private tournament, which is something that I miss greatly. The same is true for Latin, which I had for four years in high school and had wanted to continue in college, but on account of the assinine "first come, first serve" policy, no one took notice that a student such as me had a special, qualifying academic and athletic need for immediate entrance to University Park. And now I suffer.

After I discovered that I was going to be recklessly tossed into a branch campus, I then had to find accommodations for myself for the school year. Again, the ridiculous "first come, first serve" policy prevailed. On my application, I expressly checked the space that I did want a dorm room, but when I returned my acceptance letter and dorm contract request card in early November, I found out three months later that Hazleton dorms were filled in early October, at

least two weeks before I even processed and mailed my application! I understand that Penn State has to deal with large numbers, but such blatant negligence and haphazard processing is horrible!

I eventually found suitable lodgings off-campus and after several months of scheduling, testing, and waiting, the end of August and beginning of school finally rolled around. By this time, I had mixed feelings about just what I was getting myself into, as there were obvious, prior signs of negligence on the University's behalf.

Before long, I became situated with my classes and comfortable with my life here at Hazleton. But it wasn't long before I began to see signs of further negligence from the University. It would appear in all regards that University Park doesn't really care about their students. On account of this travesty, there are great divisions between on and off-branch campus students and those lucky, unchosen few who made it to University Park. I have been coldly snubbed by on-campus people at Hazleton and even more poorly treated by friends who went to University Park! The University is solely to blame.

What sense does this make? Are we really Penn State students? Or are we just a diverse group of people brought together under the false pretense of a "higher education" (when in reality the only work done in the freshman year is basic high school review and completion of general education courses) for the sole purpose of lining the pockets of the administration and funding the activities of the unchosen few at University Park? What are we really getting for our money? Think about it ladies and gentlemen. Think about those things that we here at Hazleton don't have that the unchosen few at University Park do have. For those of you like me, think about the academic and athletic negligence that you may be suffering from. All of you think about whether or not we can really consider ourselves Penn State students.

I say to all, of you that the answer is no. No professional university would outrightly do what this one has. The outrageous lack of care on the university's behalf is appalling. There are people here at Hazleton who don't belong here and should rightly be at University Park. For those who are here because of regional limitations or for whatever other reasons, you are not getting a full collegiate education. Think about it. University Park is not making any attempt to promulgate a unified collegiate experience for its students, which is a part of your expense. You have only to look at the disunity of Hazleton Campus to see that these divisions begin immediately in the freshman year. Where is the united university life that should be in the Pennsylvania State University spirit? In effect, we as a branch campus have nothing, whereas the unchosen, pampered few of University Park have everything! Where is the justice in this people?

If we are ever to really consider ourselves as Penn State students, we must speak out against these abuses and let the University know that its branch campuses are greatly dissatisfied. The time for dissent is now, for how much longer can these intolerances be allowed to continue? I realize that the times have produced a group of people who are afraid to speak out against authority, but individual needs and rights are being increasingly lost to student disinterest! Speak out for what you rightly deserve and want! Individual needs require special care and consideration. We as a whole cannot allow ourselves to be molded by the University as a mass group to be recklessly tossed about and mishandled as if we were nothing but a money-generating, third class piece of merchandise! We have our rights as students to be entitled to the care of the special needs that we require! The entitlement for the chosen few at University Park must end!

How much longer can we consider ourselves Penn State?

S.O.S. Save Our Soccer Field

Many of the students at PSU Hazleton enjoy sports of all kinds, and the campus provides exceptional facilities for the pursuit of these games: a large gym with equipment for basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, etc; six very nice tennis courts with a practice wall; racquetball courts; a large pool with assorted dives; even a bowling alley. And then there is the soccer field, home to the varsity soccer team and a multitude of other games - primarily pick-up football.

Compared to other fields throughout the area's colleges and universities, our field is poor. Compared to the other facilities at Highacres, the field is an atrocity. The field is rocky with holes and gulleys all over, and is very often muddy at the south east quarter. Even several sunny days fail to dry it, after rain. The little grass that does grow, exists in small clumps, making the field very bumpy and a soccer player's nightmare.

First of all, the ball doesn't roll on the ground; it hops and bounces over every clump, very often in different directions. This makes passing very difficult, and although this may be overlooked at practice or in pick-up games, in major varsity matches, such as against Ogonitz or Berks, accurate passing is crucial, but usually unobtainable.

Another problem for soccer players, and indeed all athletes, is the danger of the clumps of sod. It is very easy to twist an ankle on these clumps, and in many sports, like football and soccer, in which quick changes of direction while running are commonplace, more severe ankle injuries could occur.

The field also retains a lot of water, and the lack of strong sod makes for huge puddles and lots of mud. Slipping and falling in mud may be funny, but when someone slips, falls, and breaks their leg or tears ligaments, the fun stops. And after all, isn't that why the field is there - for the students to enjoy?

RADON: Is It a Problem?

Ever since Radon gas was discovered in Reading, the problem of Radon contamination has been a big concern for the citizens of Pennsylvania. Although our campus is more than seventy miles from Reading, students have shown some concern about whether or not there is a Radon problem on campus. In response to these concerns, Penn State conducted a university-wide testing program. Here are the results.

On May 29, 1987, the last testing device was removed from Highacres for analysis. The device reported a Radon level under four picocuries, the level determined safe by the

Department of Environmental Resources (DER). Unfortunately, the administration could not release any specific figures for each building on campus. They do, however, state that the university average was 2.2 picocuries.

What do these numbers mean? Well, one curie is equal to 3.7×10^{10} to the tenth power (37,000,000,000) disintegrations per second. A pico is equal to one trillionth. So, the official danger level is in excess of four trillionth of a curie per liter of Radon. However, different levels affect people differently. Smokers may be able to tolerate eight to ten

picocuries. A young child might

be affected by five. Therefore, some discretion should be used in evaluating these readings.

For those unfamiliar with Radon, it is a colorless, odorless gas formed by the breakdown of Uranium or Thorium in soil. Most of the danger comes from the Radon daughter, which is a solid, radioactive particle. The DER attributes 30,000 deaths per year to Radon.

The reason Central Pennsylvania is so concerned with Radon is a geological formation called the Reading Prong. This irregular band of rocks, extending from New York to Pennsylvania, contains an abundance of granite and other metamorphic rocks.

These types of rock are primary sources of uranium concentration. Other possible contributors are sedimentary rock and bituminous materials. Bituminous means the material contains various mixtures of hydrocarbons such as coal. Central Pennsylvania is rich in both sedimentary and bituminous materials.

While Radon contamination is, and should be, an important concern for us all, it appears that there is no immediate danger here at Highacres. Hopefully, there won't be a problem in the future.