

Should we punish student apathy?

Last week the Student Government Association held an open forum to get input from students on what campus conditions are like, and how they might help to change them. They spent money printing flyers and covering the walls, halls and bulletin boards with them. No one showed up.

SGA wanted to hold a dance marathon on campus, similar to the large one held at University Park. They thought the club leaders should undertake some of the responsibility to help plan the festivities. They held a meeting for club presidents, which...you guessed it...few of us attended.

They were mad, ticked, irritated and annoyed. How dare the club presidents show as much apathy as the entire student body? "They must be punished and punished hard" was the sentiment as wheels turned, minds worked, and members of the SGA set about putting a freeze on all club funds. This was going to be big.

Someone anonymously "tipped" a *Capital Times* reporter, as well as our adviser, of the SGA's intents. Heads were going to roll. There was to be a freeze on every club's budget; no club would be able to hold events, plan trips or breathe without benefit of their allotment from SGA. The almighty had spoken and so it would be.

But it just didn't happen. Why? I'm sure there are legal reasons, ethical reasons, moral reasons...perhaps a voice wiser than that of the SGA calmed the waters before the storm ever really began. Whatever the reason, it just didn't happen.

I'm not addressing the issue to shake my finger in glee at the organization whose temper tantrum was squelched by the voice of reason. Instead, I hope to offer a more logical reason why freezing clubs funds would only have been an act of a dictatorial jackass.

The catchword of the year for Penn State Harrisburg seems to be *apathy*. Webster's Dictionary defines apathy as 1) a lack of interest or emotion; impassiveness and 2) a lack of interest or concern; indifference.

Going by the definitions, there's a lot of apathy on this campus. Okay, let's admit it, we're overflowing with apathy. We're largely a commuter campus with a high population of non-traditional students. Students who don't have time to participate in campus activities, such as a dance marathon that one might see as being reminiscent of high school.

BUT, by the definition, do club presidents exhibit the qualities of apathy? Are we to be punished, even though we're already involved? Is punishing people who do something right a totally backwards concept or is it just me?

I have no doubt the club presidents have their own reasons for not showing up at SGA's meeting. Mine: I have a 12-credit, 40-hours-a-week internship that keeps me slightly busy. But even if I didn't, I wouldn't have gone to the meeting.

I do not believe that because I edit the college newspaper, it's assumed that I also devote my time to participating in campus events. I put as much time into one issue of the paper as I do at my internship in three weeks. However, unlike my internship, I neither get paid nor receive credit for my time and effort on the paper.

I do have to work with a volunteer staff (whom I am VERY thankful for), insufficient equipment, and budget, beg and plead for every penny the paper receives. I, like all club presidents, AM involved at this college. I do my best to use the paper to keep people informed on this campus. I am neither impassive nor indifferent when it comes to this college.

Did SGA think of these things before their decision to "divide and conquer" in a financial tug-of-war? I doubt it. Perhaps it's simply that they don't exactly know what the clubs do--that they themselves don't go outside of SGA to get involved with other clubs. If they'd venture outside their hillside castle, they might find it's the little people who labor into the wee hours of the morning to make their clubs work.

Perhaps Terry Wolf, general manager of WPSH, put it best when he said, "They don't know what the hell we do, and they don't care."

Wolf had budgeted for a certain piece of equipment and been denied funding. When he tried to explain the need for the equipment, a member of the SGA Finance Committee admitted he didn't even know what Wolf was talking about, much less why WPSH needed it.

Something WPSH and the *Capital Times* have in common is our independence. Staff members learn from doing things, not reading about them. It's hands-on learning. We teach each other--it's an environment of



spontaneous learning. Isn't that what a college is for? Learning? You would think SGA, in particular, would be proud of such an atmosphere--where students teach other students. Instead they wanted to stop it in its tracks.

I'm sure there will be rebuttals to this editorial, and I welcome them wholeheartedly. But, I caution SGA to seriously consider the time and effort club presidents already give this school before they seek to "punish" us, for whatever reason. We might just go with the apathetic flow, and stick our heads in the sand with the rest of the student body.

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Capital Times

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