

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SGA President, Advisor defend Behrend's student government

Students show dislike for 'Bitchin' by Mike' column

National Commentary
Ventura For President
Doesn't Sound So Good

Dear Editor,
I'd like to respond to Mike Frawley's column "Gavel talk and monkey business" in the October 29, 1999, edition of the Beacon. As SGA President, I'd like to set the record straight regarding SGA's activities this fall.

SGA is accomplishing more this fall than we did in the entire last year. Senators are becoming more active through their participation in committees, the open Senate seats in the fall election were all contested, and most importantly, major issues which impact students are being addressed. SGA committee action has included a technology fee committee which gives the college input into how each student's \$100 per semester is spent, a committee to create a Real Audio campus radio station (which may be operating in the Spring semester), and webmasters for a new student information website have been selected and the committee is now building the webpage. Reports on committee activities are given at each meeting. It's ironic to me that right next to the article is a letter from Demian Blair, an SGA Senator, writing on behalf of the technology fee committee.

Yes, we have had some senators resign this semester because they could not keep up with the time commitment. The people who have re-

placed them have the time to give and want to live up to the expectations for their positions.

Most of SGA's work has been done behind the scenes. Committees meet separately and report at the SGA meetings, which are held each Wednesday at 5:20 p.m. in Reed 114. Why do Senators come and go at the meetings? Some senators have classes which end at 5:15 p.m. and others have classes at 6:10 p.m. and have to leave early if meetings run over. It is hard to find an hour for at least 25 people to meet when the school is overcrowded and classes meet all the time.

We can do more to reach out to students. We're trying to inform students about SGA through the creation of an SGA website. We plan to include meeting minutes, committee meeting times and locations, a roster of SGA members, and announcements about programs like the SGA Booksale coming in January.

Finally, you misrepresented SGA with your article. For those people who don't know about SGA and based their opinion on this article, I would challenge them to come to a meeting and see what is really happening and what issues we are dealing with. Perhaps we'll serve bananas.

Andrea DiPlacido
SGA President
05, Communication

Dear Editor,

I've been successfully ignoring your pessimistic column for several weeks now, but the hypocrisy in the last one (10-29-99) was too great to overlook. And despite giving you what you're begging for—attention—I think you ought to know a few things:

1. Fraternities and sororities support their organization and always defend it, even if they occasionally don't agree with some of the practices or rules. They are proud to be in it and proud to represent it. You, however, trash the SGA even though you are a member of it. You say the SGA hasn't been in the news because they don't do anything. You are on SGA. Therefore—simple inference—you don't do anything. And it also makes you look bad to trash an organization yet belong to it at the same time. If you didn't like something about the Beacon, would you turn on that too, and slam that? How hypocritical is that? Obviously, the Greeks have more class than you.

2. The newspaper this year, through the efforts of Editor-in-chief Jason Snyder, has made a real attempt to be on the same level as other universities publications. He has done an excellent job of implementing positive changes and has devoted endless hours to it. Unfortunately, every week, there is a dark cloud hanging over the editorial page due to your pessimistic column, "Bitchin' by Mike". Any changes have been overshadowed, possibly negated, by your weekly dose of cynicism. Does anything make you happy, Mike Frawley? Or do you just see the worst in everything? Must you drag us all down with you into your cynical little world? I have enough problems in my own life than to have to read about the anal, trivial concerns that seem to plague yours. I'm already quite aware of problems and issues at Behrend. But wait—don't tell me—I know, you have justified your column to some extent: see my third point.

3. You say that your "Bitchin' by Mike" column exists to facilitate change at Behrend and jump start its students to implement those changes. But you are on SGA, the students'

voice and catalyst for change. So why don't you do your job as elected council member and make these changes instead of just "BITCHING" ABOUT THEM?? Oh, but I forgot—to quote you, "Hell, the people who get elected to SGA don't even care." Does this include you?

You run your mouth about this and that and all the issues you have, and then sit at council meetings and shake your head at the lethargy. "Bitch" at the meetings and get something started. Don't criticize others when you're doing the same thing. Your responsibility as council member is to help the student body. You obviously see valid and significant problems. Do something: take some action with the power you have as council member.

4. I chose Penn State Behrend because of the quality and high standards the school upholds. I am proud to be associated with this school. What I am not proud of, however, is the fact that our school newspaper has a column with a title that includes profanity and in some cases, a feminist slur. If I were you, I would be ashamed to show your column to a prospective employer. Most seasoned journalists and editors don't see it necessary to sink to your level of profanity and obscene language. Instead of intelligently writing about issues, you choose to try to "bring this bitch to order", but never finish—never come through with a solution.

So perhaps you ought to look at your own practices before accusing the SGA of inaction. Maybe the Beacon staff should be worried that they will someday be the subject of a scathing "Bitchin' by Mike" column. Maybe you should realize that no one wants to hear you complain anymore. You have your forum (a public one, unfortunately)—don't abuse it. Try not to incite riots and controversy (the fraternity/sorority column, for example)—just present the issue without hypocrisy and whining and maybe (gasp) some solutions.

Nicole Canter
07, English

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to respond to Mike Frawley's column in the October 29th Beacon regarding the Student Government Association. As SGA advisor, I was very frustrated after reading it. SGA has been working on a number of issues including Blue Bus funding from the transportation fee, the College's use of the Technology Fee and how student input is collected for changes (this is ironic b/c the letter to the editor which appears next to Mike's column is from Demian Blair, an SGA senator), and a complete reorganization of the accounting procedures which provides SGA with better information on how/when/if clubs are spending funds.

Other projects that are underway include the Real Audio radio station, the student-centered web site, and an evaluation of going to a Fall/Spring budget process to spur more activities on campus. It should also be noted that the elections held this fall for Senate vacancies were contested races, something that is a good sign of a healthy organization.

This is my second year advising SGA and I believe they have accomplished a great deal less than one semester. Can the organization do more? Yes, we can all improve. You should take note that I introduced the stipend issue to SGA because I feel strongly that IF the SGA president is doing his/her job, then he/she should receive some sort of stipend as do most other institutions across the country. Sti-

pends spur accountability for the positions and will hopefully generate more interest among students in running.

I should also add that Andrea DiPlacido, the SGA President, has been particularly helpful with regard to the functioning of the Student Activity Fee committee.

Senators have a responsibility to bring issues to the Senate about which students are concerned and provide the leadership necessary to bring about change. Perhaps one of the reasons Senators are leaving their positions is because the executive board expects them to participate in committees and be more fully involved in the proceedings of the organization. Adding senators who are genuinely interested in change is progress in my opinion.

Finally, it is easier to tear down than to build up. Student apathy is a very serious issue facing this campus and students looking for a reason not to get involved found one in this article. Student involvement is a powerful force and can change a great deal on campus. One need look no further than the Beacon to see the tremendous progress as the result of more students getting involved. SGA has improved this year and will continue to do so. We have a core group of very dedicated individuals who go above and beyond the call in serving students.

Ken Miller
Acting Dean of Student Affairs

Something bothering you?
Write a letter to the editor!

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Dear Editor,

I am a firm believer that life is only what you make it, and that goes for most everything in life as well. Furthermore, it really perturbs me when someone whines about something they have the power to change.

Tell me if I am wrong, but wouldn't it be a good idea for groups and organizations on campus to benefit each other? So far, from my experience, the Beacon, and namely Mike Frawley, have only caused tension and discord amongst our university organizations. With his harsh and biting commentary, he puts down what he sees fit, and offers no suggestion for the betterment of what is debased. I realize that he is an editorial writer, but he is also the managing editor of the Beacon. His articles reflect on the paper, editorial or not. Since the beginning of the fall semester, he has criticized three campus groups: the Computer Center, Greek Organizations, and the Student Government Organization. The latter disturbing me the most.

In each "bitchin'" session he points out the worst and conveniently leaves out any positive points. An argument is always strong until the other side is presented. All of the groups mentioned above have a positive role to play on our campus. The Computer Center has provided us with easy accessibility to computers and the internet at most any time. Many fraternities and sororities participate in community service projects that not only benefit our campus, but our community. And finally SGA is one of the most important organizations at this university. It is the sole governing body of the students at Behrend. We, as students, have the power to use student government to achieve what we want.

I commented earlier on what perturbs me. Mike Frawley is many things, two of which are managing editor of the school newspaper, and an SGA Senator. Both of these positions can be very influential. Unfortunately I don't see him using either position to the full potential. As an editor I experience him spending more time on controversy writing, that is writing that is intended solely to invoke a passionate response from his reader. Unfortunately, he is

bitchin' about things that are really quite stupid. Most social organizations drink and parties are loud, but they have been since the beginning of time. The Computer Center had a few bugs to work out; computers in general have always had bugs. Student government spent time debating the stipends allotted to the officers, but once again that is what government bodies do; they find a topic, debate it, and then they vote on it. What is the big deal. My challenge to Mr. Frawley is to find something that has some relevance, and write an article that actually confronts a problem. Why bitch about something if your bitching has no positive effect. Frawley's commentary has only one effect, and that is it makes people mad. Not at the problem he confronts, but at himself. Mike has debased three organizations on campus, and so far I don't think there has been change in any of them.

Secondly, as an SGA Senator, he is also lacking. If I had to compare Mr. Frawley at an SGA meeting to something, I would say that he is like a Puritan child at the dinner table. He doesn't speak unless spoken to. Judging from his article on SGA, he is opposed to the stipends allotted to the student government officers. My question is then, why didn't he bring this up in the meetings dealing with it. I believe it is the duty of a senator to speak about a topic if he feels strongly about it. Possibly, if he would have made an effort to put his two cents in, the motion wouldn't have been passed. All I have to say about the comment, "Hell, the people who get elected to SGA don't even care." is for Frawley to speak for himself. I am an SGA Senator, and I am proud to be so. I also believe that there are people that feel the same way I do on SGA. It is obvious that Mike Frawley is apathetic about Student Government, and I believe he is apathetic about most things that go on around campus. Unfortunately, apathy is contagious, and as long as Frawley propagates his sour outlook on life I feel it will be hard to make any organization shine in the eyes of students at Behrend.

Keenan Hansen
01, ENG

by Billy O'Keefe
Campus Correspondent
Columbia College

If you're a woman, that's great news, because the world needs you. If you're a religious person, that's great too. If you live in the state of Minnesota, that's not so bad either, as long as you take a vacation or two here and there. But if you're all of the above? I feel for you. I really do.

Enter Jesse "the Mind" Ventura. When the former wrestler and sometime actor was elected last year as Minnesota's governor, we giggled and thought it was really neat and fun. There's nothing as invigorating as a good gimmick, and what piece of the country's rotten apple pie needs a change more than American politics? All in all, we could do much worse than having a big, honest mouth calling the shots somewhere. But as my somewhat-crazy second grade teacher told me, it's only fun and games until somebody gets hurt. In this case, that somebody just happens to be about 80 percent of the country. That's 10 percent times eight. That's a big number, no?

The most amazing thing about insulting that many people is that Ventura did it all in one day. In an interview with Playboy magazine, he let his dimmest lights shine. Some "highlights," to use the term loosely: The governor denounced all organized religion as a "sham" for "weak-minded people who need strength in numbers." After partially recanting his statements at a press conference days later, he said that he expects religious leaders to forgive him because "that's what religion is all about - forgiving."

He also said his favorite thing about being governor is that it makes him feel like "a king," and that nobody can tell him what to do. He later discounted these statements as a joke. Or perhaps someone told him to do that. He mentioned that overweight people "can't push themselves away from the table." Why that had to be said is anybody's guess. Worst of all, he very nearly justified the behavior behind the Tailhook scandal in 1991, in which 83 women, mostly naval officers, were sexually assaulted in Vegas during a Navy and Marine Corps convention.

"These are people who live on the razor's edge and defy death and do things where people die," he sort of explained. "They're not going to consider grabbing a woman's breast or buttock a major situation." He later joked that he'd like to be reincarnated as a 38DD bra. If he keeps this up, he'll probably come back as

a scratchy wool sweater.

But wait, that's not all. In the past, Ventura's mouth has choked on everything from prostitution (it should be legalized and ... unionized?!) to guns. He was quick to apologize for his suggestion that the Littleton, Colo., disaster could have been minimized if concealed weapons were legal. In other words, if a bunch of high school kids were packing that day, the violence could've been prevented.

I've been to high school. He's wrong. At least he apologized for that remark. He has yet to do the same here, even as his approval rating has been shot down faster than an Iraqi plane flying over Alabama. According to statistics compiled by Minnesota's Star-Tribune, only 54 percent of Minnesotans approve the job the governor is doing. Not bad, but that's a 19 percent drop from this summer's record highs. Meanwhile, 68 percent say that "The Mind" needs to use better judgement, 60 percent believe he is a poor role model, and only 57 percent insist that Ventura is not an embarrassment to the state. Ouch.

With another presidential election just around the corner ("around the corner" being anything from one day to three years in political-speak), a lot of people have insisted that Ventura throw his leather boa into the ring as the Reform Party's candidate. He won't do it, but only because he's committed to being the governor right now, he says. But that might not be the same story he tells in 2004.

Is that good news? Well, it's not as bad as it seems, anyway. Taken out of context, Ventura sounds like a walking natural disaster. But when he gets a chance to explain himself and elaborate, he sometimes - sometimes - makes sense. His comments on religion, for example, came from firsthand experience in Vietnam of defenseless people giving their lifelong earnings to causes that never even existed. His blanket denouncement is still a stupid and shortsighted move, but at least he doesn't come off as a complete moron. In fact, depending on whom he's talking to, he can be just plain bright.

But a partial moron is still a moron, and the possibility of someone like Ventura becoming our country's main representative to the world is nuts. He'd never get out of the Middle East alive, for one thing, and that's only if the Queen of England doesn't rip his head off first. For once, we can be thankful that Ventura's affiliation with a third party almost guarantees his losing if he should decide to run. Because if this bra-to-be can barely get along with his own people in Minnesota, what would happen if he had to take on the rest of us?

