



THE BEHREND BEACON

A PENN STATE ERIE STUDENT PUBLICATION

XLVIII No. 26

APRIL 13, 2001

APR 13 2001

18 pages - 2 SECTIONS

PENNSTATE
Erie

SPRING 2001

WEATHER

FRIDAY - Partly Cloudy



High - 55
Low - 48

Check page 2A for the weekend weather outlook.

INSIDE

PAGE 3A

WHAT IS...

POLITICAL JEOPARDY

Behrend's Political Science department held its second annual "Political Science Jeopardy" this past Tuesday.



PAGE 12A

TRAVELING MAN

Ali Ellis takes a minute to sit down and share his thoughts on Erie, traveling and his new home at Behrend.

PAGE 14A

MOVIES, MOVIES, MOVIES

Haven't hit the movie theatre lately? Find out what you're missing out on. And what you should consider missing out on.

The Beacon's monthly installment of *Your Money and You*. This week's topic: Student Loans



INDEX

NEWS

WEATHER..... 2A
WORLD & NATION..... 6A
NATIONAL CAMPUS..... 7A

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
MARK YOUR CALENDAR 9A

EDITORIAL

STAFF EDITORIAL..... 10A

FEATURES

HOT SPOTS IN ERIE..... 12A
A&E..... 14A

SPORTS

BEHREND SPORTS..... 1B
NATIONAL SPORTS..... 4B

CONTACT US

NEWSROOM: 898-6488
FAX US: 898-6019
ON THE WEB:
www.clubs.psu.edu/beacononline/
Offices are located downstairs in Reed Union Building

Equipment thefts continue

Cost of thefts highest in years

by Jeff Miller
managing editor

Last weekend, a janitor reported the theft of a video data projector, which was taken from the Academic Building in Room 41. The thief bypassed several security measures while removing the projector from its overhead bracket and cut the wires leading to the computer in front of the classroom. Also, the locked computer stand in the podium at the front of the classroom was broken into in order to retrieve the remote control for the projector.

Behrend's electronics come equipped with special security kits made for computers, projectors, and A/V equipment, according to Mario Loreti, an instructional service specialist with Media and Instructional Support (MISC).

"They use aircraft grade steel cable and chains. There are also alarms on the projectors," said Loreti. "It takes a special tool to remove them as well."

Because the cables leading from the projector to the computer go through the walls it isn't just a simple matter to replace the missing projector. The room will have to be rewired.

This theft isn't the first of its kind at Behrend. This academic year, five projectors have been stolen from classrooms and engineering labs. The price of the stolen projectors is estimated at \$5,000 each, totaling more than \$20,000.

The monetary value of the



PHOTO BY NEIL MAKADIA

Students in Academic 41 look at the empty video data projector stand after the projector had been reported stolen. The theft adds to Behrend's list of expensive equipment stolen this year.

projectors isn't the only concern for administration. "Whoever walked in and took this projector [was also] stealing the ability of the college to provide quality education," said William Donahue, manager of Police and Safety.

Behrend's MISC is doing everything possible to replace the missing equipment and keep the negative effect it has on classes to a minimum.

"One problem is these projectors are chosen because of their features and

ease of use. It seems as soon as we find the perfect model they stop making it," said Loreti. A new model will have to be selected to help replace what has been stolen.

Professors have the option to get a mobile projector and computer unit for their lectures. Unfortunately, at this time in the semester it is difficult to obtain a mobile unit; many seniors are using them for graduation projects.

A wide variety of classes are being held in Academic 41 this semester. They include art history with Dr.

Sharon Dale, African American studies with Dr. Roberta Salper, Jewish and Christian studies with Dr. Daniel Frankforter, and mass media and society with Dr. Carla Lloyd.

Behrend is taking steps to reduce theft of technology equipment on campus. "We are investigating it actively, and the state police have been made aware of the theft," said Donahue. "There have been cameras

THEFTS

continued on page 3A

Schools join to create new majors

by Mark Benko
staff writer

The Penn State Behrend School of Engineering and Engineering Technology will join with the School of Science in presenting two new majors beginning in the fall of 2001.

An information seminar will be held at noon on April 17 in Nick 171. The meeting will be hosted by Ron McCarty, instructor of computer science from the School of Science, and Dr. Ralph Ford, assistant professor of engineering for the SEET. It is open to the public.

McCarty will present the new computer science major that is designed to complement, not compete, with Behrend's existing computer majors. The program is designed to provide a framework for those students interested in developing computer skills related specifically to the sciences. Flexible natural science requirements will enable students to tailor a program to complement studies in biology, physics, chemistry and other natural sciences.

The objectives of the major will also contain rigorous math requirements with a science orientation.

The major will be geared to satisfy potential employers, adhere to accreditation guidelines as much as possible, and provide computer

NEW MAJORS

continued on page 3A

Blue Bus funding questioned after decreased ridership



FILE PHOTO

Behrend's Blue Bus has experienced a decrease in ridership during the past year.

by Jason Snyder
editor-in-chief

The Student Activity Fee Committee will discuss and possibly decide the future of Behrend's Blue Bus at this week's SAF meeting. There is a possibility that funding for the Blue Bus may be cut, given concerns of decreasing student use during the past year.

Student Activities Assistant Stacey McCoy and Director of Student Activities Chris Rizzo requested the funding for the Blue Bus in their SAF proposal submitted last month. The proposal was broken down into three separate options for future funding. Some options would require a commitment from SAF to fund the project for the next five years.

The first option, and the most expensive, would call for the purchase of a new bus. This would cost \$48,304 paid all at once through SAF. Additional costs within that option include the cost for wages, gas, and the use of a cellular phone. The total cost for this option is \$50,961.

The second option submitted would also call for the purchase of a new bus. This plan would pay for the bus over the course of five years, at a rate of \$1,000/month. The total cost of this option is \$14,657 which also includes the cost of wages, gas and a cellular phone.

The third option is very similar with the only difference coming with the cost of gas and maintenance. This option calls for payment to be made to Fleet for fuel and maintenance. The extra money needed to pay for this service is about \$5,000, bringing the cost of this option to \$17,306.

If Behrend doesn't purchase a new bus, a fourth option would be to keep the current bus running, reducing the schedule of operation to just 29 hours per week. This plan would only cost \$2,657, but wouldn't guarantee that the bus would be fully operational given the recent mechanical problems the Blue Bus has had.

The fifth option requests no money from SAF, but requires the use of the \$10,000 in carryover funds. The carryover funds would pay for the

operation of the Blue Bus to be used specifically for special trips only.

According to Student Government Association president Jen Miles, the problem in funding the Blue Bus comes from the lack of ridership. This concern resonates throughout campus from students who don't use the service.

"There's a huge decline in ridership," said McCoy. "We are only serving a core group of students."

McCoy admits that this is a problem when requesting money. "What the Student Activity Fee is looking at when I provide them with the details about ridership information is whether or not to spend this money if we only have, for example, four students this past Sunday, ride the bus." According to Director of Student Affairs Ken Miller, it cost \$237 for these four students to use the bus this past Sunday.

According to McCoy, it cost a total of \$3,752 for the Blue Bus to run in the first two weeks of the fall 2000 semester. This two-week span was the busiest for the Blue Bus this year. That would be equivalent to charging SAF \$18.95 per student to use the bus during those two weeks.

When students use the service less often it results in a higher "per student" cost. Taking the four riders this past Sunday, the cost per student would be \$59.25. That means that it cost almost \$60 to give a student a ride to Buffalo Road or to the mall.

Total ridership this year is 2,217, with many of those riders being multiple time users. This is down from last year, which totaled 3,464 riders. The decrease is because ridership was recorded differently. Last year, the ridership numbers would include student groups that requested use of the Blue Bus. The members of these groups were counted individually, which is not the case this year.

BLUE BUS

continued on page 3A

Behrend VIZualizes web-based tool

by Andrea Bolton
staff writer

VIZ, a new web-based spatial visualization training program, is fast approaching. The web site is being designed and the program completed by students currently attending Behrend. The interdisciplinary team of students working on the project consists of eight students from the psychology, engineering, and communication majors.

VIZ is a program dedicated to the understanding and improvement of spatial visualization skills and was actually up and running last year. Dr. Dawn Blasko, associate professor of psychology, and Kathy Holliday-Darr, instructor of engineering graphics, began designing the web site through the assistance of a university Fund for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (FELT) grant. They were able to complete two tests of spatial ability, and the project for this summer will consist of eight interdisciplinary students using "cutting-edge technology." The projects that have already been completed will remain a permanent part of the site. Teachers and faculty will be able to access

VIZ

continued on page 3A