

Why Aren't Colleges Measuring Up?

By Doug Richwine

According to a recent report by the Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of teaching, our nations' undergraduate colleges are "more successful at handing out degrees than in educating students." Carnegie President Ernest L. Boyer states that, "America's higher educational system remains the envy of the world but the undergraduate college, the very heart of higher learning, is a troubled institution."

"Scrambling for students and driven by marketplace demands, many undergraduate colleges have lost their sense of mission," concluded the report titled, "College: The Undergraduate Experience in America." If the conclusion of the Carnegie report is accurate, then what was the mission that was lost? More importantly, however, what was the essence of the mission the undergraduate colleges have found.

Think about it. During the senior year of high school college representatives flood the local school districts in search of potential students. Students look over the colleges, college representatives look over the students. Later, during the senior year of undergraduate study, representatives of corporations, governmental agencies and all branches of the military, flood

college campuses in search of potential employees. The prospective employees attired in their Sunday best, fudge a resume or two, and present themselves to the courters of their abilities. Is there a pattern forming here?

The corporations, government and the military are all bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations. These institutions require a specific type of individual to fit into the constraints of the organization. Whereas the military processes an organizational structure designed to produce this type of individual (basic training and officer candidate school), corporations and governmental agencies typically do not. It becomes the role of the undergraduate college to provide the specifically requested individual for the bureaucratic organizations.

Notice the pattern. XYZ Corporation desires a specific type of employee. ABC College strives to produce the graduates correctly fitting the requirements of XYZ Corporation. If ABC College begins to produce round graduates and XYZ Corporation requests square employees, then XYZ Corporation won't recruit at ABC Colleges anymore.

This situation is horrendous for ABC College because of its competition for freshman with other colleges. If high school students perceive that ABC College is producing a different graduate than desired by

XYZ Corporation, then the choice of the potential freshman will be to attend a college producing correct graduates.

Since student population is of grave concern to ABC College, the resolution to this problem is simply to produce the desired graduate for all XYZ Corporation.

The next problem facing ABC College is that once the correct graduate is being produced, how can potential freshman choose between colleges? Again the solution is simple. All ABC College must do is successfully impress the high school students more than other colleges.

This is accomplished differently between institutions. Generally there are several initial steps. First is to advertise the percentage of faculty having obtained the highest degree in their respective fields. Next, is to pile the accumulated published essays, critiques and research of the college faculty on top of one another and feud against the accumulated pile of publications produced by other college faculty. Third, a computation of successfully placed graduates into the bureaucratic world by the college is bantered against the obviously inferior accomplishments of other colleges. Last and probably most importantly, the sport teams, number of sex, and availability of drink-ing establishments are tossed together

into a public relations package. If ABC College presents this package successfully the choice of potential freshman should be obvious.

The formula is simple enough. Even the faculty learn to play the roles assigned to them by the system. The rules for hiring, firing, promotion, and tenure are imprinted from the first day of employment. Credentials, publications, consultantships, and the correct sex, age and race become the determinates for advancements.

Students also learn how to play the game. Professors present necessary skills that will enable employment. Students regurgitate these "pearls of wisdom" on test day. The object of the game is to capture the prize: the degree.

What does all this have to do with the undergraduate educational system in trouble? One finding within the Carnegie report showed that over 63 percent of all faculty members and nearly 40 percent of those at "research" universities indicated their "interests lie towards teaching as opposed to research." Yet research and publish they must; if they desire to keep their jobs. This situation is not conducive to enthusiastic teaching.

With the emphasis on "producing" employable graduates, thus reducing students from individuals to mere

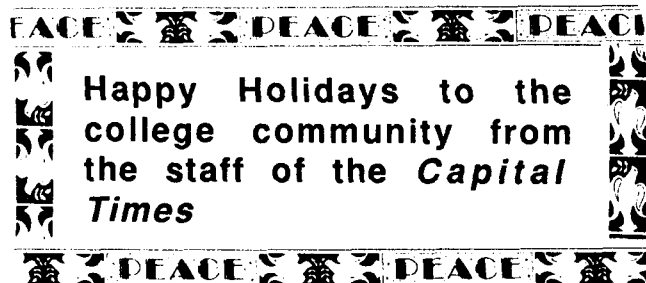
products, how can students be enthusiastic? Without enthusiasm, how can creativity, critical thought and analysis, spontaneity and learning flourish?

These attributes are not respected in the modern bureaucratic world, unless they fit the exact mold.

Professors are not encouraged to produce anything but successful, employable, conformable bureaucratic functionaries. Therefore, classes become chores to both professors and students alike. Professors begin not to care about teaching, but instead focus only on the requirements for advancement.

Students accept the conditioning into the bureaucratic system and desire only the prize, the "rite of passage" into the modern world. It is not the fault of the professor, nor the students. It is directly the fault of the system. This system had forced amnesia into the undergraduate educational institutions of the original mission to educate its students and graduate independent, critical thinkers.

If the desire is to retrieve the original mission of the higher learning institutions, then awareness of the present mission becomes the initial step towards change. Remember, Penn State University may be ABC University.



Five Lions Face Dragons, Bison, and Rats

By Kathleen Riley-King

What are The Lab Rats, Bison Chips, Dragons, Ruccas Razors, and Huskies' Byte? No, they are not new rock groups, nor are they street gangs. Instead, they are only a few of the nineteen teams that competed in the Ninth Annual Allegheny Region Computer Programming Contest at Bucknell University on November 15. They represented the University of Delaware, Bucknell, Drexel, Rutgers, and Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, respectively.

At the competition, David Nowacoski, John Stepanik, Robert Gill, Michael Maitland, and Thomas Cheate represented Penn State at Harrisburg. Usually, two students from the Business Administration program and two students from the Math Science program attend the competition. This year, all five competitors were Math Science majors. In addition to these five Lions, University Park sent a separate team to the competition.

The objective of the competition was to write four Turbo Pascal computer programs within a four-and-a-half-hour time

limit. The teams tried to solve each of the four problems as fast as they could. Each completed program was sent to a station where its submission time was recorded; it was then tested to see if it would run and produce accurate results. Points were lost either if the program did not run or if it did not produce correct results. Judging took place on a FIFO (first-in, first-out) basis. Final results and penalty points were kept secret until the awards banquet. Our team completed three of the four programs.

Dr. Ali Faradj-Bakht, leader of the expedition, said that the team attended this year's competition for several reasons: to meet students from other universities, to learn about the

courses of other students, and to discover what professors from other universities expect from their students. He wanted our team to have the experience of competing against others who will be in the same field.

During the spring semester, Dr. Bakht plans to begin preparation for next year's competition. He intends to compile a library of programs, to conduct practice sessions with the students, and to hold monthly meetings.

Juniors with any Turbo Pascal programming experience are invited to become part of next year's team. Anyone (regardless of major) who is interested in participating may contact Bakht in E258, Olmsted Building.

Message About Commencement

The Fall Semester Commencement Ceremony for graduate and undergraduate degree candidates is scheduled for 10 am on Saturday, January 10, 1987, in the College's Capital Union Building. The speaker will be Lt. Governor elect Mark S. Singel (D-Cambria). All graduates are to be gowned and in the Student Center Area of the Capital Union Building by 9 am so they can receive instructions and be lined up for the procession at 9:30 am.

Capital Times

EDITOR: Jan Travers

STAFF:

Tom Boyle	Julie Larson
Ray Burkett	Jean Meitz
Mike Camilli	Sharon Olmstead
Thalia Cook	Alan Pincus
Luke Hess	Denise Reinas
Vicki Koon	Bob TRs

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Kris Hansen

BUSINESS MANAGER: Diane Fitzgerald

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Todd Hammaker
Sylvia Johnson

CARTOONIST: Joe Kupec

CONTRIBUTORS: Doug Richwine
Kathy Riley-King

ADVISOR: Joanne Smith

Printed at the Press and Journal, Middletown.

The Capital Times is published by the students of Penn State at Harrisburg. Concerns about content of any issue should be directed to the editor in Room 212, Olmsted Building. Any opinion expressed are those of the author and are not representative of the college administration, faculty or student body. The Capital Times does not endorse its advertisers. The Capital Times welcomes signed letters from readers. Unsigned letters cannot be printed; however a writer's name can be withheld upon request.