

Exerpts from Spanier's State of the University Address

Below are excerpts from Graham B. Spanier's State of 1999 State of the University Address, given on August 27. The complete text can be found on the web at www.psu.edu/ur/speeches/sou99.html.

Nationwide, there is a conversation occurring about how to get faculty to be more actively involved with their universities.

Many faculty members are really independent operators who are only marginally tied into the life of the university.

Their allegiance is not to the institution for which they work, but to their discipline nationally and internationally, an orientation that tends to be reinforced by the academic reward structure.

Hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions are based in the department, or college, and the department's strongest frame of reference is its academic discipline viewed globally.

This phenomenon, of course, can also be an impediment to fostering multidisciplinary and collaborative teaching and research.

Must this be viewed as an "either/or" struggle? I believe an allegiance to one's university, pride in our shared mission and stature, commitment to our students, and loyalty to our colleagues can be entirely compatible with standards of academic excellence, prominence as a scholar, and national recognition as a department.

I'm grateful that so many of our faculty exemplify such a profile each and every day. This is amply documented in the incredible stories found in the nomination letters for University awards, in student and alumni testimonials about those who truly made a difference

in their lives, and in letters and e-mail I get praising faculty and staff who went the extra mile.

But today, I wish to challenge our faculty in particular to get more involved in the lives of our students.

Our nation's research universities have spawned two faculties: those who do and those who don't - those who believe it is their responsibility to engage fully with each cohort of students and those who do not see this as their primary responsibility.

To be honest, every experienced department head can point to casualties - cases of junior faculty members ultimately denied tenure because they became so immersed with student advising and programming that they neglected their scholarship.

So let's admit up front that we indeed expect an exceptional level of scholarship from our faculty.

Balance is the key. Balance. Many of our students say they do not interact with instructors outside of class.

I know some faculty who were once inclined to connect with their students in a meaningful way but have backed off for a variety of reasons ranging from time pressures to a negative reaction to the growing consumer orientation of their students to fears that taking a student to the Creamery for an ice cream cone might be seen as an inappropriate contact.

All legitimate concerns, of course, but what a shame that we can't transcend these obstacles.

What a shame that only a tiny portion of our faculty attend a commencement ceremony in any given year.

What a shame that so few faculty can be found at undergraduate student awards banquets, having lunch with students in the dining halls, or even attending their own college's welcome reception that some deans

hold for new students. What a shame that I see so few faculty at HUB late night events, the President's Convocation for new students, or any of our University awards ceremonies each spring.

I prefer not to fault individuals, since this situation exists at all leading universities.

It is a situation of our own collective making. And despite all protestations to the contrary, we continue to orient the reward structure so that interaction outside the classroom with undergraduates counts for very little.

Consider academic advising. We've chosen to hire a cadre of staff members who specialize in academic advising to perform that important function.

Penn State's advising professionals are among the best anywhere, thank goodness. But the consequence is that few faculty do much undergraduate advising and thus miss a golden opportunity to get to know their students.

Fortunately, we are blessed with countless examples of faculty who exemplify the very best models of commitment to our students.

They participate actively in campus life while shining as scholars and researchers.

They accept invitations to student events. They attend an occasional Penn State Forum that brings us nationally recognized speakers of broad interest to higher education.

They attend undergraduate commencement. They spend that extra time with students.

I am deeply appreciative of their contributions to the rich intellectual, cultural, and social life to be had at every one of Penn State's locations.

More of us must join in this effort.

A Few Words About PSPEC

By Daniel McClure
Capital Times Staff Writer

PSPEC (Penn State Professional Engineers and Contractors) is a student organization that coincides with the Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers (PSPE), Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), and Associated General Contractors (AGC).

This organization has been active at Penn State Harrisburg for many years and is always looking for new members.

Membership is open to all engineering majors and provides an excellent opportunity for students to see working projects and to talk to professionals about their future ca-

reer.

In the past, some of PSPEC's most notable offerings were a trip to Las Vegas to attend a Construction/Engineering trade show, the ConExpo, and its annual trip to Pittsburgh to visit large active construction sites.

In addition to helping students, PSPEC also serves the campus. PSPEC students built the Howard Hunt Memorial, located at the west rear of the Olmsted Building. The memorial, just recently completed, features picnic tables and park benches for use by the students.

PSPEC, in an effort to attract new members, is offering a cookout on September 9 at 6:30 p.m. All prospective engineering students are

welcome to come to enjoy free food and receive information on membership. The cookout will be located at 9491B Kirtland Ave. in Middletown.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting PSPEC president John Frank at 948-9677 or you reach him via email at jif117@psu.edu.

There will be a regular meeting held on September 14 at 1:00 p.m. located in room W225 of the Olmsted Building.

PSPEC would like to increase its presence at PSH and appreciates any help it can get from new members and the active participation from current members.

Spanier Urges More Involvement from Faculty

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ceive a problem with student-faculty interaction at the campus, Spanier's sentiments re-inforced the importance of such academic relationships.

"The president really is extending a helping hand to every Penn State regardless of age, race, or situation," Hevner said.

Spanier noted that minority student enrollment this year jumped to 26 percent, up from 16 percent last semester. He said that figure is still well above the national average.

"It's all about improving conditions for our students," said James Malm, PSH campus marketing manager, "the speech will help to invigorate all of our campus efforts in the future."

In his speech (now posted on the university's internet home page), Spanier announced Penn State received its largest amount of state appropriated funding from the Pennsylvania General Assembly Annual Budget in more than ten years.

He said the new funding will be used to improve continuing education, educational resource, and faculty research programs at all campuses. The school of information science and technology at University Park is among nearly a dozen new projects slated to be completed with the funds.

Spanier chronicled the progress of the \$700 million capital construction campaign, which will fund new classroom and residence facilities to be built at ten branch campuses, he said.

The funding will be used to complete the new library situated in front of the Olmsted Building, along with state-of-the-art student residence townhomes.

Hevner said a completion date for the townhomes hasn't been determined, but he added construction crews will break ground on the project sometime early next semester.

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