

Support group founded for PSH students with disabilities

Joanne C. Ramirez
Staff Reporter

"Have you taken notice of the parking lot across from the Capital Union Building (CUB)?" asks Shirley Bohner, and Accounting major completing her first semester at Penn State Harrisburg (PSH). "Try crossing it in a wheelchair," she challenges.

Bohner is referring to the numerous potholes and ragged concrete which cover the upper Bookstore parking lot and states that the disrepair makes it inconvenient for wheelchair users.

This is the type of issue she hopes will be discussed during the meetings of the newly formed Support Group for Students with Disabilities (SGSD).

As a founding member of this group at PSH, Bohner describes it as an opportunity for students with disabilities to come together and discuss particular problems and/or solutions. She feels that this forum can be particularly helpful to such students in providing access to the experience and knowledge of other students who face similar challenges.

The SGSD was formed this semester with the help of Donna Howard, coordinator for non-traditional and disabled students. In a recent interview, Howard cited some difficulties which may be unique to disabled students and which SGSD would be able to address. According to Howard, these included "biases against disabled students, insensitivity in the classroom and frustration on how to deal with a disability."

"We hope that the support group will be a place where [disabled students] can vent their

frustration," Howard stated adding that it is a very informal group which is designed to meet the needs of students with any kind of disability, not just physical limitations. Both Howard and Bohner stress that the support group is open to everyone, faculty, staff and students alike, regardless of their type of disability.

"If we get enough support for this group, we can go to the University and get things done," reports Bohner.

As another example of an issue that needs to be addressed on behalf of physically disabled students, Bohner relates that although the bathrooms at PSH have been made handicapped-accessible, the doors are very difficult to open for someone who is in a wheelchair.

"The tension is too high," she comments adding that she feels it would be a simple mechanical task for the University to fix this.

When asked why she felt that a support group was necessary for disabled students, Bohner replied, "I know I am disabled but it has been hard to adjust [to college]." She feels it would be easier with the support of other students and faculty members. She assumes that other disabled students face this difficult adjustment period.

Donna Howard agrees with Bohner's assessment adding that University Park has a large support group in place for disabled students. Other Penn State campuses also provide similar outlets for their campus communities.

At PSH, letters providing

information about the support group were sent out to those students who self-disclosed their disability during the admissions process.

However, Howard senses that there may be other students out there who have not come forward and she invites them to schedule an appointment with her or to come to a meeting of the support group.

"All students, faculty and staff affiliated with Penn State are welcome," Bohner declares.

Family members of disabled persons are also encouraged to attend meetings as the flow of information and experiences back and forth will assist all involved.

Meetings of the Support Group for Disabled Students are currently held in room W132 at 12 noon (brown bag lunch) on alternating Wednesdays. Howard clarifies that this time and day may be changed depending on the schedule of group members. "It is very flexible," she offers.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, Dec. 4 and Bohner hopes to have a nurse present from Health Services to answer questions and field medical concerns. Anyone interested in joining the Group can contact Donna Howard at 948-6025. She can also be reached via E-mail at DJH1@PSU.EDU with suggestions and/or ideas for group meetings.

Bohner summarized the goals of the support group by adding, "We just want other people with similar problems to know they are not all alone."



Photo by Jody L. Jacobs

Coordinator for Non-traditional and Disabled Students, Donna Howard sits with Shirley Bohner PSH accounting major and founding member of the campus Support Group for Students with Disabilities (SGSD).

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deficient by some 90 credits.

This level of inaccuracy has had a series of repercussions. Some students describe problems with their parents and varying degrees of punishment brought against them based on the information provided by the degree audit.

Other students state that their employers, who may offer tuition reimbursement, have been curious about the inconsistencies on the piece of paper. Then there are those who, like Georgia Foltz, emphasize the stress and anxiety caused when an erroneous degree audit is received.

"We have enough hassle in our lives without having this. The last thing you need is to be slapped in the face with, 'You're 65 credits short,'" Foltz said. "It's kind of a jolt."

Faculty advisors and staff assistants also described the backlash resulting from inaccurate degree audits as stressful and tedious and bad publicity for the University.

"We are showing we don't know how to do our job," related one faculty advisor who preferred to go unnamed. "It is the one piece of solid information we provide to our students and

we can't even get it right."

This is a reference to the fact that grades are no longer mailed without a specific request and registration can be done over the telephone generating a limited paper trail for students and parents to follow.

The result of these inaccuracies is that many students report they simply throw the degree audit away when they receive it.

"I don't put much weight on it," admits Julie Simpson, a Criminal Justice major in her Senior year. "Pretty much everyone I know, their audits have been wrong."

Simpson's audit recorded her deficient for 6 credits which were actually classes from which she had been waived.

"I know it is in my file that I am waived so I don't worry about it," she concludes, adding that she calls the department's staff assistant to check on her progress toward her degree. Other students echo this reliance on their paper file and staff assistants.

"It is critical to still maintain records the old-fashioned way," says Dr. Clem Gilpin, faculty advisor to some 60 students in the department of

behavioral sciences.

Gilpin warns that wholesale reliance on the computer-generated degree audit can be "dicey" given that the computer may become inoperative or the electronic information lost.

The degree audit program has been in place at PSH for approximately 3 years and although critics argue that its inconsistencies and inaccuracies make it a tiresome bother, Dr. Thomas Strevler, registrar and head of enrollment services which produces the audits, defends the program.

"It is going to take some confidence building," Strevler said, "but we are using the degree audit as a benchmark planning tool for administration, registration, advising, admissions and graduation. There is a deep commitment on the part of the institution to the audit."

"I know it is not universally accepted," Strevler said, "but it can work."

Strevler contends that when the program was first implemented it was not taken as seriously as it should have been. As a result, some departments did not take part in the original design of the program and this

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Fencing club approved by student court

Debbi Mallek
Staff Reporter

The Fencing Club was approved as an official Penn State Harrisburg club by student court last week. A final decision on the club's status will be made by student government this week.

Interested students are invited to attend a planning and orientation meeting, scheduled for Monday, November 25, at the Capital Union Building. Those interested in joining the fencing club are asked to bring a \$25 membership fee. The fee will cover the cost of a 12 month membership in the U.S. Fencing Association. This membership is necessary for insurance purposes. The remaining \$5 will cover equipment and uniforms.

For more information about the Fencing Club, contact Rachel Wright at 761-0550, or via e-mail rwright@ptdprolog.net.

Food policy less lenient for campus clubs and organizations

Jody L. Jacobs
Editor

Food sales and purchases by Penn State Harrisburg (PSH) clubs and organizations will be more closely monitored according to JoAnn Coleman, manager, housing and food services.

"Since we are a small campus, we've been a little lenient on it [food guidelines] in the past so clubs and organizations could make money," Coleman said.

She said that food safety issues, such as the refrigeration of perishable food, have become a growing concern.

Coleman said that since she is ultimately responsible for food safety issues, (food poisoning, sanitation, etc.), she has established a printed list of food guidelines for clubs and organizations to follow so that the housing and food services offices has a record of the food sales and purchases of campus clubs

and organizations.

Not only must the guidelines be followed, but fundraising activities in which clubs and organizations sell food, or food purchases of over \$20, must be approved.

"We will grant exemptions," Coleman said, "if students come to us beforehand and explain their situation."

Food guideline sheets and approval forms may be obtained in the Room 212, the Student Activities Office. Questions regarding the food policy should be directed to Coleman at (717) 948-6241.

Lion's Den alters menu to serve needs of the campus community

Debbi Mallek
Staff Reporter

For those of you who have avoided the dining facility because of dietary restrictions, make it a point to stop by. This month the Lion's Den began adding menu items to accommodate vegetarian patrons.

Among the new items are vegetarian pasta with sauce and a delicious black bean burger.

Food services made the menu changes in response to a letter published in the last issue of the Capital Times and several inquiries and recommendations made directly by students, faculty, and staff. Response to the changes is overwhelmingly positive. Students who have tried the new menu items have been pleased with the new taste.

They hope to see food services maintain the trend of improving the quality and variety of students' choices on campus.

Newly founded street hockey club seeks participants

Mandy Souchack
Staff Reporter

Are you looking for a little action? How about an outlet for your aggressions? Or do you enjoy playing street hockey but have nowhere to play?

The Hockey Club, one of Penn State Harrisburg (PSH)'s newest club is looking for participants of any skill level and ability to join.

According to one of the founders, Bryan Strayer, last

week the club was recognized and given a budget from Student Government Association (SGA). The money will be used to buy sticks, equipment, and goalie pads for games. The club will be building its own goals to save money.

"People can play who don't go to PSH, or aren't members of the club," said Strayer. Strayer and Aaron Smith formed the club because they wanted to start a sport at PSH.

The club will play street

hockey games against itself in the gym of the Capital Union Building (CUB), and hopes to play outside teams in the future. An in-line team is also being considered.

If you would like to join, or are interested in playing, keep your eyes open for flyers which will list organizational meetings and open play days, or call Bryan at (717) 948-6686 or Aaron at (717) 948-6662.

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