

## On Our Hill

By Joe Marsicano  
For The Capital Times

"On Our Hill" will be a new column to keep students informed of news and events from inside our state capitol. This will be a non-partisan column to keep rhetorical comments away from the facts.

With all elections finished and the Philadelphia recount over, things are now settling down in Harrisburg.

Here's what's new on Capitol Hill. The Republicans kept control of the House of Representatives with a 104-99 majority and control of the state Senate with a 30-20 majority. John M. Perzel (R-172 District), the Majority House Leader, won his election by a mere 92 votes after a recount.

Questions arose from the Democratic Caucus about the results of the House race. Democrats invested a huge sum of money into House races in an effort to regain control of the Pennsylvania House. The results of the election show the Democrats received a majority of the presidential votes for candidate Al Gore but lost many House races to the Republicans. This is a simple result of split-ticket voting. The Democrats continue to investigate reasons for losing another seat in the House.

This year, Pennsylvanians elected five more women to the House of Representatives, bringing the total to 28 women. That's still only 14 percent. This keeps Pennsylvania near the bottom of the



A lovely view of Pennsylvania's Capitol building on a fine autumn afternoon.

list nationally for women's representation.

Lt. Gov. Mark S. Schweiker announced he will not run for governor in 2002 to succeed Tom Ridge. Schweiker wants to spend more time with his family.

The Capitol was evacuated Monday, Nov. 20 for a bomb threat. Everyone was evacuated around 9:30 a.m., and employees were allowed to return to their offices at 11:30 a.m. With the House and Senate trying to wrap up the year and the stress of *sine die*, I feel the person caught should be sent a bill for two hours wages for 1,200 Capitol employees.

### LIBRARY HOURS FOR HOLIDAY/EXAM SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 3 to Thursday, December 14:

Monday - Thursday 7:45 a.m. - 11 p.m. (CyberCafe open until 1 a.m.)

Fridays 7:45 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Saturdays 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Sundays 12 p.m. - 11 p.m. (CyberCafe open until 1 a.m.)

#### Semester Break Hours:

Friday, Dec. 15 - 7:45 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 16 - 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 17 - CLOSED

Monday-Thursday, Dec. 18-21, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Friday-Monday, Dec. 22-Jan. 1, CLOSED

## Campus Question & Answer

### Question

"I have been a student here at PSU capital campus for two semesters. Why do the secretaries of various departments here at PSH play a more active role in student advising and scheduling than the advisors? By the way, the secretaries provide accurate information and guidance when my advisor fails to."

### Response from Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Dr. M. Susan Richman

The Academic Council, which includes all of the school directors and academic administrators, discussed this question and expressed the great importance placed on the quality of advising. I

don't know in which school you are enrolled, but Dr. Steven Peterson, director of the school of public affairs,

provided the following response, which would be equally applicable to all of the schools:

If a student 'drops by' without an appointment and if an academic advisor is present (even if not the student's own advisor), the faculty member will handle any questions of a student. If it happens that no advisors are around from the student's major, then an administrative or staff assistant would help the student. Our assistants get very positive responses from students for their knowledge and helpfulness.

A staff assistant is often the first contact for a student seeking information and soon gets a lot of experience in fielding questions. Your acknowledgement that our staff assistants provide valuable service is very much appreciated.

A few words of advice and sympathy, on degree audits: Degree audits are probably the greatest source of advising-related frustration at Penn State Harrisburg. With changes in curricula, including changes in the general education requirements for every one of our majors, the degree audit system has a number of glitches.

You have probably used eLion, Penn

State's online advising support system, to access your academic records. You may have been faced with an inaccurate degree audit and, after the initial panic, tried to have your advisor make the changes necessary to "fix it." The good news is that, once the audit is "fixed" and properly reflects your academic record, it is a marvelous source of information on your progress toward your degree. But "fixing it" is not always a simple process. Once the faculty advisor determines what changes should be made to the degree audit, e.g., moving courses from one category to another or indicating that a transferred course meets a specific requirement, in some programs, the staff assistants are responsible for making those changes. But often "the system" does not respond as expected and the changes may require several attempts and even a consultation with the

"degree audit guru." The important thing to remember is: Don't panic when the degree audit suddenly informs you that you have to take an additional 87 credits in order to graduate! The degree audit may require a fair amount of tinkering, but we will get it right. The audit can be cleaned up — and should be, as soon as possible. Meet with your advisor early in your time here to ensure that your degree audit is correct. Don't wait until the semester you expect to graduate.

One more thing, although you can use your access account to register for courses online, i.e. without your advisor's signature, please meet with your advisor first. He or she can often tell you things that are not obvious from the schedule of classes, such as, "That course is offered only once a year so you'd better take it next semester or you may not be able to graduate on time." While staff assistants are usually available at their desks, faculty responsibilities often take them away from their offices, so it is a good idea to come during scheduled office hours or make an appointment.

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Advising is an important part of a successful student experience, and we need student feedback to see that it is done successfully.

You have probably used eLion, Penn

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Address questions to:  
Q&A Column

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