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ACLU gets involved with graduation prayer

by Anne Rajotte
managing editor

The issue of prayer at graduation is being taken a step further by SGA president Michael Zampetti. Tuesday night, Zampetti met with the Northwest Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) regarding the student led prayer at Behrend graduation and convocation ceremonies.

"Students shouldn't accept something because that is the way it has always been."

Michael Zampetti
SGA President

Zampetti attended the meeting to clarify and update the information that the ACLU already has. The main committee of the ACLU has passed it on to their legal committee so they can check on the legalities of the case. Zampetti still has to do some research, such as the procedure at graduations.

In 1996, Behrend changed the policy of ministerial led prayer to student remarks. These remarks are not required to be a prayer, though three quarters of them have been.

Despite support of these remarks from administrators, such as Dr. Chris Reber and Dean John Lilley, Zampetti says that there is overwhelming support in the opposite direction from many professors in the Humanities and Social Sciences division. One of

these supporters of ending prayers at graduation is Dr. John Champagne, Assistant Professor of English. He believes that prayer at functions such as graduations and convocations are inappropriate because there isn't the freedom not to listen. He feels that a moment of reflection may be suitable to accommodate all of those attending the ceremonies. If there is a prayer spoken, people who don't want prayer can't be accommodated.

Champagne feels that it is a "matter of civility" to keep prayer out of these ceremonies. He also stated that having these prayers "doesn't respect one's right not to pray." Champagne goes on to say that everyone has a "different sense of appropriate spirituality" and that graduation is a time for celebration; people should have to the freedom to celebrate this time in their own way.

Zampetti feels that there is a realistic chance that the ACLU will take this case. He also feels that the "court would have to agree that this is a violation."

The fact that University Park has ceased all prayer at their graduations has no sway on this particular case, stated Zampetti; Penn State president Graham Spanier supports students' prayer at graduations. Behrend is the only campus where the policy of allowing prayer had remained.

Zampetti plans to circulate a petition so students can voice their support. Zampetti states that "students shouldn't accept something because that is the way it has always been."



photo by Jessica Trzeciakowski

SGA President Michael Zampetti spoke to the ACLU about student-led prayer at Behrend graduation and convocation ceremonies.

Teacher certification program begun

by Brian Ashbaugh
associate editor

For Behrend students in the past, the dream of becoming a teacher was filled with extraneous course work and extra years at another university. This past summer, Penn State-Behrend and Mercyhurst College struck a deal for a new five-year, Pennsylvania Teacher Certification program allowing students to achieve their dream without the hassle. Secondary and elementary education are both offered as options.

The secondary education program encompasses work within the majors of biology, chemistry, English, history, and mathematics while at Behrend. Students are expected to take required courses within while attaining a 2.75 overall grade point average. Also, education courses will be added to the curriculum as general requirements for transfer. This program is ideal in that sense. Previously, students were not guaranteed that all of their credits would transfer to another institution offering certification. The elementary education program is broader than the secondary in that students may complete any major offered at Behrend.

Sometime before receiving their bachelor's degree from Behrend, students must take the National Teacher Examination administered by the Educational Testing Service. This is a standardized test comprised of listening comprehension and general knowledge. The results of the test are kept on record and taken



photo by Jessica Trzeciakowski
Behrend experienced its first snowfall
in creeping up the coast.

into account when applying for a teaching position. The exam is offered several times a year at local universities such as Edinboro, Gannon, and Mercyhurst. In secondary education, three of the sections must be taken and passed; while in elementary education, only two of the sections must be taken and

passed.

The primary advantage of this arrangement is that the majors are covered more thoroughly than at other campuses. For example, if one were to attend University Park for certification in chemistry, they would receive what amounts to a minor in chemistry and a major in education.

With this five-year program, one would receive a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Behrend and a teaching certificate from Mercyhurst. This is an attempt to produce more knowledgeable and skilled instructors.

Although transfer is required for certification, tuition for Behrend

students participating in the fifth year at Mercyhurst will cost approximately the same as Penn State's in-state tuition.

The origin for this

please see TEACHER CERTIFICATION page 2

SGA passes fall break resolution

by Mike DeSantis
staff writer

The Student Government Association last night unanimously passed a resolution calling on Penn State and Behrend College to institute a Fall Break of the sort found in many other colleges and universities around the country.

SGA Senator Charles Testrake, the author of the resolution, called for "a week long Fall Break...in the middle of that semester." Right now Penn State only has three days during the Fall semester for break, one for Labor Day the other two for Thanksgiving.

Mike Zampetti, President of SGA, feels that Penn State "needs to readjust the way [Penn State] give breaks." He feels "putting a break around Columbus Day might help."

Testrake would like to see a one week break, possibly eight weeks into the semester. If the university does not give a one week break, he hopes that students might be able to "negotiate" at least a two or three day break for fall.

Since the semester schedules are made at University Park, this is not just an issue for Behrend. This weekend at the Council of Commonwealth Student Governments (CCSG), Testrake will bring up his resolution. He will try to get it on the agendas of other campuses, because CCSG is a group of Penn State student government leaders who gather at University Park to discuss university-wide issues.

Testrake would like to have classes start one week earlier in August to compensate for the lost break time. This is the main opposition that he has found to his resolution.

If you have any suggestions for the resolution e-mail Charles Testrake at crt115@psu.edu.