

Low black enrollment may boost PSU tuition

By LaVerna Fountain

The low enrollment of blacks at Penn State University may result in Capitol Campus students paying higher tuition.

President John Oswald stated that if Penn State does not receive the \$14.6 million increase in state aid (which is five times more than Governor Dick Thornburgh recommended), the tuition cost may increase by more than five percent.

Several legislators have criticized Penn State's low enrollment of blacks, and have warned Oswald not to even count on the governor's proposed funding level.

"I'd hate to think this legislative body, because of non-compliance and foot dragging, might have to punish Penn State," Rep. Edward Wiggins threatened.

Blacks account for 1400 of the University's 56,500 resident undergraduates. This 2.5 percent enrollment interestingly matches Capitol Campus' low enrollment of 48 black undergraduates out of 1800 undergraduate students, or 2.7 percent.

Oswald contends that during his 13 year tenure, he has made great efforts to recruit more black students and faculty members.

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Director of Admissns.

Citing the establishment of the Paul Roberson Cultural Center, Black Scholars Scholarship Program, and the President's Opportunity Fund to attract black faculty by increasing salary offerings, Oswald asked the legislative body to appropriate the money based on his "good intentions" and not

the actual recruitment.

It is unlikely that the House of Representatives will decide in favor of the \$14.6 million based on intentions. As Robert Coleman, Chairman of the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Council puts it, "You can't measure intention, but you can measure results."

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Mary Gundel, Director of Admissions for Capitol Campus, said, "As a satellite campus, it is difficult recruiting blacks. We have several programs to recruit blacks, but we don't want to compete with the main campus. Because most of our students come from within a fifty mile radius, we concentrate our recruitment efforts on the community colleges and surrounding areas."

There are many excuses for the low enrollment of blacks. Most blacks attending the main campus cited low black faculty members. Oswald cites the rural setting of the main campus for low enrollment.

A massive study, done by James E. Blackwell, Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, found that the single most important factor in recruiting, keeping, and graduating black students is the presence of black faculty in more than token numbers.

Blackwell says the absence of significant numbers of black faculty and black students "may suggest lack of institutional commitment to equality of employment and educational opportunity as well as a negative institutional

climate."

Penn State faculty and administrators interviewed recently in the wake of renewed controversy about the status of blacks at the University offer two reasons for the University's low percentage of blacks on staff and in class.

-- blacks find Penn State's main

satellite campuses have approximately the same low black enrollment - 2.5 percent. Blacks offer other reasons for the higher drop-out rate and lower enrollment.

-- black faculty membership is low.

-- the university has shown no real financial commitment to expanding its black enrollment and staff.

-- blacks feel unwelcome at Penn State and encounter problems that range from feeling that the professors expect them to fail academically to attitudes of white student hostility or a simple lack of understanding of those with a different cultural background.

-- the absence of cultural and recreational activities of interest to blacks rather than the rural setting, leads to a sense of isolation for blacks.

Regardless of the good intentions of both Capitol Campus and the Main Campus, the fact remains that if black enrollment does not increase, it is doubtful that Penn State will obtain the desired funding from the state. Without this funding, students on all Penn State University campuses will be paying more for tuition.

campus in Centre County unattractive because it is rural.

-- a higher proportion of blacks than whites leave Penn State before graduating, which keeps the proportion of blacks low.

Using the first excuse of the rural setting of the main campus can be refuted for two reasons; 1) such a statement infers that blacks are unwilling to defer gratification of the urban lifestyle to obtain a better lifestyle in the future, and 2) each of the 13

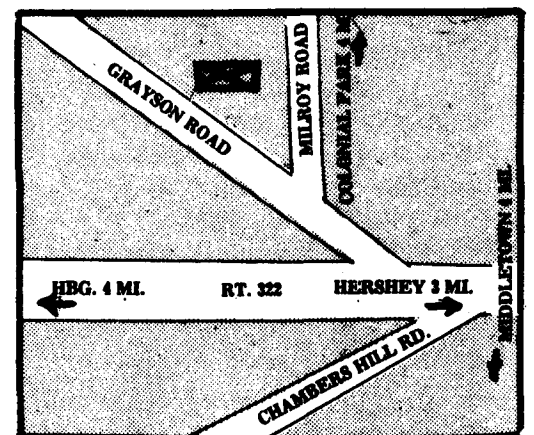
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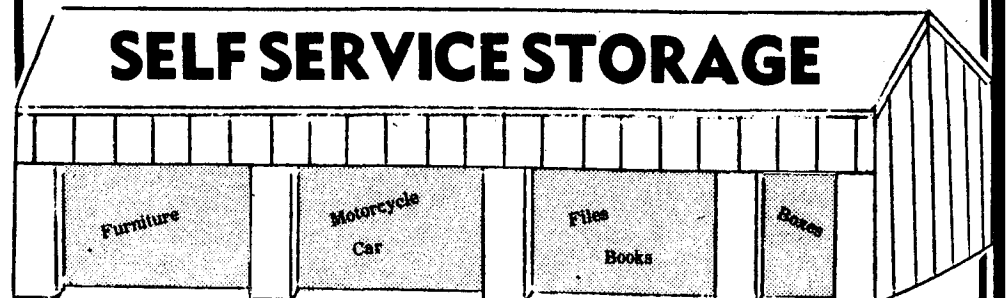
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