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Diversity issue remains up in air

*Karen M. Putt
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The issue of whether or not to implement a diversity requirement remains unresolved following the faculty organization's April 22 meeting.

A crowd ranging up to 40 faculty members debated the issue for more than an hour and a half, before closing the meeting with a 30 to 1 vote in favor of reconvening in two weeks to consider amendments or new ideas on the proposed requirement.

At the center of the debate was the task force proposal on diversity. The proposal is Penn State Harrisburg's reaction to a mandate from the faculty senate at University Park on March 20, 1990, calling for the implementation of a diversity requirement by the campus.

A first draft of the proposal was written in February of this year, and was recently altered after receiving opposition from the faculty council at its April 9 meeting.

James Hudson, chair of faculty council, said the amended proposal would allow students to meet the diversity requirement in four different ways. Through courses taken at other colleges, a student's previous experiences, courses taken at Penn State Harrisburg or through experiences the student has while at PSH.

The proposal defines cultural diversity as "difference or variety in ethnicity, language, race, religion, gender, age, differently abled or sexual orientation, social class, global and regional perspectives."

In courses students admitted for the fall 1994 semester would take at least

three credits of work in courses that focus on diversity issues, or six credits in culturally enhanced courses, courses that contain at least 25 percent cultural diversity material.

Starting in fall 1996 students would have to complete at least three credits in culturally focused courses or 12 in culturally enhanced courses.

Experiences that would satisfy the requirement might include service in the Peace Corps, community agencies, or internships.

Faculty members focused their debate on problems with the plan.

Calling the plan "a breath-taking insult to students," Michael Barton, associate professor of social science and American studies, asked, "who, what and how will courses be considered diversified--and for whom?"

Robert W. Colman, assistant professor of social science and psychology, said if the faculty passed this resolution now it would be buying "one big pig in a poke."

Some faculty members, like Louise Hoffman, associate professor of humanities and history, wondered who would teach the new courses.

"We are ill-equipped to teach these courses," she said, noting the weakness of offerings in a subject like African history. "We have faculty with interests in different areas...but we're not qualified to teach a course on topics we haven't studied."

Students too had problems with the proposal.

Melissa Major, Student Government's representative to the

See Diversity, page 11

Ex-PSH official charged with theft

*Jeff Berrigan and Elin Marcel
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Kenneth E. Witmer, the former manager of facilities and maintenance operations at Penn State Harrisburg, has been charged with stealing tools and building materials from the university, using them to improve his own properties and build a house he sold for almost \$100,000.

A statement released by the university says that Witmer allegedly "charged and acquired building tools from the college totaling \$36,613. The charges stem from a four-month investigation by university police services at University Park."

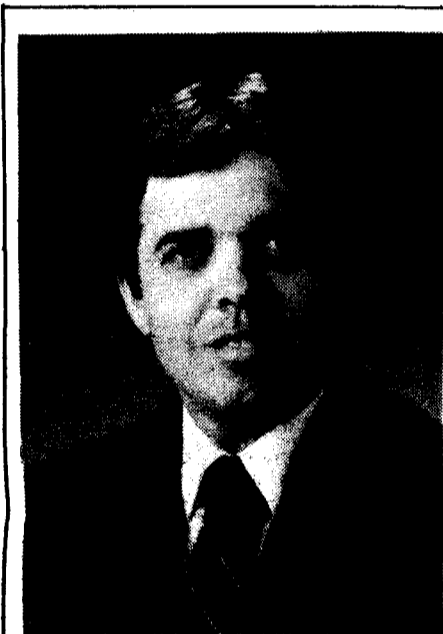
Witmer, 41, has been charged with 14 counts of theft by deception.

The alleged thefts took place between December 1986 and November 1990, according to court papers. Witmer allegedly used purchase orders to buy materials from local merchants including, a lawnmower, tools, a stapler, locks, a ladder, about \$200 in nails, a storm door and accessories, decking, roofing materials, toilet attachments, 50 sweatshirts, paint, and construction materials.

Witmer, a former Londonderry Twp. supervisor, told the Patriot-News that the charges against him are a "misunderstanding" and that he was "sure we'll get the whole thing cleared up."

In affidavits filed with the District Justice, Witmer said he was borrowing the items and returned some of them.

Officials became suspicious during a 1990 audit, the affidavits said.



Kenneth Witmer

Witmer declined any comment "until all matters have been settled."

Witmer allegedly used some of the materials to build a new house, put an addition on his Elizabethtown home, and put new windows in his beach house in Rehoboth Beach, Del. The new house, a property in Conewago Twp. was sold for \$98,200, according to court papers.

Witmer was arraigned before District Justice Bob Yanich and was released on a recognizance bail of \$10,000.

Luanne Lawrence, assistant to the director of community relations, said the school would release no further information until Witmer's preliminary hearing May 2.

Tassel hassles

Dean tightens cap and gown requirements

*T.J. Brightman
Capital Times Staff*

Students who have been allowed to participate in commencement ceremonies before finishing their coursework, will no longer be granted exceptions said Ernest K. Dishner, associate provost and dean of faculty.

And that has some mechanical engineering students upset.

"I want the opportunity to graduate after completing the majority of my

courses," said Henry Reed, a mechanical engineering major who is three credits short of completing his coursework before spring graduation. "Eight months from now it won't be as meaningful, especially not having the opportunity of graduating with students I have spent the last two years with."

Reed and several students want Dishner to allow them to participate in graduation ceremonies in May and fulfill their remaining coursework in the summer session.

"The policy says that we can't do it," said Dishner. "In order to graduate, you must fulfill all degree requirements."

Dishner said that exceptions in the past became rule and there was a need to "tighten" up university policy.

Dishner said that exceptions will be granted only under "extenuating circumstances," for example, a student who will be out of the country or a student with a parent who is terminally ill and would like to see their son or daughter graduate.

This kind of policy does not satisfy Reed.

"I will be out in the working world in a few months, and if I graduate in the fall my ties to the university will already be gone," he said.

Dishner is concerned about the true spirit of graduation.

"We started granting too many (exceptions) and what we had was a graduation ceremony, but it wasn't. "It actually was something else," Dishner said.