

Mahar stands behind class cancellation policy

By RACHEL SHEPHERD
Assistant Editor

It was a snowy day. Other schools in the area had already closed and Jodi Preisler was waiting to see if she would have her 3:30 class. She waited. Two o'clock, 2:15, 2:30. . . still no cancellation. After cleaning off her car, Preisler trekked to school. She finally arrived at 3:35. Sure, she was late, but she was alive. At 3:45, Penn State decided to cancel class. Preisler had just made a trip to school for ten minutes of instruction.

Many students have been in this situation before, not knowing what the weather will bring and more importantly what Penn State will do about it.

"You're in limbo," said Josh Yeckley, education. "If you have a 3:30 p.m. class they should let you know by 2:00 p.m. Some people have to drive over an hour to get here."

Dr. William Mahar, associate provost and senior associate dean for academic affairs, said the decision to open or close school lies in the hands of a "storm team." The team consists of several department heads and Penn State staff.

"Since the Provost and Dean is the chief executive officer of the College, she makes all the decisions, but she has delegated some responsibilities to the "storm team" because such designations are commonly used by local and regional news media," said Mahar.

Helen Casner, management, said the problem she has with the snow situation is similar to other students's concerns.

"If Harrisburg weather is better than Juanita, Mifflin, Hazelton, or Wilkes-Barre areas, [Penn State Harrisburg] does not close or delay," she said.

Mahar said, "Students who say that Penn State Harrisburg does not cancel classes are wrong. The University will take every measure necessary to protect the health and safety of its students and employees."

Mahar explained the general principle governing all decisions to close is that students must be notified at least two hours before a regularly scheduled class period because that is what Police Services calculated as the maximum driving distance for most students.

However, in Preisler's case, this was difficult since the college decided to close school early.

According to Penn State's Inclement Weather Guidelines found at <http://www.hbg.psu.edu/hbg/weather.html>, "the primary function of the college is

to provide a full 14.75 weeks of high quality instruction during the academic year. These guidelines describe how the Harrisburg campus will notify faculty, staff, and students if inclement or dangerous weather occurs or develops prior to and/or during the normal business day."

Casner also said some teachers will hold classes if school is open while other chose to cancel class.

"It is not easy to travel over an hour to school for one class that is one hour and 15 minutes long. Administration needs to realize that not all students live on campus or the Harrisburg area, in fact many of us travel an hour or more to get to class."

According to Penn State's weather policy, if a faculty member does decide to cancel class, he/she must notify students through telephone trees, e-mail lists, instant messaging, or any other appropriate means. These arrangements, which must be approved in writing by the School Director, should appear in the course syllabus.

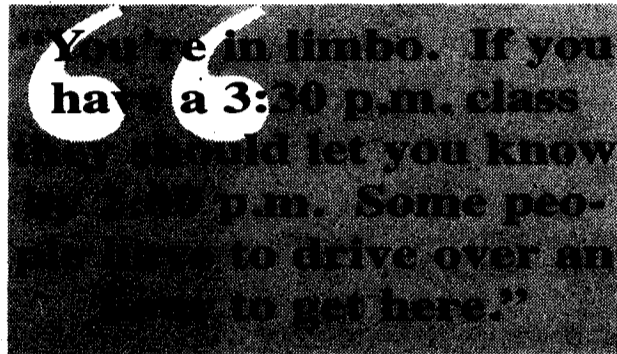
Mahar said there are some financial implications related to closing the campus. He said some "essential" technical services employees may be required to register for work; those individuals are notified of their status by the Manager of Human Resources.

"Such employees would receive additional compensation [overtime] in accordance with the provisions of the contracts between Penn State University and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the labor organization representing most of the University's technical service employees."

Housing and Food Services, may also be affected by decisions to close the campus. Staff exempt and non-exempt employees may also be affected by such decisions in accordance with their rights under the Fair Labor Standards Act, which applies to employees at Penn State University, according to Mahar.

Staff members assure that the college is doing its best for students. Sue Hipple, staff assistant in science and technology, said she was actually surprised the campus opened at noon rather than 10 a.m. last Tuesday. "Usually we never open that late," she said.

Mahar said, "PSH has cancelled classes during every major weather emergency for the last two years. I encourage the students who missed the announcements to consult the weather policy or the University's public records."



Health Services provides convenient remedy for sick students

By GLORIA LONG
Staff Reporter

It is time for biology and you have a headache, but you forgot your headache medicine. Fortunately, the Health Care Service Center has a packet of Advil. Located on the first floor of Olmsted, the Health Care Service Center has a variety of services to satisfy most medical needs.

The center provides videos, pamphlets, and contraceptives in the waiting room and employs a physician and a nurse that provide medical assistance.

Marylou Martz, coordinator for Student Health Services, said, "Students can access a doctor twenty-four seven if they need to. "If you call me at five in the morning, you receive a message and it will give you a number to call." The registry will take the call and the physician will return the student's call.

The Health Service Center provides new student orientation and annual flu shots. Martz e-mails information to students about up-coming events. Martz said some students do not always check their e-mails and are unaware of the Health Service Center.

The waiting area, where most students visit, offers over-the-counter medications and health pamphlets. Students are allowed to watch videos while waiting to see the physician or nurse. Students may also use the sick bay area if an illness persists.

"Students are not allowed to use the sick bay as a place to get over hangovers," said Martz.

Students who receive treatment are kept track of by a daily log that is filled out after the session. Students can also evaluate the services they receive and remain strictly anonymous.

A confidential file is maintained on each student's medical history. The only peo-

ple who have access to the files are the staff assistant and the nurse. Patient information can only be released with a student's written consent.

Students can also purchase health insurance depending on their needs and student status. International students are required by the college to get health insurance.

Student Health Service makes referrals for specialists, dentists and STD and HIV testing. Students may also receive a blood pressure screening, weight, height and vision testing.

The scale for taking weight is in the waiting area. "Students like to check out their weight," Martz said, it is convenient for the student.

Student Health Services must follow Penn State guidelines and the center is assessed annually by risk management.

The waiting area is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Thursday and Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The office hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday. The clinic operates by appointment only from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

Martz said that the Health Service Center is only available to students.

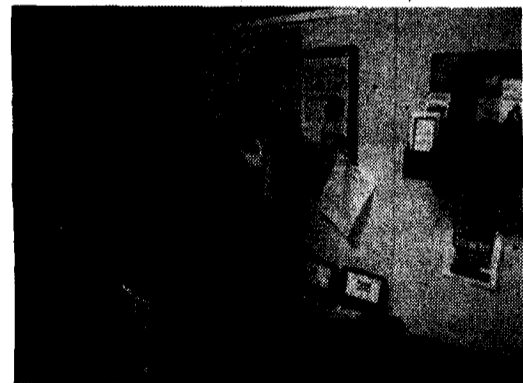


photo by Peter Strella

Eric Thomas looks at the medicine offered in the self-care area.