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## O'Hara named as Director of Student Affairs

By Michele Hart

Peggy O'Hara has always been involved with students in her 16 years at Capital College, but now she will be closer than ever to the students. O'Hara was named to the Director of Student Affairs post last November.

Formerly the Coordinator of Career Services, O'Hara had also held the title of Assistant Director of Student Activities. In her new position, which had been occupied since 1976 by Dr. Jerry South, O'Hara will still be working with Student Activities, but now she will also be handling residence living, health services, career counseling, athletics, financial aid, and support services.

Student Affairs is something that most students have heard of, but really do not know what its function is. O'Hara would like students to have a better knowledge of Student Affairs and plans to make it more visible to students. She is currently working on a plan that will consolidate each office that is under Student Affairs to one complex and have one person head each division.

Her job, then, will be to supervise and help each branch of Student Affairs. "Basically, the most important duty, as I see it, is to help the people in those positions," she said.

O'Hara will also do "any kind of extra, odd things." She said that it will be important for her to make sure that this campus is taking advantage of everything that it should be taking advantage of at University Park.

Student Affairs is important in that respect because it works for the benefit of the students. "The role of Student Affairs is of student advocacy," she said. O'Hara wants to help evaluate student organizations to make sure they are getting and doing all that they can for the students.

But, O'Hara wants Student Affairs to help not only the students, she plans on working closely with the faculty and staff of this campus. "One of my goals is a closer working relationship with staff and faculty," she said. "We need a good, basic understanding of what each other's responsibilities are and what we do."

If she can accomplish her goals she said that Student Affairs will be more effective and can grow. The most challenging aspect of that growth will be moving this campus into the 1990s and "making everything relevant," O'Hara said.



*Peg O'Hara has recently been named the Director of Student Affairs at Capital College.*

## Chilly Classroom Climate Investigated

By Jan Travers

*"Unsatisfying or negative experiences in the classroom may contribute to high rates of attrition among students. In addition, it can affect those who complete their education by limiting their intellectual growth, self-confidence and career aspirations." --The Strategic Study Group on the Status of Women, July 1987.*

In a report released in August 1987, the Strategic Study Group on the Status of Women made a recommendation to the Penn State administration to study the classroom climate for women within the university and commit institutional resources to improve it, as necessary. Of particular concern to the group was the critical element of professor/student interaction

in the classroom.

The group's investigation, which concluded with the report, was supported by forums held at all Penn State locations during the early months of 1986. In the report, they detailed examples of the "chilly classroom" for women, ranging from outward verbal attacks to intimidation caused by the low numbers of women at Penn State.

The report told of incidents where women in nontraditional fields were told they were doing well "for women," and of an engineering student being told by a male faculty member that it didn't matter if she learned anything or not, "she would be hired because she was a woman." In addition, returning women on many campuses reported being intimidated by male

faculty members.

The study group made three suggestions for improvement of the situation at Penn State--mentoring, monitoring the classroom climate, and improving the faculty/student interaction in the classroom.

At Penn State, where females comprise only 17.1 percent of the faculty, finding role models for women students is limited. The study group

suggested Penn State encourage faculty to accept the role of mentor in return for recognition in promotion and tenure decisions.

In addition, they recommended to the president that questions concerning "classroom climate" appear on student evaluations of instructors and

that handbooks be developed for program heads that contain information on improving and assessing the classroom climate.

The classroom atmosphere has become an important factor in the high attrition rate of women, as well as minorities and all returning students in recent years, putting these groups at a significant educational disadvantage.

However, the atmosphere can also affect men by reinforcing negative views about women. By receiving these mixed signals, either overtly or subtly, they can interfere with men's ability to work with women as equals, both in the classroom situation and later in the "real" world.