

# Blumberg

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change somebody's perception that somehow he's being neglected."

Blumberg responded that he was not sure that going to Main Campus would allow a student greater flexibility in scheduling. He pointed out that Main Campus has few part-time evening students. "... I don't think there's any school where you can get your classes always when you want them," he said, "but you're right, perception has a lot to do with it."

"I'm not explaining why people are wrong. I'm trying to give our side of the picture to show that we're neither insensitive, stupid, or incompetent and that, one, we care very much about our students and, two, we're doing the best we can within limited constraints of the budget," replied Blumberg.

"What my problem has been this semester is a lot of the teachers I have are very bright, competent in their areas, but when it comes time to [teach] class, they are not being able to communicate effectively to the students what they are about to teach. A lot of them teach straight from the book. I can read the book. I can understand that information. I want to learn in class how that applies to me. ..." said a concerned student. Blumberg responded, "... We try to hire the best possible person we can, and the best possible person is one who is very familiar with the field, is a capable researcher, is a good teacher, and also shows evidence of service commitment to teaching. We first try to hire Americans--American citizens. They have first priority. If we can't hire someone who is an American citizen, then we look for foreign nationals who are permanent residents. ... We do look at their teaching. ...

"Sometimes we make mistakes, but one of the things we do is try and weed people out who aren't good teachers. ... Some people never do become good teachers. When you're hiring someone who is in the doctoral program--a graduate student as we often do--you're using your best judgment [as to] whether or not this person will be a good teacher. Sometimes they are; sometimes [they're not]. But that's one of the reasons we do the student teaching evaluations. We look at those very carefully. [There is], of course, a time lag. ..."

Another student said, "... I realize the fact that with any personnel-oriented decision there is lag time, there is a possibility of human error involved. In a business situation, when a business makes that mistake, the people who make the decisions pay for it. In this case, number one--Who *should* pay for the mistake, if there is a mistake? Number two--Who should suffer due to the lag time? There are the questions that you have to address. In this case, it's not the people that are making the decisions that are suffering for the result of their decisions; it's the people that those decisions are imposed upon. ..."

"I agree. What do you suggest I do?" asked Blumberg.

The student suggested a more stringent review program that would involve a volunteer group of teachers--one teacher from each major or one teacher from each division. Four or five

weeks into the semester, the group would evaluate the class(es) and offer constructive criticism to the related professor(s). Having been done early in the semester, this procedure would allow the professor to change the course structure, his teaching methods, etc. before the semester ended.

Blumberg said that there *are* peer evaluations where another professor sits in on a class, but several students who are seniors said that they had never seen this done. Further-more, they questioned whether sitting in on one class would be enough to assess the situation.

Blumberg added that there are student evaluations. A student countered that student evaluations are after-the-fact.

A student said that one problem with evaluations is that some professors, knowing that they will be evaluated, might change their behaviors to look good for the evaluation.

Still another student suggested that student evaluations be done much earlier in the semester. Blumberg considered this possibility.

"What actually gets done with these evaluations?" asked one student.

Blumberg answered that first he goes over them and looks for really low evaluations. "Then, they go into the person's file," he said. At the end of the second year when the administration decides whether to keep the faculty member or let him go, the evaluations are also reviewed. Every year, faculty members send him reports--faculty status reports--that detail their research, teaching, and service. Blumberg sits down and goes over these reports with them.

"To move to a different area, I would like to comment on the inconsistency of different sections of the same course," said one student. "You might have an accounting course or a law course where one section is particularly easy and the other section is like tooth-and-nails, backbreaking hard. ... or an accounting course where one professor one semester covers eight chapters and the next semester a different professor covers sixteen chapters. ... What are the guidelines you've set up for as far as covering chapters and what the professor is supposed to cover in the class?"

"... Faculty decide what the academic content of the course should be. That's an academic question, and I hold both an academic appointment and an administrative appointment. I do mostly scheduling and kind of administrative things. But in terms of course content and what a 300-level course of a certain number should cover, that's up to the faculty, and what they're supposed to do where there are multiple sections is to sit down and talk about it and jointly decide. And to the extent that that's not happening, then we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing as a faculty," answered Blumberg.

A student who is a single parent pointed out that she takes classes during the day so she can work or spend time with her child at night. She said she, and other students, cannot take both day and night courses. This semester she was unable to carry as many credits as she wanted to because not enough day courses were open the second day of

registration. She suggested that the administration plan course schedules three to four semesters in advance so students can also plan ahead. Dr. Blumberg later said that the division was considering a five-year schedule of projected courses.

Switching subjects, another student asked, "... Does the value of academic freedom [of the professors] outweigh the value of the students' education?" He said that the type of teaching he is seeing in one course at Capital College has made him decide to pursue his MBA elsewhere. "The person [teacher], I would really have loved to sit in on the [job] interview--provided the interview was in English," said the student, "to see this person go through it."

"Are you really going to let one course with one professor, though, change your career plans?" asked Blumberg.

"Yes, because I'm not seeing any results. I'm not seeing anything done about it. First of all it shows me that, one, it happened once. That means it can happen again. Also ... in this type of environment ... you're talking about a lot of the teachers we have now--

if you do go to grad school, you'll probably see them again. ... And if nothing is being done to correct the problem, if no system checks are in place, you know, what incentive does the teacher have to correct himself? And

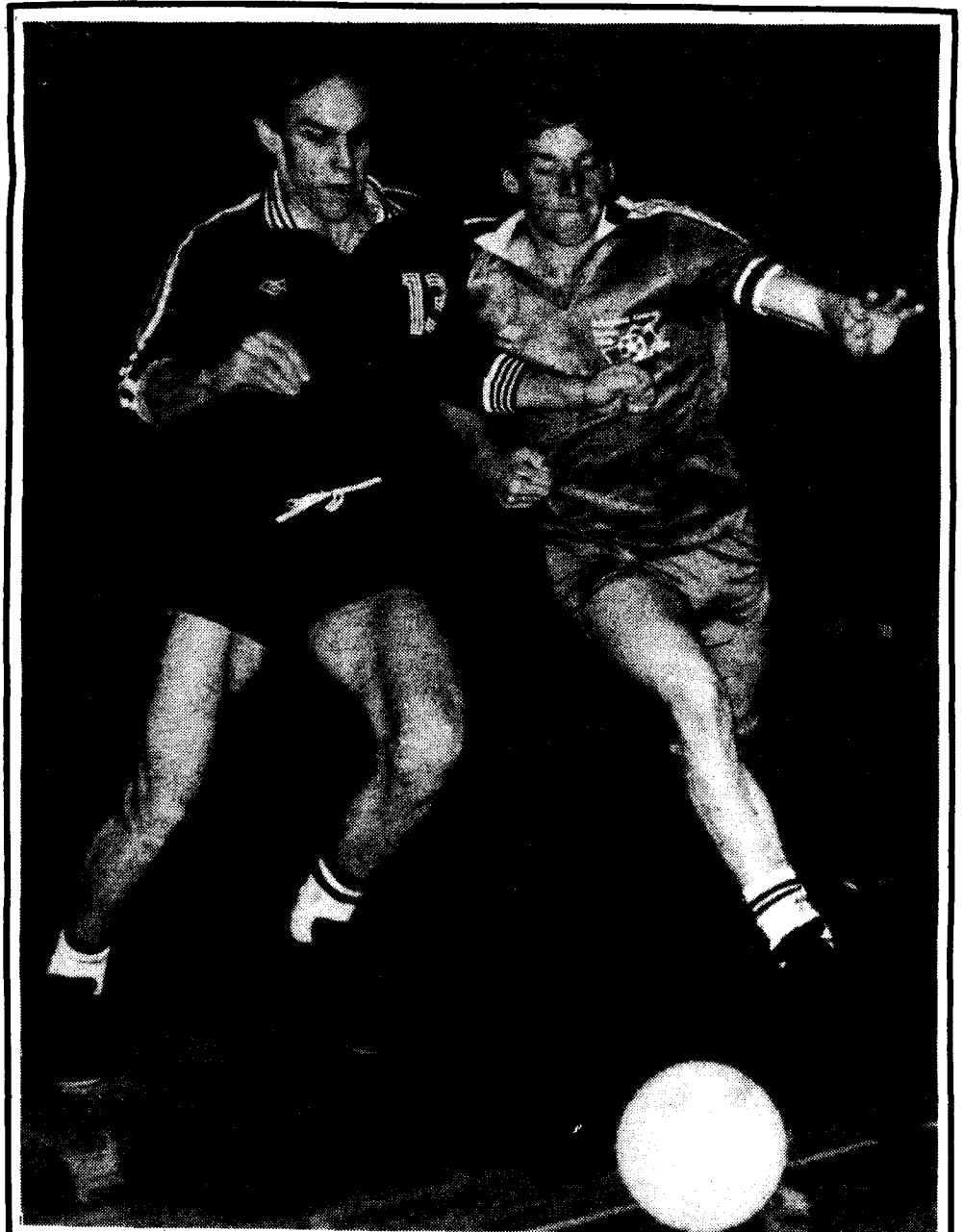
... where is the incentive to come back?" replied the student.

Blumberg responded that there is no guarantee that teachers at another college will be any better.

The vice president of SGA, a senior in Public Policy, said that of the complaints he had heard over the past two years, about 70 percent were about the Business department. He offered two solutions: First, he suggested that the division have other teachers from other divisions evaluate classes. The only criterion they would use would be the ability of the instructor to do the "how" of teaching. Second, he suggested that graduate students sit in on undergraduate classes and evaluate them.

Regarding the shortage of professors, Dr. Blumberg mentioned that he was planning to recruit four professors for next September.

The forum terminated at the end of two hours.



Picture by Jan Travers

Penn State's John Rivell battles opponent for the ball during the indoor soccer tournament held at Capital College on March 7. Organized by Rivell, Dale Zartman and Kim Mazur, the first year tournament was run as a fundraiser to benefit the soccer team.