

# OPINION/EDITORIAL

## Editorial: What Are You Getting For Your Educational Dollar?

"...the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state, he is Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking." —Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar*

Good afternoon. Welcome to Penn State Harrisburg, what can I get for you today?"  
"Hmm... give me a business degree with a side of marketing. Can I get the diploma for that? I'm going to need it for my employer."

Universities across the country are slowly but surely turning into "fast food" style diploma mills. They are becoming cash-and-carry outlets selling a piece of paper that qualifies you for the job of your choice. This trend in higher education is symbolic of market-driven America and its subtle as a sledgehammer push toward sterile efficiency.

Penn State Harrisburg is no exception. The college must offer classes that will sell. It is a business after all. Since society, and thus students, are beginning to put a premium on a trade-school type of education, PSH will have no choice but to provide just that.

Many students are buying into the same doctrine as well. "Give us the courses that will fit easily into our schedule for the future," they demand. Provide us with the quickest path to our future of money, a family, a dog and a house with a two-car garage.

In other words, we all want to hop on the fast track to success. The problem is, the fast track inherently excludes courses that will educate in valuable areas other than our own majors. So, students miss a chance for a holistic education, and the university misses a chance to produce holistic people (who will later claim to be alumni).

We are in danger of becoming "mere thinkers" rather than "People Thinking." This change is already evidencing itself. Look at your resume. Have you listed two GPA's, one overall and one for your major? Your overall average should be enough to tell employers that you are (or are not) going to be a good employee. Even so, companies want specialization, and we are willing to provide it at our own expense.

The school also exhibits the push toward specialization. PSH, to stay in business, provides courses of study that will attract students. If students want a "trade school," the school must respond in kind. For now, the college requires a range of other classes in addition to major-specific courses, but will the student "market" allow this continue?

Will the market demand "mere thinkers" and change the school's goal of creating "People Thinking?"

Hopefully not—we can not afford such a change. We would only be getting a partial education, as our occupation is only a part of our lives. There is more to learn in life than a chosen trade, and our studies must reflect that.

American education reformer and philosopher John Dewey said: "Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself." He realized we are constantly learning about all facets of our existence. Since all these fragments of our lives are a vital part of our education, why would we pay a university to enhance only one?

As paying customers, we should demand a holistic education. We must ask the question, "What are we getting for our educational dollar?" and answer it critically and fairly.

In upcoming issues of the Capital Times, we will examine this question to see if PSH is providing the necessary educational opportunities. More importantly, we will see if students are both demanding these opportunities and taking advantage of them when they are provided.

We all must specialize our education to some extent. Obviously, we cannot observe situations promoting "mere thinking" that arise in areas we do not experience. You will see some as well, and when you do, contact us. They may be, by nature, somewhat controversial—all the better for positive changes. You can E-mail us at the CapTimes office ([captimes@hotmail.com](mailto:captimes@hotmail.com)).

## Smells Like School Spirit

By Paul Smith  
Guest Columnist

I was certain I had never seen her before in my life. "You've got a lot of nerve," she said. I scanned her face again carefully. I was worried I had encountered her on one of those hazy nights in my reckless youth.

"You've got a lot of nerve," she repeated. Then she added, "Wearing that jacket today."

Whew, momentary relief. Then it dawned on me I was wearing my Michigan Wolverines jacket at Penn State Harrisburg. Michigan pasted Penn State the previous Saturday, 35-8. That never crossed my mind since I had worn the jacket several times. Before I had gotten nary a stray look.

The woman's reaction was the closest thing to school spirit I have seen since coming to PSH. It is easy to forget this is Penn State if you don't go in to the bookstore every once and a while. I know, we have the Blue and White signs in the parking lot. They fade into the scenery after a while. What I mean is atmosphere, or the lack of it, here at PSH.

You might take issue with this. My aforementioned accuser certainly would, but you and she are in the minority. Take a look around.

The school paper had a near death experience earlier this semester. Did you see the infamous "non-issue?" Probably not, since about as many people read it as write articles for it. Then, just when we thought the Capitol Times had a pulse, the latest issue was cancelled at the last minute.

As for Student Government Association, their number one goal is to have enough warm bodies to fill all of its offices. Pathetic. Does anyone know what band the compus radio station is on. Of course not, it is not broadcasting.

Is there a solution? Can we breathe some life into "Under the Airport U.?" Maybe, but student apathy is a big hurdle at a commuter campus. Perhaps some sort of sports program would give the school something to rally around. We have a recreation center and no teams.

Maybe participation in a club or activity should be a requirement. Maybe we need to have a big protest or play some pranks on HACC. I don't know the answer. But I do know there is more to college than the classes. I'm not getting that here. Neither are most others.

### "Meade" From Page One

changeover time between residents is short, those moving out are expected to clean the unit.

"Some students leave late, and we have new students coming in," Coleman said. For students with jobs or internships that keep them later than the semester, "We try to be lenient," she added. The rush in between outgoing and incoming residents does not always allow time for the contractors to get the cleaning done.

In those cases, departing students are expected to clean the unit. However, housing services can not always be sure that happens. Coleman said they try to set an appointment to check the unit, but that is not always possible. This is when a unit may show up dirty or with broken furniture.

In such cases, the outgoing residents will be charged for extra costs needed for any cleaning or repairs. Normally, it is not necessary to charge much if anything, Coleman said. Since it is a small amount, it is just charged to the students' semester bills.

For problems that arise despite housing's measures, help is always a phone call away. Coleman said the housing staff itself will clean if necessary. They have done it before when contractors refused to come back after dealing with some of the units.

However, no such staff was necessary on moving day. "There were cleaners available all day," she said. "All they (residents) had to do was call."

Insect control is also contracted. "Each unit is exterminated bi-monthly," Coleman said. "They (exterminators) are on campus three weeks out of every month."

All residents are given a schedule of exterminations. Each unit is sprayed on a routine basis. However, problems may sometimes occur. Again students can call for an emergency extermination.

Other problems occur as well. For example, if a unit is empty in spring and unoccupied until fall, the cleaning and exterminating may result in some "residue bugs" Coleman said.

She explained, the cleaning is done when the place is vacated, but the spraying is continuous. Therefore, bugs may wander into the sprayed areas after the unit has been cleaned. Generally, this is remedied with a simple sweeping, Coleman said.

"Problems vary from year to year," she said. "There is always help available."

**Capital Times**

Dan Zehr - Associate Editor

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