

Scranton initiates

Plan for Central PA College

"Every cloud has a silver lining," could be William Scranton's philosophy toward life.

When the former governor of Pennsylvania heard the news from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara on November 19, 1964 about the closing of the Olmsted Air Force Base in Middletown, he contacted Eric Walker, president of PSU. Scranton, concerned of the impact of 11,000 base members losing their jobs, asked Walker to consider opening a graduate school at the site. Referring the matter to the Administrative Committee on Long Range Planning, Walker requested a proposal on the feasibility on Olmsted becoming a school.

On August 10, 1965, the basic plan the Capitol Campus was finished, creating not just a graduate school, but an upper division college capable of offering bachelor degrees, as well as associate degrees in selected technological areas and master degrees. This would complement the offerings of other local efforts, namely the newly opened Harrisburg Area Community College, and at the same time ease the strain on the growing University Park campus.

With the encouragement of Harrisburg leaders, the school moved forward, setting an almost impossible target date of opening for Fall 1966—one year later. Things began to move quickly. By the end of August 1965 the organization structure was developed and presented to the school's board of trustees.

In December Governor Scranton made the formal request for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to secure the north complex of 177.5 acres of Olmsted Air Force Base. On March 10, 1966 the state

Board of Education passed the Penn State resolution to approve the new project, closing the legal procedure. This allowed Scranton to approve the funds for establishing the campus.

Curriculum, which was being created since January, included courses in humanities and social science.

September 1966 came, and with it the first class of 18 students, transfers from other commonwealth campuses and University Park. They were greeted by a faculty of eight which had been hired during the previous three months. These included still active members of the school today: Nancy Tischler, Stanley Miller, Murray Budney, George Wolf.

With such a small teaching load, professors spent much of their time developing curriculum. This, combined with faculty hiring, was to become the major focus over the next few years.

Improvements on these fronts were readily visible. By the second year of operation programs in elementary education, engineering technology, and business administration were added to the maturing humanities and social science programs to serve 513 students.

Capitol Campus's first commencement in June 1968 with 12 graduate students, was held in Beaver Stadium in conjunction with the University Park ceremony. Demonstrating the closeness of those first years, campus administration, faculty, and staff joined student's and their families on a bus for the two hour trip to State College.

Enrollment continued to climb in the third year to 1,002, being taught by a faculty of 29 full-time

and 19 part-time. By June 1969, the graduation was brought home to Capitol Campus, awarding 251 baccalaureate and 4 master's degrees.

A reorganization took place in 1972. Coleman Herpel, director of the campus from its inception, retired. The position was redefined and renamed as provost. The first person to hold this office was Robert McDermott. His achievements during his seven year tenure included building of the Multi-Purpose Building and developing PROBE (Potential Reentry Opportunities in Business and Education) to aid women returning to work or school after many years.

In 1979 Theodore L. Gross replaced McDermott as provost, determined to push the campus into a major university role in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Over a period of five years he created a board of advisers, approached the private sector for funds, reactivated the Alumni Society, and began the campaign for the Science, Engineering and Technology building.

Stanley Miller served as acting provost, filling the position vacated by Gross in 1983. Serving only as a temporary replacement, he completed many programs begun by Gross, as well as remodeling the Admissions Office.

Our present leader, Dr. Ruth Leventhal came on board July 1, 1984. Some of her achievements during her short reign have thus far included campus beautification, cultural center, and increased attention to minority and women recruiting programs.

As we enter this anniversary year, events are being planned to emphasize existing programs or introduce new ones. The "noble experiment," as Capitol Campus was dubbed in its early years, has been an obvious success.



This makes it official. The Capitol Campus is now in business.



Mud wrestling tournament held near dorms as part of "Rites of Spring" in 1983.

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