

THE BEHREND BEACON

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Contact Us

Newsroom:
898-6488
Fax:
898-6019

E-mail: csl5005@psu.edu

Our offices are located downstairs
in the Reed Union Building.

Behrend booms with many new faces

By Lenny Smith
news editor
lrs5046@psu.edu

The halls of Behrend are much more crowded this year due to an increase in the number of students. The most significant size increase is that of the freshman class.

Penn State Behrend Director of Admissions Mary-Ellen Madigan said that the numbers have not been finalized yet, but that there are approximately 1,100 freshmen enrolled this semester, an increase of about 100 over last year's record class.

In order to keep admissions under control, the admissions office increased admissions criteria this year. The middle 50 percent of freshmen this year have a Grade Point Average between 3.1 and 3.6, while their SAT scores range between 1050 and 1250, based on just the critical reading and math sections only. Madigan said, "We will begin using the writing portion of the SAT for the fall of 2009 admissions process."

Many students said that one of the main reasons they chose Behrend was because its small faculty to student ratio. To keep that small ratio Madigan said, "We hired more faculty."

"I've always wanted to go to Penn State and I didn't want to go to University Park because it just seemed too big," Freshman Kurt Ross said, "Behrend has so much to offer." Many students shared the same ideas as Ross, "I really like all that the Junker has to offer and I am really excited for intramural sports to start," he added.

Many students attend Behrend for its academic



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON

Students pack Bruno's for lunch while on a break from classes during their first week of class.

history. Sophomore Andrew Harmon said, "I chose Behrend because I am a Plastics Engineering Technology major and this is one of the best places to go to school for that." With the addition of a new Nursing program this semester, Behrend opened itself up for even more interest from high school students. The program offers students the opportunity to earn a two-year Associate's Degree. After earning their degree, students have the option of taking the national licensure test to become a Registered Nurse.

"I like the cultural and natural environment of campus. It is a really good school for engineering, which is my major," Freshman Chirs Oehme, "I can't wait for intramurals to start too." The

Wintergreen Gorge, Bruno's, and the Junker Center top the list of student's favorite places on campus.

Madigan said, "[Because of the larger classes,] there are more and more graduates out telling the Behrend story. Based on the surveys that we do, graduates say they've had a good experience here and they share that experience with their siblings and neighbors. Our graduates are getting good jobs because of our strong programs."

Madigan believes that admissions can be a challenge. She said, "We increased criteria and had a record number apply, gain admission, and decide to come. Some (colleges) really struggle with that, but we aren't having that problem."

Penn State to offer new text message-based alert system

By Britt Bailey
staff writer
bwb5059@psu.edu



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A student opens their phone to check for messages.

Penn State Behrend now offers an emergency alert system for students, which allows the ability to receive informative messages regarding various situations around campus. These alerts are transmitted via text message

and are mainly focused on three topics: campus emergency, sports, and concert information. This wireless service, being referred to as PSUTXT, was officially launched on August 18, 2007, but has been available since late April, following the horrific Virginia Tech Shooting.

A major concern for students and parents who have their children away at college is safety. With the school shootings such as the most recent and notable incident being the events that took place at Virginia Tech

during the last second semester of last year, schools have been trying to think of newer, and more rapid way of transmitting emergency signals to the large population on campus. Chancellor of Penn State Behrend, Jack Burke, says "This addition of cell phone text messaging to relay important information is a valuable communication tool for the college." Since most students have cellular phones in which

they generally check more often than their email or school web pages that would display the same type of information, it is a logical idea to expand to a faster means of communication through a cell phone alert message.

This alert service will also provide students with the opportunity to be informed when there is a class delay or cancellation during the winter months when the road conditions are not favorable. This would help the students who have a long drive or perhaps even a long walk in the cold, winter weather, by providing a text message sent to their cell phone letting them know of a change in scheduled class times. Also, as this newly designed program gets more familiar with students, it will also be sending alerts about sporting events and musical performances happening throughout campus to those students whom are interested.

University Park was the first to acquire the PSUTXT service during the 2006-2007 school year and since then, all of the Penn State campuses have been added to the system. Penn State realizes that some students may be charged by their cellular phone providers for text messages so they are trying to limit usage to alerts that students really want. Brittany Howanitz, a second year residential student here at Penn State Behrend has signed up for the service last week. "I think its a good idea but I have yet to see it be in use. It should help keep a level of communication open since most people have their cell phones by their side at all times. I think it'll definitely help with delays, if there are any. As far as being safe, I don't think I'd say it makes me feel safer, just more alert about my surroundings," said Howanitz.

Signing up for this alert system is easy. All you need to do is chose a user name and password, enter your name and choose from a list of campuses that you wish to be alerted for. Then you must enter your phone number and wireless carrier. You will receive a four digit validation code on your cell phone that you must enter online to complete the free registration. Also, you can choose an e-mail only version if you do not carry a text message package or do not wish to receive text alerts on your phone. You can register by logging onto <http://news-wires.psu.edu> and following the simple directions on the screen.

"This addition of cell phone text messaging to relay important information is a valuable communication tool for the college."

-Jack Burke
Chancellor of
Penn State Behrend

Welcome Weekend brings orientation events for freshmen

By Molly Bonavita and Carly Smith
staff writers
mab5356@psu.edu; cas5044@psu.edu

When the Smith Carillon on the campus of Penn State Behrend rang out at 8 a.m. on Aug. 24, the freshmen experience began. Instantly, Resident Advisors unloaded vehicles and delivered the contents to the freshmen dorm rooms. Shortly after, the boxes were unpacked, the parents left, and the freshmen were left to attend orientation activities.

"The Big Premiere" as it was entitled, included orientation activities such as comedians, bingo, and the Academic Convocation. With all of these activities there were plenty of opportunities to get one's mind off of the homesickness and into the college state of mind. Although the majority of the orientation activities were indicated as mandatory, many students found it unnecessary to attend all of the activities listed. Those who did attend however

found some of the activities to be useful. The Orientation Small Group Sessions turned out to be one of the more helpful activities where the students had the opportunity to learn more about the requirements for their major as well as a chance to meet other students in their major.

Most students seemed to think that Midnight Bingo was the highlight of all the orientation activities. Midnight Bingo brought people by the dozens to play and possibly win all kinds of prizes. As ten o'clock approached, McGarvey Commons quickly filled with anxious students. Prizes ranged from popcorn and apparel to DVDs and even an X-Box 360. Whether it be because of a shiny new prize, or simply the enjoyment of bingo, many students said they walked away happy that evening.

The whole process of orientation is viewed by students as activities that are provided just to keep them busy. But what do the authority figures on campus

think the purpose of Freshman Orientation is? Sam Yong, Resident Assistant of Senat Hall, shared what she thought about the orientation events scheduled. Yong said, "The orientation is important for students because it makes Behrend feel like home and it gets you closer to the people around you and that is important because the people around you are your new family." Many students said that none of them had really thought of their new surroundings as being their new home. Instead they thought of it as school. However, it really is more than that due to the orientation events and the people met.

Overall, the freshmen orientation weekend went as planned and, although many students missed a few of the events, many freshmen benefitted from the weekend's events. This is due to the fact that the events helped form family-like bonds within the student body; they were informational and answered questions that students may have had that concerned their major; and the events had solid entertainment value that is important to any kind of welcoming weekend.