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Penn State wrestles with Info Tech Fee

by Justin Curry
news editor

Each semester for the past 12 years, Penn State students have been paying into what is known as the Information Technology, or IT, Fee. Since its inception in fall of 1991, the IT Fee has more than quadrupled, to a cost of \$160 per semester. The way the fee is being spent, however, seems to remain unnoticed by most students. With Penn State having an enrollment of 82,000 for the 2003-04 school year, the IT Fee alone will bring in more than \$26 million. But many students do not have understanding of where their money is actually going.

Each location of Penn State, including University Park, has a predetermined IT Fee board. The board is usually chosen by the CEO or Dean at each location. Behrend's IT fee board, however, is formed by the SGA, according to Ron Hoffman, IT director. This committee decides how to spend the money that the campus collects each year from the IT fee. This money is intended to be spent on providing up to date technology, and improving labs and computers for exclusively students.

Students at each location don't see a full return on their \$160 fee, however. Out of the \$160, only 37.5 percent, or \$60 is returned per student per semester. The rest of the money is retained at University Park to pay for the libraries, computer and information systems budgets and site licensed software. Services used by the students that fall under this umbrella are eLion, webmail, ANGEL, portal,



Students diligently at work in the computer lab in Hammerrill

PHOTO BY JUSTIN CURRY/BEHREND BEACON

e-mail accounts, personal web space, Microsoft programs for students, LIAS and the online library as well as a plethora of tutorials and computer training modules. Every Penn State student's money is divided up this way, regardless of location or major.

At Behrend, the 37.5 percent return on the IT Fee equals out to be around \$456,000 a year. The fate of this bulk appears to be ambiguous. Labs are updated with the newest software yearly, yet the money required to do that comes from the other portion of

the IT fee which remains at University Park. Every year, at least one lab is updated with new computers. This year, three labs were overhauled. But as of yet, the IT report from last year as well as the committee has yet to be released.

Student leaders have been trying to deal with the IT ambiguity on a University-wide level as of recently. At the last meeting of the Commonwealth Council of Student Governments (CCSG), a resolution was passed to form a committee that

will set up the guidelines for the IT committee at each location. The goal is to set up equal student representation on IT Boards across the commonwealth, given that students are the only ones paying into the IT fee. The committee that the resolution formed is comprised of a student from each caucus. Locations are placed into caucuses depending on their geographic location in the

commonwealth. The student representative for the Northwest caucus, which Behrend belongs to, is Elischia Fludd. She can be reached at ejf153@psu.edu if anyone has questions or suggestions for the committee.

Midnight Bingo in jeopardy

by Courtney Straub
news editor

For the past few years, Midnight Bingo has been one of the best attended, regularly held programs at Behrend. However, the club is in jeopardy of fading out of existence this semester.

Midnight Bingo is an event that is held approximately three times per semester. The program starts around 10 p.m. and runs as late as 2 a.m. Each bingo has a different theme, including Getting leid at Midnight Bingo and Valentine's Day. The event hands out more than 50 prizes per night, at a cost of over \$300. Also, around midnight, players receive a free meal from McDonald's, Pizza Outlet, or catering from Housing and Food Services. Average attendance last year was approximately 175 students.

Although the events were popular, the club has begun to weaken. The decline of the club began last semester when the club was only funded for one event as opposed to past years when it was given up to three per semester. Graduation of key members of the club was a contributing factor to lack of involvement.

According to Patrick Mazur, current treasurer of the Midnight Bingo Board, the funding cut came because SAF wanted more specific quotes.

Although the programs were well attended, the club found difficulty in recruiting members to help. Aside from the executive board, the club only has five current members. Also hurting membership was the graduation of most of the clubs founders such as

Aaron Barun, Ryan Raines, and Tiffany Schlosser. A final blow to the club was the loss of advisor, Maria Madigan, who is no longer employed at Behrend.

The fate of the Midnight Bingo Board is not yet sealed but hopes are quickly diminishing.

The sad part about it is that it's one of those things that students like to do, said Netta Nelson, former treasurer of the Midnight Bingo Board.

Midnight Bingo is a rare delicacy that sadly has now come to an end, said Jenna Boazzo, regular attendee of Midnight Bingo.

However some are still keeping hope.

We're trying to find enough people to put it together, said Mazur. The group can likely be saved with the addition of 10 to 12 more members.

Students may not realize how much work goes into one bingo. Prizes must be bought, food ordered, Reed Wintergarden set up. Calling the bingos, for example, yelling, Under the 0, 69 has always made helpers cringe as the student body cheers back with fourth grade comments such as Ooooo.

It is the stigma of helping a club, in addition to student apathy, that has been an issue constantly facing Behrend, as well as campuses across the nation. It is not until clubs start to disappear that the problem becomes visible.

We all need to realize that unless we support all of our clubs there will be nothing to do on campus, said Scott Soltis, Student Government Association President.



Students participating in Midnight Bingo in McGarvey Commons on April 11, 2003.

PHOTO BY PAT MAZUR

A matter of identification

University plans switch to new identification numbers

by Justin Plansinis
staff writer

Penn State President Graham Spanier has approved a plan to replace the University-wide use of an individual's Social Security number with a unique Penn State Identification Number. The Social Security Numbers in the central business and student systems (IBIS and ISIS) will be replaced during the winter break of 2004. The entire University is closed. This means that there are three semesters of the status quo before the new numbers are put into use. This number may end up being just as long as a Social Security Number since a Penn State number may have to be issued to alumni as well, though that information is not known at this time.

This is all being done for confidentiality reasons, says Dr. Mary Ellen Bayuk, Penn State Erie's Registrar. Bayuk said that there are many concerns these days about identity theft, and the University is trying to address these concerns. Upon completion of this project, the Social Security Number will be stored as a confidential attribute and the University's use of it will be restricted.

A number of smaller private colleges have already transitioned into this new system of identification; however, Penn State

is one of the first state schools to try this. While most private colleges only deal with a few thousand students, Penn State, and most other state colleges, have more than 100,000 students in addition to faculty and staff that have to be taken into account.

The identification cards that are used for everything from buying food at Bruno's and Dobbins to obtaining a transcript in the Registrar's office have your social security number on the magnetic strip; therefore, new ID cards are going to have to be made for all students after the change. Remember this will be over winter break next year so seniors need not worry.

There are always problems whenever there's a change to something of this magnitude, says Dr. Bayuk. However, this is all being done for the protection of students.

Despite the possible problems that may arise from this transition, the new numbering system is clearly going to benefit everyone. The University has gone to great lengths to ensure our safety and security so we should be patient and understanding about any problems.

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