

EDITORIAL

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The Behrend Beacon

The Behrend Beacon

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The Great Debate

Every other week, two members of the Beacon's board of opinions will choose a topic and discuss the topic from opposite viewpoints. This week, the focus of The Great Debate is class attendance policy.

Attendance policies are there for a reason. I wanna rock 'n' roll all night and party every day, as I'm sure many of you do, but I realize that I need to go to classes. If I don't go to classes I might not pass the course. If I don't pass enough courses, I might not graduate. If I don't graduate, I might have to pump gas at my local full-service gas station for the rest of my life.

I realize the importance of going to class, but many do not. This is why we need to have attendance policies, so that people who don't realize that they are possibly screwing their lives up by never going to class have something there to force them.

Think back to high school. I know if it wasn't for my parents telling me to get to school, I might not have gone nearly as much. If my school didn't have a maximum number of days I was allowed to miss, I wouldn't have had

to go and learn and get good enough grades to attend a higher education institution like Penn State University.

Now think ahead. In 10 years when you're working a job and think to yourself, "Gee if I work isn't really gonna matter today" or "I can do my job at home." That may be fine and good for you, but good luck trying to hold the job.

In high school, here at Behrend, and at work there is a limit of days you can miss. In school you can show up late so many times, not show up at all a few times and still be fine as long as you have notes from your parent or guardian. At work you will earn many sick days and vacation days as you are employed over a period of time. After that most employers are very forgiving if you go over your sick days if you have to miss work because you were in the hospital or were medicated

and not allowed to drive.

In college you can miss a week's worth of classes without repercussion. You don't even have to have an excuse to miss class. You could miss class because you had been playing Madden all night or be really hung over, or it may have just been really cold outside. It doesn't matter. On top of that after those three days, most professors are very forgiving about serious illness, deaths in the family, and sometimes other extenuating circumstances.

We pay (or our parents pay) a lot of money to go to school here. Showing up to class most of the time is simply using the money we are spending. It's not like the school is saying "come to class no matter what!" Instead they are telling you "it's okay if you miss a few classes, but remember what you are here for."

Attendance policies suck. There, I said it. I think that the majority of students would agree with me that there are mornings, afternoons and hell, even evenings when you are just too tired, busy or simply hung-over to sit through a 50 minute or hour-and-a-half lecture. Professors seem to thrive on these policies, with the ultimate vengeance being the reduction of our grades. If a person can stay caught up on out of class assignments, readings and projects, there is no reason for them to have to sit through classes going over the material assigned the night before. We, as students, have enough resources at our discretion that if we, as adults, decide to not attend class, we shouldn't be punished for it.

The first, and oldest of these resources is the almighty syllabus. All professors pass them out the first day of class, outlining the class topics, reading assignments, projects, quizzes and exams. Also outlined are the attendance policies for the various

classes. Attendance policies range from three to six excused absences, and the punishment for exceeding the limit varies from the reduction of a few percentage points to a letter grade to failing the class.

Students have the complete semester's breakdown of work at their fingertips with the syllabi and, if needed, they should be able to use them to stay caught up on work outside of class and attend class when needed.

Another resource for our use is the course management, or ANGEL network. More and more professors are starting to utilize this site to upload homework assignments, notes, readings, additional materials and questionnaires. ANGEL can normally be accessed 24/7, so students are able to check out their upcoming work and schedule easily. I have used ANGEL for a few of my classes, and it just adds to the torment of having to sit through another boring lecture when all of my work is done and I have all of the read-

ings completed.

Ultimately, it should be our decision as to whether or not attending our classes regularly is something we like to do.

Some students need the class atmosphere to flourish, while others do fine on their own accord. A more hands-off approach to attendance might actually weed out some of the weaker students and allow the classes to go further in a semester, with everyone having a better knowledge and understanding of the material covered.

In summation, we're spending our money here. Professors get paid the same regardless if we're in class or not, so I don't think they should be turning into dictators when it comes to attending class. If I feel like going, or I have questions, you'll see me there. But if I know what's going on and feel like I'm competent in the material, what's the point? It's just a waste of my time and money.



Homecoming court lacks requirements

A 27-member homecoming court? You've got to be kidding me.

Excuse me while I dab away my tears of laughter. Whatever happened to the wonderful cliché "quality not quantity?"

Is it necessary to waste time and resources with that many candidates? Absolutely not. Let's be realistic. Of those 27, only a small handful can be considered legitimate representatives of our student body. The other remaining candidates serve only to dilute the quality of the court and contribute to the three-ring circus that is the homecoming court. The whole situation is a complete farce, depriving the eventual king and queen of any legitimacy to the title. Having an absurd number of candidates spreads the votes too thin. Winning with 10 votes is not winning.

And just who deserves to be on the court? Guessing by this year's court, any Joe Schmo. Until there is an established set of guidelines put into effect, no king or queen should be recognized.

As of now, one only has to be nominated by another for acceptance onto the homecoming court. There is no semester standing requirement, no GPA requirement, no activities/organizations requirements and no service requirements. There is nothing. Therein is the problem.

This year's homecoming court is nothing more than a repeat of a high-school homecoming and is lacking serious value.

As of now, it is largely a popularity contest. As a student body, the only thing we have to judge the 27 individuals on is popularity, status, appearance and which club nominated each representative.

If this event is to command any respect or reverence in the coming years, provided this is not a one-time



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editor in chief

thing, which I believe it will be, there has to be an effort made to establish respectable criteria for admittance onto the court.

And what makes it respectable?

First thing, first-through-fourth-semester standing students should not be allowed to participate. They can't even declare a major, so why give them the responsibility of representing our school?

Secondly, a minimum GPA of at least 2.0 should be required. You have to have it to graduate anyway.

Thirdly, the candidate must be involved in some sort of college-related activity.

Lastly, the candidate should have or will stay at Behrend for the entire undergraduate career.

If the criteria seem harsh, it is because they should be. Let's let our student body take a serious look at the candidates, and let's have the candidates be serious.

King and queen are titles associated with royalty, a state of higher being, not average citizenship.

Packer's column appears every three weeks.

America says no to nudity

Janet Jackson should be ashamed of herself. And Justin Timberlake, too. Let's not forget that MTV and CBS are partially to blame here. That's right. Jackson, Timberlake, CBS and MTV, you made a grave mistake. Not one of you went far enough.

That's right, not far enough. Controversy is still brewing as the FCC launches an investigation into the now infamous Super Bowl halftime show, but the intentional nipple slip isn't a "shocking moment" for Jackson or CBS.

Jackson has admitted the stunt was planned. No shocker, when you considering the line that accompanied Timberlake's grab and rip. "I'm gonna have you naked by the end of this song." By baring her breast on television, Jackson got the press she wants as she prepares to release another CD. The uproar has also made Jackson's the most-searched event in Internet history with even more searches than the Paris Hilton sex-tape.

Still, it was just a breast. Jackson shouldn't have to defend the frat-house stunt or even apologize, for that matter. The flash comes off as silly and amateurish, not as an audacious, limit-pushing stand against antiquated indecency rules. As amusing as it may be to envision FCC Chairman Michael Powell and his cronies sitting in a smoke-filled room, doing a shot-by-shot analysis of the boob bobble, investigating this timid attempt at grabbing headlines only gives the stunt

credence.

Now, I understand there are parents out there who feel their children are going to turn out to be teenage mothers or sex offenders after seeing a single breast, but no one complained when Bud Light used a farting horse to promote their



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beer, a cartoony promotion with little value to an adult audience. If children were watching the Super Bowl, and the parental breast logic is applied, then we can't ignore the number of children who will now grow up to be beer guzzling drunks because they saw nine commercials for adult beverages during a "family" program.

Still, that's no reason to ignore the tactless nature of the stunt. It was an unintelligent photo opportunity that got everyone talking (I'm writing this column, after all), but the criticism isn't being aimed in the right direction. Most

of the condemnation should go toward the response of producers and performers, not the boob that did nothing wrong.

It wouldn't be appropriate to just start screaming "liars" from the windows, but Timberlake's "wardrobe malfunction" fib proves no one involved was strong enough to just say, "It happened. Get over it." America's outrage is only strong in the face of controversy, and all the pandering and apologizing just fueled the fire. If the performers would have just shrugged and moved on, Jackson could have lost all her clothes and the lack of response would have left the hecklers dumb-founded.

Baring it all would also have made a stronger statement than a flash that equates to a quick lift of a T-shirt for the stadium big screen. It's evident from the stories we hear about European television with its drag shows and "Coupplings," its "f"-bombs and "c"-words, that American television is as brave as Dennis Franz's butt is cute. The next time MTV produces a performance, it should remember America says no to nudity. While borderline pornography is worth the trouble, there are more creative ways to offend people. Why not show Britney Spears dressed in a nun's habit while singing "The Touch of My Hand." After that, America will be begging for naked nipples.

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