

SGA Deals with Problems

Since 1968, the student government has been representing student's interest. It has been their job to develop, implement, and oversee policies which are needed to promote student's welfare at Penn State University, Harrisburg, as well as to act as a liaison between student and faculty/administration.

Like any political group, from time to time there has been controversy. The latest was just after the SGA elections in late April. The winning candidate for president was disqualified by the Election Screening Committee. He was found not to have maintained a 2.0 grade point average while at PSU, even though he had a 2.5 from his previous school.

This oversight by the Election Screening Committee led to a group of outraged students petitioning the Student Court for a ruling on what they thought was an unfair situation. The court found the election to be valid and binding.

SGA countered by unseating the ten members of the court and rescinding their decision,

justifying their action by saying the Student Court can only rule on matters pertaining to the constitution and this was not a constitutional matter. Because the SGA appoints the justices they also have the right to remove them. In the end, Jeanette Brinker, incumbent and runner up, retained the presidency.

Perhaps this has been the most extreme problem at PSU at Harrisburg, making the local news and papers. But each group tends to view problems seriously, which shows how sincerely the students take their governing responsibilities.

Student governance got off to a shaky start in 1967 when it was opposed by a group of students who wanted to form an alternate form of government. The Free Assembly (FA). Rather than forming a government with three separate areas of expertise (executive, legislative, judicial) the FA wanted only a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and an assembly made up of all students with equal voting rights.

The first election, reflecting

the unrest of the Vietnam years, was won by the FA candidates for president and vice-president. On paper their philosophy looked good, if somewhat ideological. They wanted to: preserve rights and freedom of student activities; guard the concept of Capitol Campus in light of the interdisciplinary philosophy under which it was founded; maximize student happiness while staying within boundaries of freedom with self-limitations. While their intentions were good, time proved they had few plans to implement them.

By January 1968, both the president and the vice-president were expelled from office because they did not carry a 2.0 grade point average, as stated in the brand new constitution.

Student opinions, as stated in the student newspaper was that the FA had failed and it was time for traditional form of government to take its place.

In another major incidence, a controversial vote count left the SGA without a president in 1975. The ballot used that year contained two ballots on one

sheet. Each voter first was asked to check his curriculum, then vote for SGA officers. The second ballot on the page listed the student senators. The Election Screening Committee, in finding several ballots done incorrectly, ruled 51 ballots, were invalid.

In counting the two ballots separately, Sue Bretherick would have been the winner. However, after discounting the 51 ballots, Scott Deardorff won.

The screening committee referred the conflicting results to SGA, who decided to hold a run-off election. At this time, Deardorff filed charges with the Student Court saying the run-off election was unconstitutional. The Student Court upheld

SGA's right to hold a special election, and recommended a provision to the constitutional so there would be no future occurrences.

Again, in 1977 the Election Screening committee came under fire when a candidate for

vice-president charged them to be negligent in reviewing candidates. This time again, the Student Court disagreed because the charges were not adequately substantiated. The candidate countered by asking the new SGA to resign because only 10 percent of the student body had voted in the election. The SGA refused saying the "vote may not be representative of the entire student body, but it is representative of an involved segment of it."

These instances seem to represent the reign of governance by the students since the founding of the college. It has always been a small group of hard workers, trying to do what's best for the student body at the same time as gaining experience in dealing with people. The controversies, many times being repeated over the 20 years, are not that important, only the method of solving them are. This is the learning experience intended by the system.

Smoking in Classrooms Prohibited

A public campaign to protect the rights of non-smokers has gained momentum over the past decade. As a result, many businesses and public buildings have adopted restrictions on smoking. The concept of restrictions is not new, but the principle behind it is. Formerly, no-smoking areas were designated for safety, rather than for health hazards or personal objection. This was the case at Penn State University until 1975. During that year the university polled the campuses and found 'there was strong support for regulating smoking in classroom facilities.'

As a result, a university-wide policy was implemented to protect the rights of both smokers and non-smokers.

The policy, still in effect today, prohibits smoking in classrooms and seminar rooms, study areas, dining facilities and public lounges except in specially marked areas. Also off limits to smokers are the auditorium, exhibit galleries, laboratories, elevators, stairwells, indoor recreation areas, and committee meeting and conference rooms.

The necessity of the legislation, according to the University news

release was primarily health concerns, followed by property damage and maintenance problems. Implementation of the policy depended more on student/faculty cooperation than anything else. A random survey conducted by the student newspaper two weeks after adoption revealed Board of Trustees faith in people was warranted. The results showed that an overwhelming majority were abiding by the decision.



Peace Sign monument was built by students and erected behind the main building in the early 1970's as a plea for peace.

Fox's Market