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Possible changes in Gen Ed requirements

Working group makes recommendations, changes just being discussed

by Bryan Harkins
Collegian Staff

During its last meeting, held October 24, Penn State's Faculty Senate held a forensic session to discuss possible changes in the general education requirements.

In April of 1994, a working group was appointed to examine the general education curriculum and identify ways to revise general education requirements.

The forensic session was held last month to discuss the recommendations brought forth by the working group.

The purpose of a forensic session is not to take immediate action on the topic discussed. Rather, as was the case with the General Education requirements, "They just brought it up to talk about it," said Mike Chiteman, head of the Department of Undergraduate Studies.

According to Dr. John Burke, associate provost and senior associate dean, "They were just airing it out, I guess is the best way to say it."

"There were two very interesting issues brought up," said Provost and Dean Dr. John Lilley. "The first is lowering four year programs to a minimum of 120 credits and five year programs to a minimum of 150 credits. The second, is reducing the number of credits in the gen ed package."

Chiteman said, "A recommendation was put forth to lower Gen Ed requirements about ten credits, from 46 to 36."

These suggestions were brought forth due to a survey conducted by the working group. The working group concluded that "it is obvious that in the semester system significantly larger numbers of students do not graduate in four years."

They also stated that "it is clear that general education has become part of the credit problem the University now faces, as it

grew from ten credits to 37 to 43 to 46 in its various iterations."

In its proposal, the working group not only recommended that we lessen the amount of general education credits, but they also recommended a specific change in most general education courses.

The communications section, which consists of English 15 or English 30, English 202 and Speech Communication 100, would remain the same.

ESACT and Health Education courses could be decided by individual colleges, but would not be considered part of the General Education courses.

The working group recommended that each College choose two to three courses that count toward General Education, but not the student's major. They also recommended a hand full of quantification courses.

"We recommend especially the creation of interdisciplinary courses in 'Civilizations', that is, core courses to be offered in American, Western, Asian, and African Civilizations," said the working group.

Lastly, they recommended "Contemporary Topics" courses in Natural Sciences and Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Dean Lilley said, "I thought they suggested some interesting new requirements. I thought that the 'Contemporary Topics' and the 'Civilization' courses were interesting proposals."

Dean Lilley also said, "I thought we should go back to the 120 minimum for the four year program."

Dr. Burke added, "I would like to see more coherence, more integration in the courses."

Of the 100 people that were at the Senate meeting, roughly ten people spoke on the issue. Most of those people spoke against the proposal.

Dr. Burke continued, "I don't know what will happen as far as the vote is concerned."

According to Dean Lilley, "It is premature to say what the Senate will vote."

It is important to remember that this meeting was just a forensic session. As Chiteman put it, "It was just a beginning discussion. Don't start not taking your gen ed courses."

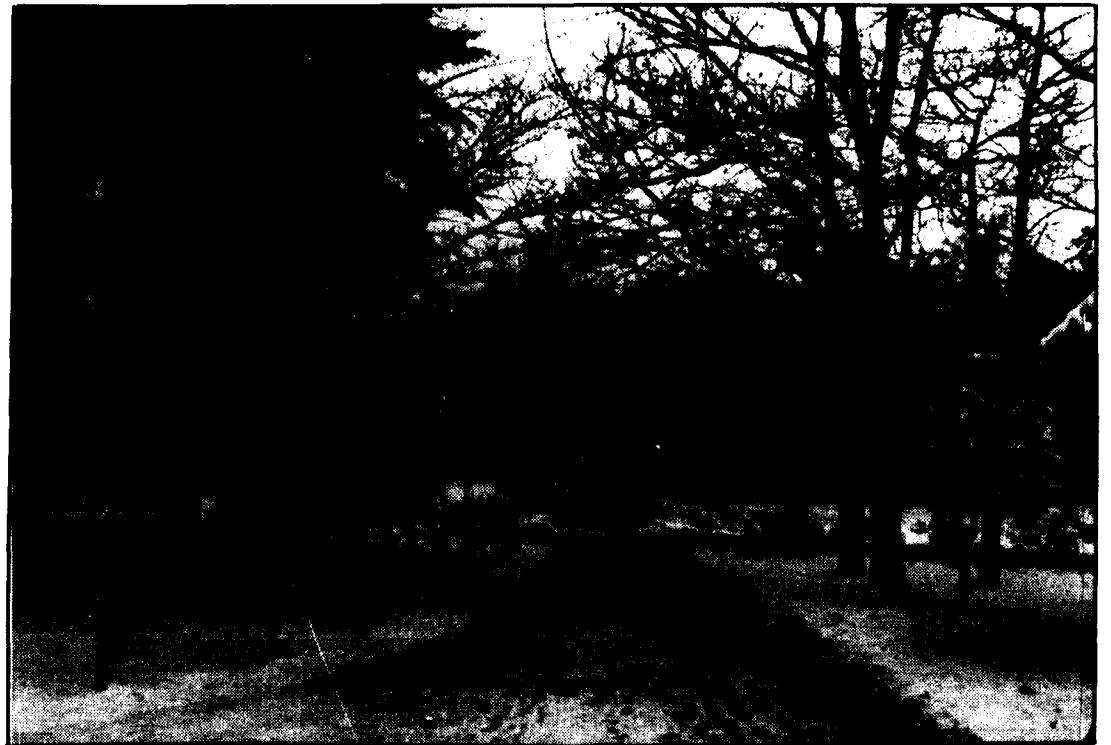


Photo by Joe Stiller/Photo Editor

HUH? What's this? Snow already? Mother nature has dumped much snow on Northwestern Pennsylvania since early Wednesday morning. Behrend's students can look forward to more knee-deep snow in the upcoming months. *Today's Forecast:* Snow storms and squalls tapering to flurries. High in the mid 30s. West winds 10-15mph. Chance of Snow is 80%. *Tonight:* Mostly cloudy, lows in the upper 20s.

Students take stand against cuts in state aid for colleges

Petition is available for signature til December 1

by Doreen Foutz
Collegian Staff

"Since 1990, the state appropriation to Penn State University has fallen 87 million dollars below the University's requests. The deficit has been made up in tuition increases," said John Butler, a Behrend Student Government Association senator.

Butler is heading up the petition at Behrend in protest of the Pennsylvania legislature's continued cuts in funding for public higher education. The petition is currently in circulation at Behrend. Posters on campus scream, "Stop the Raid on Student Aid!" to encourage student involvement in protesting the cuts.

Pennsylvania ranks 47th in overall funding for public higher education among the 50 states. The state government now plans more cuts for public higher education. These decreases in state funding lead to increases in tuition. "Pennsylvania has the second highest tuition rates in the country behind only Vermont," said Butler.

Penn State is working in conjunction with the University of Pittsburgh and Temple University to achieve a goal of 50,000 signatures on the petition protesting Pennsylvania cuts. The petition at Behrend had 346 signatures, as of Wednesday afternoon. SGA's goal for Behrend is to have half the student body sign the petition, about 1,600 signatures.

Penn State, with Pitt and Temple, is planning a demonstration in Harrisburg. Scheduled for February, the demonstration will also protest cuts.

"If Penn State students don't stick up for themselves, no one else is going to help us."

-John Butler, SGA Senator

The petition is available for signatures til December 1 and can be signed in the SGA office in the Reed Building near the mailboxes. "The signatures will be hand-delivered to Governor Ridge's desk in December while he's working on the budget," Butler said.

"If Penn State students don't stick up for themselves, no one else is going to help us," added Butler.