

The Behrend College Collegian

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

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Postal Information: The Collegian is published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie. The Behrend College: First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building, Station Road, Erie, PA 16563. The Collegian can be reached by calling (814) 898-6488 or (814) 898-6019 (FAX). ISSN 1071-9288.

Letter Policy: The Collegian encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail their letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5pm Tuesday for inclusion in that week's issue.

EDITORIAL

Some housing complaints unwarranted

Recently, there have been a lot of complaints about the quality of housing offered at Behrend. Most of these complaints are from students living in Perry, Niagara and Lawrence Halls. However, some of these complaints also come from students living in the suites and apartments. Of course, having cramped living quarters is an expected part of college life, however the conditions of these three dorms are below what the residents of the suites, Almy or the apartments have to offer. Every year students line up all night for a chance to live in the suites instead of the three dorms.

Students who live in the dorms have some valid complaints. The rooms are old, there is limited shelf space and it is hard to control the heat. It is generally agreed that there needs to be some kind of improvement. Perry has new furniture, though Niagara and Lawrence are still waiting. Lawrence was supposed to receive new furniture this past year, however, there was not enough money in the budget.

All this aside, sometimes students can take their complaints too far. At last week's Coffee with the Provost and SGA Open Forum, students took the opportunity to let administration know about their complaints. The majority of the complaints were about

not being allowed to write on the sidewalk with chalk and the renaming of the apartments. The two issues were brought up at both the Open Forum and Coffee with the Provost. This seems like a very trivial thing to be complaining about. Some students had legitimate complaints concerning the quality of their apartments. However, it seems like an undue amount of time was spent discussing inconsequential subjects like writing with chalk on the sidewalks or the fact that it is sometimes unpleasant to walk in the stairwell between the suites and Perry Hall. The new rule prohibiting writing on the sidewalks with chalk brought about angry responses denying administration's reasoning behind the rule. Other things students addressed were the fact that the desk lamps in some cases were not lit adequately or to their liking, which is something most people could probably remedy themselves and does not warrant a complaint to administration.

It seems there are important valid complaints that need to be looked at by Housing and Food and administration. When students spend so much time complaining about sidewalk chalk and building renaming, it takes away from issues that really need to be addressed.

A Day in the Life

Penn State needs a Fall Break

If I were to take a poll around Behrend and asked if students would be willing to begin the Fall semester a week earlier in August, the answer would most likely be a resounding "no." But what if the reason for the early start meant having a Fall Break halfway through the semester? Well, that might change a few minds on the issue. Unlike the Spring semester, the Fall semester lacks a break in the monotony. Both semesters are the equal in academic length, yet the Spring seems to be the one chosen for the break. Would a Fall Break benefit or hinder the students, faculty, and staff on campus? This is a question that Penn State has considered regarding the inclusion of a week-long break in the Fall.

With information compiled by Penn State's Council of Commonwealth Student Governments President Greg Bednarski, a paper was found which was first presented to the American Psychological Association in 1978 on the idea of having a Fall Break. The paper, called "Intervention and Evaluation in Campus Environmental Assessment" was a project performed by the Student Counseling Center of Illinois State University after the insertion of the Fall Break into their calendar. The project searched for reduced anxiety, tension, sickness, and pressure at mid-semester as a result of the break. And although the evaluations proved to be generally inconclusive, many important points were taken from the tested individuals on the Illinois State campus.

The results of the research are as follows: University staff reported consistently that the break affected them positively; the staff reported that the Fall semester was the calmest compared to previous Fall semesters; Academic Advisement and Financial Aid areas experienced a sudden increase in student appointments following the break, suggesting the time off may have been used by students to speak to their families regarding financial and academic plans; 65 student advisors reported that students had described the break as enjoyable. The comments were totally unsolicited; quantitative data provided no clear resolution on the effect of a break on students, while the qualitative data clearly showed the break eased tension and it was a period of cooling-off for students; and impressionistic staff data collected were generally strongly supportive of the break.

It is evident that the results of the survey were, for the most part, posi-

tive and reinforcing in support of the Fall Break. But would this system be as effective on a smaller campus like Behrend? According to Shawn Benson (10, MEBD), a graduating senior, the size of the campus does not matter. "College students are under tremendous pressure these days. School work coupled with employment can make stressful situations. Inconsiderate roommates become bothersome. A Fall Semester Break would be beneficial to many students as well as professors," says Benson.

Lock Haven University, a campus of comparable size to Behrend, has implemented a Fall Break. Bednarski contacted the Associate Dean of Lock Haven and found out that finals week

an instructional week alleviating the extra class days created by the break. The professors there have the option to either give a final exam during that week, or teach a class if there is no exam.

Bednarski also spoke to the head Registrars at Millersville and Shippensburg Universities as well as other state schools about their situations. He found that most Fall Breaks were instituted to balance the fall and spring semesters. Mr. Dempsey at Shippensburg stated that "both students and faculty enjoy the break and find it beneficial."

With the information compiled by Bednarski, it's not difficult to see the advantages of having a yearly Fall

Penn State is seriously considering putting forth the idea and I am not sure who is in charge of making this decision. But one thing is for sure, it is being made at University Park, many miles away from Erie. Any student opinions about this situation would be greatly appreciated, pro or con. I, for one, am greatly and wholeheartedly in favor of the Fall Break proposal, and I hope I am not the only one. Unfortunately, one person cannot make the wheels turn. If anyone out there cares about their academic well-being during the long Fall semester, write a letter to someone important, someone representing your views, and we can all make this happen.

A Day in the Life appears every three

Gun ban: A step for life

The Los Angeles Times

President Clinton's action Monday to ban the importation of 58 types of assault-style rifles means that as many as 1.6 million of these murderous weapons will not enter the United States this year and countless others will be barred in future years, assuming the ban survives expected challenges in Congress or the courts. Regardless of what the National Rifle Association may claim, this step means lives will be saved.

The president made permanent a suspension ordered last November so Treasury experts could study imported arms modified to be classified as sporting weapons. As such they would have eluded a 1989 Bush administration ban on semiautomatic assault rifles. Of 59 types studied under the presidential suspension, only one was deemed to fit the definition of a sporting weapon.

An estimated 600,000 weapons already approved for importation were held up pending the study. Requests for an additional 1 million weapons piled up while the study was under way. Now, none will enter the country.

The NRA insists that Clinton's action is cosmetic and that these guns are not the criminals' weapon of choice. But imagine, 1.6 million more semiautomatic assault rifles than we already have in our homes and streets. Just think how many of these would have found their way into the hands of criminals, terrorists or disturbed people bent on exacting revenge for some perceived wrong. Or consider how many accidental deaths of men, women and children might have been caused by the careless handling of these weapons, no matter how well-intentioned their owners.

Assault rifles with large-capacity military-style magazines--many of

them variations on the Uzi and the AK-47 -- were not designed to hunt game. They were designed to kill people.

Considerable credit goes to Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who has been the vanguard of weapons control in the Senate.

Clinton's decision should serve as an example to wavering members in the California Legislature facing a decision on AB 23, to overhaul California's assault weapons law.

The president's action Monday makes this country a slightly more civilized place. Think of the deaths and wounds not caused, the funerals not held, the grief not expended. Now, the California Legislature's support of AB 23 could be another decision for life.

This editorial appeared in Tuesday's Los Angeles Times

Women took Clinton's side for the right reasons

By Barbara T. Roessner, The Hartford Courant

A lot of us have put ourselves through the drill a hundred times: Why, why, is it that we immediately sit down when Susan Carpenter McMillan exhorts "the women of America" to stand up for "our hero"? Is it Paula's baby-doll voice, her formerly big hair, her notable absence of Ivy League pedigree?

Is it our own raw partisanship? Is it because of Bill, for all his personal foibles and flaws, is steadfast when it comes to public policy that protects and advances women's rights?

Or is it, as some particularly piggy commenters have suggested, that we harbor some kind of secret crush on the square-jawed president with the rogue reputation?

And the answers have always come back: No, no, no and no way are we that desperate.

Within minutes of the news last week that Paula Jones' entire case against President Clinton had been thrown out of court, a friend and I exchanged gleeful grins. "I knew there was a reason why so many intelligent women had a problem with the Jones case," she said. "It's bogus!"

It's always nice when one's gut instincts not only survive repeated bouts of personal soul-searching, but are summarily affirmed by the cold reasoning of the judiciary.

Even if Jones' allegations against Clinton are true, there was no sexual assault, said U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright. There was no sexual harassment. There will be no trial. Go back to Long Beach, Paula.

That's not to say this has been an easy season for feminists. The line between sexism and sexuality has always been a treacherous navigation for us, and the Jones case, with all its tentacles, has only made it more so.

Sex and sexual harassment are not the same; clearly, Jones was not sexually harassed. Sex and sexual assault are not the same; it's clear she wasn't sexually assaulted. I do wonder, though, about that old term "indecent exposure." If a guy abruptly drops trousers in the park, he's a pervert. But in a hotel suite, he's making a pass?

The Jones case also brought sexual talk -- in its overt form, anyway -- back to the workplace. This is good. I think, though not without untold complications. The recent cultural notion that sex is an unsuitable topic of of-

fice conversation is absurd. Life may as well be off-limits. Love may as well be taboo.

But where's the line between sexual talk and sexual photos? If we can talk about sex around the water cooler, does that mean we can put centerfolds on the bulletin board? Maybe the only way to keep the lid on sexism in the workplace is, after all, to put the lid on sex.

These are the kinds of underlying issues which, according to my newspaper, had women coming to near blows in a local bar the night the Jones case was dismissed. These are murky waters, indeed. Confusing. Conflicting. Opaque.

A few things are clear, though. It's sexist to contend that women who don't embrace Paula Jones as a "hero" are merely classist.

It's sexist to contend that we haven't thought the issues through, considered their ambiguities, confronted our own ambivalences.

We aren't stupid. We aren't rigid. We aren't blindly partisan. We've done the drill. We've listened to our instincts. We've used our heads. And guess what? We're right.

Distributed by the Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sorority leader disgruntled about SGA president's remark

Dear Editor,
I am writing in response to the article printed April 2 regarding the SGA Open Forum. In this article, it was noted that the turnout for this forum was much better than for the last forum. SGA President Mike Zampetti thanked everyone, "...for coming out of the kindness of your hearts or because your sorority forced you to." I cannot speak for all Greek women on this campus, but I was personally very offended by this comment. Approximately twelve Greek women were at the forum, making up the majority of the attendance. We were not there because our sororities forced us to

go. Members of our Pan Hellenic Council had read in the Collegian how disappointed Zampetti was over the last forum. He made a plea for greater student interest and support, and we were there to provide it. I certainly did not expect to be mocked by him for attending.

I think that all three sororities on this campus work very hard to dispel the myths and stereotypes that people have about us. Why Zampetti wants to make this job even harder for us is a mystery to me. When I took the position of Panhellenic Representative to SGA, people wished me luck and warned me that he was very anti-Greek. I

tried to keep an open mind about him. I wish he would give us the same courtesy. Our sororities are not about forcing people to do things against their will. We are about lasting friendships, excellence in scholarship and service to others. When another organization, SGA, asked for support, we're happy to provide it, and I was shocked that Zampetti would insult us for doing so.

Respectfully,
Melissa Musante

Pan Hellenic Representative to SGA 07, Biology

