

# NEWS

## Soni withdraws from Presidential Election

By Robert Frank  
distribution manager  
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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 Zambinini, 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 opponent, 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."



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON  
Straub and Middlemiss are the 2006 SGA President and Vice President elects.

## National holiday recognized

By Mathew Burneisen  
staff writer  
January 13, 2006

Penn State University is finally recognizing what many colleges and universities and the entire nation have been recognizing for two decades, the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday. Since being designated as a national holiday in 1986, Penn State University has failed to give students and faculty the day off. On Monday, Jan. 16, the University will honor the memory of the slain civil rights leader by canceling classes.

A national holiday, Dr. King's birthday will be, "Not a Day off...but a week on," said Andy Herrera, the Director of Educational Equity and Diversity Programs. This year on campus, students and members of the Martin Luther King Commemoration Committee will be hosting four different events and working with charities to commemorate the event.

Herrera said it's not only King's life the college is celebrating but also his message. He also said, "There has been a voice of students expressing the fact that they could not participate in many of the events to commemorate the life of Martin Luther King because they were in class."

"It is important, not only to celebrate the life of this American...but it is important because of the message this movement brought," said Herrera.

Jeffrey Stewart, a resident of Lawrence Hall agreed, "It is overdue...everyone else has it off, and he is an important man in history."

The first of the week-long festivities at Behrend will be held on Monday in the Gazebo at Dobbins at 2:30 p.m. Leon Williams, a speaker on racial issues and diversity, will portray Dr. King for the afternoon and give a speech on what Dr. King might have been saying today if he were still alive. Refreshments will be served at the event. Also on Monday, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Biography will be played repeat-

edly from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. in Bruno's.

On Tuesday, students will be hosting activities related to the theme of the civil right movement at the Child Care Center. Wednesday, a theatrical performance by the James Chapmyn group entitled One Race, One People, One Peace will be held in the McGarvey Commons of the Reed Union Building. The Chapmyn group, from Ohio, will run this annual event from 5:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. and is said to be a performance with humor, drama, and truth.

On Thursday, a video presentation and discussion involving debaters Steve Albrecht and Dale Kelly Bankhead will take place in Reed 117 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The topic of the event is the issue of protection



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Martin Luther King Jr. was a pivotal civil rights activist.

## REDC awaits additional funding

By Kate Kelecseny  
copy editor  
February 24, 2006

A \$30 million state capital investment, the largest investment in Erie county history, will be put to good use as the Research and Economic Development Center (REDC) advances toward its completion date. Over 160,000 square feet in size, the building is to be completed on March 15, 2006. The sophisticated, polished exterior is slightly deceiving because the interior is nowhere near completion. The funding to provide the furniture inside of the building has yet to be released to the university by the state. However, Penn State Erie must begin to pay the utilities on March 15.

The Director of Operations, John Ream, said the funds were approved but have not yet been given to the school. As of now, Behrend is waiting for Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, as well as the State Budget Committee, to release the money. "It is only a matter of time," stated Ream. "The money has been approved and allocated to the university and the funds will be released soon."

Although the contractors will finish the building, access into the REDC will continue to be restricted. "By May, the furniture should be ready to be moved in and everything inside will be set up," assured Ream. Until then, only those working on the interior and maintenance preparation will be permitted to enter the building.

Serving the college for over two decades, Chancellor Burke has been instrumental in the construction of

the REDC. Shortly after his arrival at Behrend, Burke submitted the plans for the facility to be approved by the state for funding. The entire process to receive approval and funding takes years. Finally, after 15 years, Dr. Burke is seeing the success of his work and dedication to the project.



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON  
Still under construction, the REDC will open in March.

In terms of the construction, no major impediments have occurred throughout the duration of the building process. "This is one of the best projects I have seen here. The contractors have done excellent work," commented Ream. Although the seemingly flawless construction is said to end on March 15, it will not be long until more construction begins. An addition to the REDC is already in the works. Originally, the REDC was to include another large lecture hall, comprised of over 200 seats and similar to the two large lecture halls currently on campus. However, funding was questionable and plans were delayed. Since then, funding has become available, and commence-

ment on the construction will begin as soon as May. By the beginning of the 2006 academic year, the REDC will be fully functional and ready for use.

Blueprint plans show the addition of 18 new classrooms, a cyber café, computer labs, engineering labs and faculty offices. The majority of the classes held in the new classrooms will consist of those in the business and engineering curriculum. The café will be similar to the coffee shop currently stationed in Bruno's and will have ample seating in addition to wireless internet.

The overall intention of the REDC is to combine the physical and intellectual resources of two of Penn State Erie's professional schools, the School of Engineering and Engineering Technology and the Black School of Business. The objective is to create a more regional environment for economic development as well as create an atmosphere

where students can combine ideas and work together. The research and activities performed in the REDC will support and add to the work done at Knowledge Park.

Ultimately, with the combination of the two professional schools, students will be able to receive more hands-on learning experience which will better prepare them for tasks they will face in their future careers. With the close connections with Knowledge Park, programs in the REDC will link students to more internship opportunities as well as the opportunity to collaborate with other colleges and universities in the area on research projects.

## New Director of Student Activities selected

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New Director of Student Activities (DSA) Kris Motta Torok greets every student that enters her office in the Student Activities Office with a smile. This, in combination with her enthusiasm and work ethic, is what gave her an edge in the choosing of a new DSA. Motta Torok earned both a B.A. in Communications and a Masters Degree from Gannon University. Torok's career with Behrend began on Feb. 1, 1996 when she was appointed Assistant Director of Student Activities. Student Activities is the body that provides support for all of Behrend's clubs and organizations, from the

Greek system to the Speaker Series.

Motta Torok has nearly ten years of experience with the office. After nine years as Assistant Director, Motta Torok was promoted to Associate Director in 2005.

She attributes many of her work ethics and personality traits to the former Director of Student Activities, Chris Rizzo, whom she considers to be a strong mentor.

When the position of Director of Student Activities became vacant, Motta Torok applied along with a pool of other highly qualified applicants. The selection process was rigorous, but Motta Torok prevailed.

Motta Torok has some new goals as the new DSA. She would like to work closely with admis-

sions. She is confident that Behrend Admissions and Student Activities could have a great partnership in working to recruit more students and retain those already enrolled. Motta Torok also sees a great opportunity in working with the Athletic Department to organize new and exciting events.

More students getting involved in student activities is also something Motta Torok would like to see. Motta Torok also hopes to get otherwise apathetic students and any student not interested in getting involved in extracurricular activities to begin participating. "I think such students are missing out by not being more involved in what goes on around campus."

Motta Torok said, "Being involved with clubs and organizations on campus provides great net-

working opportunities, a transitional landscape between college life and the real world, and an edge in graduate school admissions. Being involved is just part of the college experience."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Kris Torok named new DSA.

## THON continues its support

By Earl Gordon  
staff writer  
November 18, 2005

"Together We'll Prevail." This is the slogan for THON, which is a fund-raising event which benefits children with cancer. It began in 1973 and is the largest student run philanthropy in the world. THON received its name from it also being a dance marathon. "It's a dance marathon because everyone celebrates for the money that has been raised to help those in need," said Kenneth Middlemiss, who is the assistant director of THON. The marathon is 48 hours of continuous dance.

Directors of THON, Meredith Straub and Kenneth Middlemiss helped to raise well over \$2,000 last weekend for the Penn State Erie chapter. Last year, Penn State raised \$4.1 million for the event. The closest any other college came last year to matching Penn State only made about a tenth of our total. The money that was made goes to the Four Diamonds Fund, which assists the Pennsylvania State Children's Hospital in Hershey, Pa., and families with children suffering from cancer. The goal of the Four Diamonds Fund is to overcome childhood cancer. No family is ever turned down from the Four Diamonds Fund. "Every penny that is made from THON goes towards the kids," stated Middlemiss. "Because I danced last year, it has really motivated me to do it this year."

THON, which was supposed to be a Greek life event, became an individual function due to Penn State Behrend's size and the fact that there are only a handful of fraternities and sororities on campus. "Students can go canning for THON. We secured permits and went to the Millcreek Mall," said Straub.

Many other THON related events were also being held to help out, including glow bowling, raffles and bar nights (for those of legal age). "It's just a great way for students to go out and donate to a good cause," replied Straub. The Penn State Erie campus also has a Mini-thon in the works for February. The Mini-thon will be a smaller version of the dance celebration, shortening from 48 hours to 24 and still raising money for children with cancer.

Penn State Erie has done a very good job with aiding those less fortunate and responding to fund-raisers. Without everyone pulling together, nothing would be accomplished. "I just wanted to say thank you to everyone who went canning for us," Straub replied. "It means so much to see students at Behrend care. It's just amazing."

The THON meetings are held every Friday in Reed 113. Anyone interested in participating is more than welcome to drop by.