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# THE BEHREND BEACON

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## Soni withdraws from Presidential Election Salary solutions considered

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The 2006 - 2007 Student Government Association election continues to be filled with surprises. This started two weeks ago when the Elections Committee found Deepti Soni's runningmate Ross Zambanini, ineligible to run for vice president. This decision was subsequently overturned by a closed vote of the Senate of the Student Government Association two weeks ago 10-7-1.

After a week of campaigning and debating, the Soni/Zambinini ticket withdrew from the election. This came as a quite a surprise to many students who were in support of the Soni/Zambinini ticket. "We decided to remove our ticket after the Thursday debate," said Soni. When asked why they removed ticket so late in the race, Soni replied, "I received a letter last Thursday notifying me that I was accepted into one of the best programs that I was interested in pursuing." In reaching her decision

Soni said, "This is and was one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make in my life."

The decision led to an uncontested election for the president and vice president positions. Meredith Straub, SGA president elect, said, "I wanted a fair competitive race for the position, and I really don't feel that students should be handed a president." She reaffirmed her platform position by stating, "We ran because I felt that my ticket would serve the student body best."

Many students felt uncomfortable having an election with no contest. "Do I get to vote or do I get a president?" asked Jerry Pohl at the SGA meeting two weeks ago. Dr. Ken Miller, the advisor for SGA as well as the director of Student Affairs, said, "Well, I always prefer to see a contested election. We had one this year it just did not finish that way." He also added that there are no provisions for a re-election in the event of an uncontested race.

Despite being the Straub/Middlemiss option, Soni added, "I am confident that SGA will be fine next year. The next leaders will fight for the students as stated in their platform. They both possess leadership qualities and I am confident that with the help of returning members and of new ideas that the students will present, SGA will be strong next year."

Straub also added her thoughts on the SGA as a whole, saying, "Ken and I will perform our duties despite the circumstances of the election; furthermore, if any student does have a suggestion or comment, please come and speak to me about it."

Despite the praise of the process Zambinini said, "The election showed a lot of character and also showed a lot of ugliness. I feel that several students made it personal rather than professional."

By Christopher LaFuria  
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In the aftermath of the Penn State Senate's release of the salary data tables, Dr. Jack Burke and a working group of three faculty members from the school of Humanities and Social Sciences, including the department director, met on Tuesday, March 28 to discuss the possible problems and solutions that are a result of the evident salary disparity. The first step that Burke addressed was identifying the problem at Behrend. "We need to identify a problem, draft a plan and fix the problems," Burke said.

Even with the administration's recognition of the evident salary disparity, there are professors who feel that a change needs to take place. Many professors are frustrated due to two key concepts. The first concept is that some Behrend salaries are the lowest within the Penn State system. According to the information released by the senate, Assistant Professors in the school of Humanities and Social Sciences earn a median salary of just under \$49,000 a year, the lowest figure of any branch campus.

The second concept is that the Humanities and Social Sciences department ranks the lowest in median salary in Penn State Erie's campus. Professors in the School of Humanities earn almost 50 percent less than those in the Business program. Many knew that there was a discrepancy in salaries; however, they were not aware of the extent of the inconsistencies. Some professors at Behrend feel that this discrepancy is "bad for morale. According to Eric Corty, Associate Professor of Behavioral Psychology, said, "Recognizing that we are being paid half of another professor makes me feel like a chump. It feels like we are being underappreciated."

Burke and his working group have identified the problem of salary disparities; however, he says that the process will be long. The problem that was encountered was the action of another Penn State campus dealing with a raise in wages. This raise in employee pay moved the target for median salary. While developing a plan for adjustment, there are some avenues for resources that Burke and his staff may choose. A possible solution for the administration to pursue is asking University Park for money to compensate for the disparity and to close the gap between campuses and individual schools.

Another aspect that may affect the expedience of this project is the factors that go into a salary modification. Some of the subjects that come into consideration when formatting salaries are years of service and a merit system that takes into account the quality of work completed by each professor. Regardless of the circumstance, it will be a difficult task to account for the money that is needed to make an apparent change.

Even with the efforts of the administration, there are still professors that are confused by the Senate release. Dr. John Champagne, Associate Professor of English and Program Chair, said, "We are still trying to make sense of the figures in the Faculty Senate Report. But if, in fact, professors in Humanities and Social Sciences at Behrend are among the most poorly paid in the Penn State System, we have to work together to address the problem."



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON

Straub and Middlemiss are the 2006 SGA President and Vice President elects.

## Finding funds, a factor for SAF committee

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Though a number of proposals have been turned in to the Student Activity Fee (SAF) committee, many may not be funded. The Penn State Student Activity Fee proposals have reached their all time high totaling \$826,636,000 this year. However, the budget for funding these requests is only \$260,000 because there is only \$20,000 a month available. Last year, the total asked for was \$335,000, which was a decrease from the year before at \$456,000.

The most important events, according to Ken Miller, the Director of Student Affairs, that occur all year long will be funded first. These events are the Lion Entertainment Board (LEB), The Behrend Beacon, the Speaker Series, Intramurals and events that occur during orientation to welcome incoming students.

There are other events that have been requested to be funded but the SAF committee will have to sort through them. "We do look at the quality of the propos-

al," says Miller. Therefore, the best way to ensure a proposal will be approved is to have all the information clearly listed on the proposal.

The committee consists of seven students who carry a lot of weight on their shoulders as to which events get approved. Miller says, the committee has to ask, "Is this event something the students are going to go to?"

The committee also has to review the proposals with other questions such as: Are these fundable? If this event has been funded before how was the money used? Does it fit the criteria and guidelines by the Penn State University?

After these proposals are weeded through, the committee is able to make approval decisions easier. Seraina Naef, a student here at Behrend, is part of this committee. Naef states, "Personally, I love being on the committee because I love having my voice heard. I love being able to have a say. We can actually put more money in the hands of the students organizations."

"This process works," says Miller, "It's evolved to a point that it's just unavoidable. There has to be a criteria."

Although many proposals may have to be looked over, Miller says he likes to see that students are proposing to do so much on campus. The only aspect Miller would like to see is more students involved in the SAF committee.

Miller believes that most students tend to not get involved because they may believe that SAF is more for students who are majoring in business. The reality is that it "attracts all students who care what is going on at the campus," says Miller.

Some students are leaving this year so there will be positions open for other students to get involved; however, if you are in an elected position in SGA, you cannot become part of SAF. Miller says, "It is a really good opportunity."

Although, this program continues to evolve into a system that other Penn State Campuses admire, Naef would like to have a bigger budget. "A lot of programs come in with really good ideas, but we really don't have enough to fund them."



Preview of "The Titanic Prop..."

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## Students select single ceremony

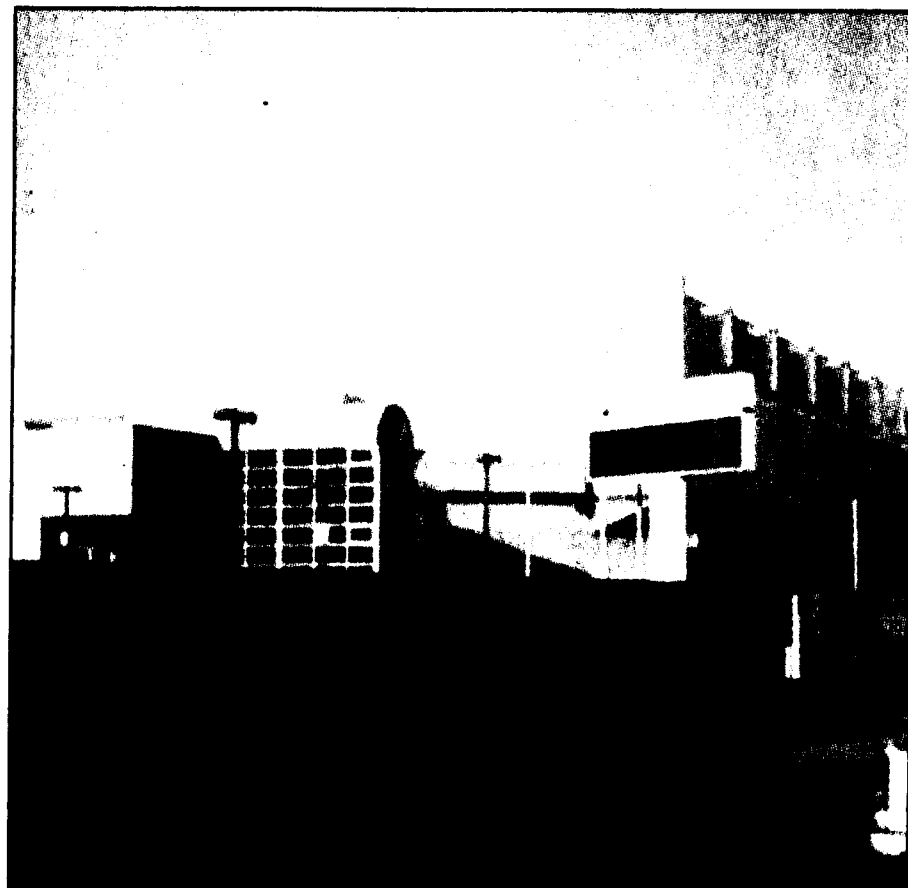
By Greg Lanich  
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Students on campus have elected to have the graduation ceremony at The Tullio Arena this spring. An e-mail survey sent out to seniors asked for student preferences and requests for upcoming graduation. The survey included concerns such as the demand for unlimited seating and for all students to graduate together. According to Kris Torok, a member of the commencement committee, "Two ceremonies would have been divided by schools in the Junker Center...the problem that arose with this would be that people who had minors, or possibly friends in other majors could not attend their ceremony."

Several students have no problem with a potential split, and in fact many were "excited to hear that they were splitting up the ceremony." This cuts the time to roughly two hours, allowing students and families to remain comfortable.

While administration is in favor of the idea to hold one ceremony, Seraina Naef, a graduating senior this year, thought dividing the ceremony would have been convenient. She would have "preferred to have a shorter ceremony, considering that the full ceremony the last few years was well over four hours." She added, "What about students with elderly family who will have trouble parking, walking, and sitting for four hours?"

Jayne Simon, Director of Special Events, believes that the choice is much better, "There are a lot of negatives in two ceremonies." While it does allow more freedom for tickets, it doesn't allow as much as people would like.



Kevin Jordan/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Tullio Arena is the new site for this year's Penn State Erie graduation ceremony.

Commencement

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