

Senior gift not a scam to get more money from graduating students, chairperson explains.

Dear Fellow Graduating Seniors:

I would like to clear up a misconception that I have heard around our campus. The word is that the Senior Gift Fund is just another way for Penn State to get money from graduating seniors before they leave.

Well, take it from me, if that were true I would not be the chairperson or even represent the committee. Those who know me, and you know who you are, can tell you that I have been against paying more money than we need to since day one, especially \$200 engineering surcharges.

The money that is donated to the Senior Gift Fund is used by the Senior Gift Committee to purchase and donate a gift to Penn State Harrisburg for use by future students. The committee is made up of graduation seniors, therefore the decision is

made by the Class of 1996.

What's that you say? Why should I give to the future students when I do not even know them? Did the previous students know who you were before you first set foot on Penn State Harrisburg soil? Probably not, but they donated Senior Gifts that you use everyday. On May 11, you will become a Penn State Alumnus; and when someone asks you "Did you go to Penn State?", hopefully, you will be proud to say, "Yes I did!"

So why not give a little to the future students of Penn State Harrisburg. I am not asking for you to reach into your pocket and make a donation. All it takes is the donation of your General Account. What? You did not know you had a General Account. Well, when you sent your application to Penn State Harrisburg you attached \$50 to it.

That money became your General Account that is used to pay any library fines, health services charges and parking fines that you have at the time of graduation. Why not donate the remainder of your General Account to a worthy cause, the Senior Gift Fund. I will guarantee you that it will be used for a student worthy gift.

So check "Yes, I will donate the remainder of my General Account" on your survey and put it in the mail or drop it by W110. If you have misplaced your survey or have thrown it out because you did not care, stop by W110 and pick up another one. If you have any questions about the Senior Gift, you can contact me through W110.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey C. Williams
Senior Gift
Committee
Chairperson

Bureaucracy 301

"People asking questions, lost in confusion.
I tell them there's no problem, only solutions.
Well, they shake their heads and they look at me, as if I've lost my mind.
I tell them there's no hurry - I'm just sitting here doing time."
—J. Lennon

By J. Andrew Smith
Contributor

You're reading the words of a very angry man.

I guess, if I sat back and took a deep breath (along with a couple draughts of beer), I'd rethink this commentary and realize that it means nothing to a society desperately infatuated with the bureaucratic system. We need to departmentalize and delegate, preserve order if tasks take forever to complete.

In a bureaucratic system like Penn State, it is very easy to get the feeling that you are an inconvenience to the local desk jockeys or, at best, represent to them the down time between coffee breaks and paychecks.

The following is a terrible, but all-too-common tale of bureaucratic wheel-spinning. In an attempt to get Penn State to release my grant money to me or make up their minds about my eligibility, I spent much of my time on campus in January and February visiting offices that clearly had no idea what was going on with my account.

I had to describe my situation to a dozen different people who were only partially responsible for keeping track of my academic file and less interested in me as a student than as a *thing* standing between them and a Snickers run down to the vending machines.

Through this experience I've come to a few conclusions: There is no centralized office that deals with student accounts. Due to the fact that I had to con-

tact three different offices over a period of two months in order to sort out my particular mess, I have to conclude that communication between offices is something like the concept of electricity to a group of cave-dwellers.

The mantra of the bureaucrat is, invariably, "I don't know for sure." which means, of course, they haven't the foggiest blur of an idea, but don't want to sound stupid admitting it. "Let me get back to you" and "I'll have to check your file" are other favorites which translate, generally, into "I've got a break coming up so go away" and "I don't know and couldn't care less." These statements are consolation phrases designed to give you the illusion that progress is actually being made while, in *our* reality, time is standing still.

In all fairness, I can't blame the individuals in those departments. After all the bureaucrat is given about as much creative reign as an air traffic controller during a weather reroute. The individuals within merely serve as parts of the broken machine that seem to helplessly clunk through and knock against their useless routines until someone comes to fix the problem or they pull guns and go postal on the whole system.

Seriously, there is something very wrong with a system that allows someone to put a "hold" on your account, without so much as a reference to what or who should be contacted to solve the problem. Had the

Bursar's office been able to give me this very basic information, it would have cut a lot of time off the waiting and hunting. There is also something very wrong with a system that allows someone to remove a student file from the records office without a visible record of who had it, why and where it can be found.

Much of my concern on the first day of this paper chase was due to the fact that "someone" had my student file "somewhere" but it couldn't be readily located. I find this very disturbing and possibly a violation of my privacy (after all, who KNOWS who has my file. Is it missing? Stolen? Being examined by the CIA?)

Some improvements in basic communication could go a long way in solving similar problems in the future. If set in motion today, the bureaucracy would have it set up just in time for my son to begin college. . . about the year 2012.

It comes down to the classic debtor/creditor relationship.

I am convinced that, if the money had been owed to them for tuition, my answer would have been found in less than a day, 36 hours tops. But because my grant was only intended to assist with my books, rent, and other living expenses (you know, peripheral luxuries), it took from December 10th, when my money was deposited by the Federal Government until the last week of February for someone to give me a simple answer to this question.

What is value of Penn State name at bookstore?

By Kelly Thomas
Staff Reporter

When it is that time of year for purchasing books and supplies for classes, some of you may fret that big bill you must pay at the Penn State Bookstore.

And at the end of the semester, some of you may fret again what the bookstore attendants tell you your books are worth for resale.

There is nothing more irritating than spending more than \$400 on books for one semester and then get, at the most, \$50 of that money back.

It is also frustrating to see that same book you paid \$25, only receiving \$1.50 back, resold for \$18 after a used book sticker is slapped on the side of it.

Does anyone else see a problem with this? Everything is overpriced!

A great example was brought up in the February 29 Capital Times issue. The TI-92, a Texas Instrument calculator, is being sold for \$50 more than what it really should be sold for. Now how do they get away with doing

that?

If the Integration Club wants to sell this calculator to raise money for funds, especially for \$50 cheaper than the bookstore's price, why not let them?

I would probably understand if the "Penn State" label was on the calculator, since paying for the "Penn State" label is like paying for the Ralph Lauren Polo label.

A mouse pad for a computer with the "Penn State" label on it costs \$8.99, where a plain mouse pad with no name on it costs \$2.99.

One pair of white tube socks with the "Penn State" label costs \$6.29, where you could buy three pairs of plain tube socks for the same price.

Tiny footballs that we gave away for free at my high school cost \$2.49 at the Penn State bookstore. I guess because it has a Nittany lion on the side of it.

Talking about Nittany lions, a stuffed lion in the bookstore costs \$60 where you could buy a stuffed animal twice as large somewhere

else for that same price.

A five-subject notebook with the "Penn State" label costs \$4.79. A plain, three subject notebook costs \$3.29.

The tackiest tie with Nittany lions all over it costs \$30. I guess that explains why there were so many on the rack. Why spend \$30 on a tie like that when you could go buy a nice silk designer tie for the same price.

A pack of 10 regular yellow pencils costs \$1. One pencil with the "Penn State" label costs 49 cents.

It costs \$6.98 for a sport mug water bottle with the "Penn State" label. I bought a water bottle at Turkey Hill for \$1 with free refills of soda and water.

There are many more items that are overpriced in the bookstore. There are just some examples to show that what I say is true.

We are just college students, here to learn and get a good education, but if you look at it terms of money, we are definitely paying for it!

Plan on being crowded when Plan for Commonwealth begins

By Wendy Hess
Contributor

As a Penn State student, you may be wondering exactly how the "Plan for the Commonwealth" is going to affect us here at Penn State Harrisburg, The Capital College.

Well for starters, the population of our campus will grow by about 5000 students. "Great" you may say, but this poses some problems. First of all the plan specifically says that "the plan must be accommodated within the existing physical plant (campus), plus those buildings that are currently approved by the legislature and are near the top of the priority list at Penn State (i.e., the new library).

So, where are 500 more students going to fit? We all know that there are some extra parking spaces in the lot, but are there 500? No, there are not. And if it snows, forget it!

Our campus has housing capacity for approximately 585 students, according to

Housing Services. That's the dorms and Meade Heights together. Where will the new students stay if they all opt to live on campus? Will residency be determined by lottery or the highest bidder?

Here's a scenario for you. It's 12:30 in the Lion's Den, you get your lunch and although it's a worthless endeavor, you look for somewhere to sit. Darn? The 50 seats are already taken! Now picture 500 students behind you looking for a seat. Scary, huh?

Another aspect of the plan state that "growth in education and research funding from external grants is strongly encouraged" and "exploration of external funding is encouraged" in regard to programmatic and degree expansion. I don't know about you, but I don't want my professors more concerned with their work and getting published in order to obtain grants and funds, than teaching me. Will serving the students fall to the wayside under the new plan? Time will tell.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for the growth of this campus. I think the more students, the better. The more students a campus has, has much to do with how vibrant and alive it is. The more diverse the better. What I'm saying is that it's like being forced to gain weight but not given bigger clothes to wear.

Fortunately, that new plan states "that new tuition generated by the campus. . . will be returned to the campus." That could mean (optimistically) as much as an extra \$2.5 million for our campus (if 1,700 more students paid about \$4,000 per year tuition, and of course pay the \$25 student fee).

Hopefully that money will be used to expand the campus physically, and used to meet increased student needs.

I'll have graduated by the time "Plan for the Commonwealth" comes into effect, but I'll be driving by to see where everyone parks when it snows.