

Faculty, students hold campus debates at PSH

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Whether you were voting as a democrat or a republican, this year's presidential election has proven to be a tough decision for many people. Let's face it, voting is a right in this country, and it must be taken seriously. But for students and staff on campus, many were still undecided even during the week leading up to the election. However, thanks to the

School of Public Affairs here at the Capital Campus, many of the important election issues were brought to light for students and faculty in the form of two debates, one by students and one by faculty.

The first debate, held on Wednesday, October 20, featured students from the College Democrats and College Republicans, both of which recently opened their chapters on campus. The debate was moderated by Professor

Matthew Woessner, professor of public policy.

A second debate was to be held on Thursday, October 21, but was cancelled because of an area visit by President George W. Bush.

Students that participated in the debate included Jen Lawhorn, president of the College Democrats, Paul Fogle, chairman of the College Republicans, Robert Kikola, vice-chairman of the College Republicans, and Brian Diskin, secondary education major and member of the College Democrats.

The debate focused mainly on the controversial and hotly contested issue of abortion. As usual, the democrats and republicans took familiar and opposing sides on the issue. The democrats supported the current legalization of abortion while the republicans favored a ban on abortion. It was a cordial debate without many fireworks between the two sides. The audience, about 20-30 people, got involved about 45 minutes into the debate by asking questions to both sides. Some questions asked by the audience included other issues considered in the election including the Iraq war and domestic policy.

The scene shifted almost one week later on Tuesday, October 26, when faculty members got

their chance to debate on issues. The debate was moderated by Dr. Steven Peterson, director of the School of Public Affairs at the campus. Representing the Republican side; Woessner and Dr. Robert Bressler, professor emeritus of public policy at

for both sides and the professors debated on issues such as stem-cell research, foreign policy and domestic issues. The democrats and republicans, as expected, took opposing sides on most issues although occasionally there was some agreement.

The debate also included a question-and-answer period from the audience. While it only lasted an hour, it was a lively debate with good dialogue. Many good questions were asked and both sides clearly defined their positions, which can be hard to find in politics.

Many people have realized that this presidential election has importance for many reasons; the war in Iraq, the future of the Supreme Court, and energy legislation among other issues. Woessner believes that this election could be the biggest election of this generation. "I think this is the most important election in a generation and I think what is at stake is Iraq and the freedom of the world," Woessner said. "Now I realize that both sides see it differently as to who should come out ahead, but I believe that both parties are patriotic and both candidates are serious about the job. I think that they [Bush and Kerry] provide a stark difference in policy and philosophy that will make a difference in this outcome on the war on terror."

It is hard to imagine that this campus never really had serious debates for faculty and students during presidential elections. Peterson said that while there had been political dialogue on campus before, these debates have clearly captured more attention. "We've had debates before. I'm not sure if I remember a debate like this at a presidential election," Peterson said. "Certainly we have had spirited discussion on a variety of facets before, but I think this is the first presidential debate since I've been here."

Robertson hinted at the suggestion that this may be the start of similar debates for future elections down the road. "I think that this is a useful forum and given how many people were here today and the questions from the audience, I think this [the debate] would be a good model to follow for future governor races and the next presidential election," he said.

Well, no one will really know how much these two debates swayed opinions around this college until after the election results are final. The most important lessons learned from these debates is that the political process in this country is very important and that people should exercise their right to vote.



Photo courtesy of Matthew Woessner

Faculty members Matthew Woessner (left) and Dr. Bressler (right) represent the pro-Bush side of the debate during PSH's campus faculty debates.

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Franklin and Marshall College. For the democrats, Dr. Beverly Cigler and Dr. Jeremy Plant, professors of public policy and public administration.

It was a crowded gallery lounge as students, staff, and even the local media came to see the dialogue. Media representatives included the television station WHTM as well as members from the Pennsylvania Cable Network. The debate featured opening and closing statements

Conference educates students on leadership skills

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Penn State Harrisburg was one of seven Penn State campuses that attended the 18th annual Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education (PBCOHE). This year the slogan, as stated by Robert D. Lynch, assistant to the president emeritus, Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, and the founder of the leadership conference, was "creating a legacy for the next 50 years." This year the location of the conference was at the Split Rock Resort's Galleria at the Pocono Mountains.

Students arrived on Friday the 29th of October. That evening, there was an interactive workshop by Dr. Judith Thomas, D.Ed, Lincoln University. It was about the relationships between men and women. She was very dynamic, and she held the whole group waiting for her words to come out. She was very comical and started by asking all the ladies in the room "do you need a man with a plan or a boy with a toy?" Thomas also said that "sex is not the only ticket to keep a man." She also stated, "If you can't read and write then you can't speak, and if you are not

educated you can't think critically."

Ms. Barbara Thompson, from Multicultural Recruitment, Penn State Capital College, and the conference operations director, and also Penn State Harrisburg student advisor, said, "It was a wonderful opportunity for students to get inside information about leadership from a successful team of individuals and interact with peers who are looking to find their place."

The conference emphasized networking and networking techniques. Personal leadership is not built on a singular experience, but rather on the ongoing process of keeping your principles and your visions before aligning your life to be congruent with those most important things.

Brianne Boberger, 24, a social work major at Millersville University, said, "This conference was great. I learned a lot of life skills and life lessons that I will be able to utilize." She continued, "The conference was more than what I expected it to be and it was really an incredible experience that I will cherish for a lifetime."

Saturday was filled with different workshops and seminars on topics such as "Uncovering Strength for Future Success,"

"Making Wise Career Choices," "The Element of Success," "Where Corporate and Education Leadership Merge," "Use of Information Technology in Leadership Development," and "Professionalism For The 21st Century."

Lynch said "...we are trying to do this over the years for students who have the capacity for leadership, from school to the community." He continued, "There will be more conferences this year in last part of February at Pittsburg University." Lynch was one of the original members of PBCOHE. He took over from 1984 to 1990.

Dependent people need others to get what they want; independent people can get what they want through their own efforts.

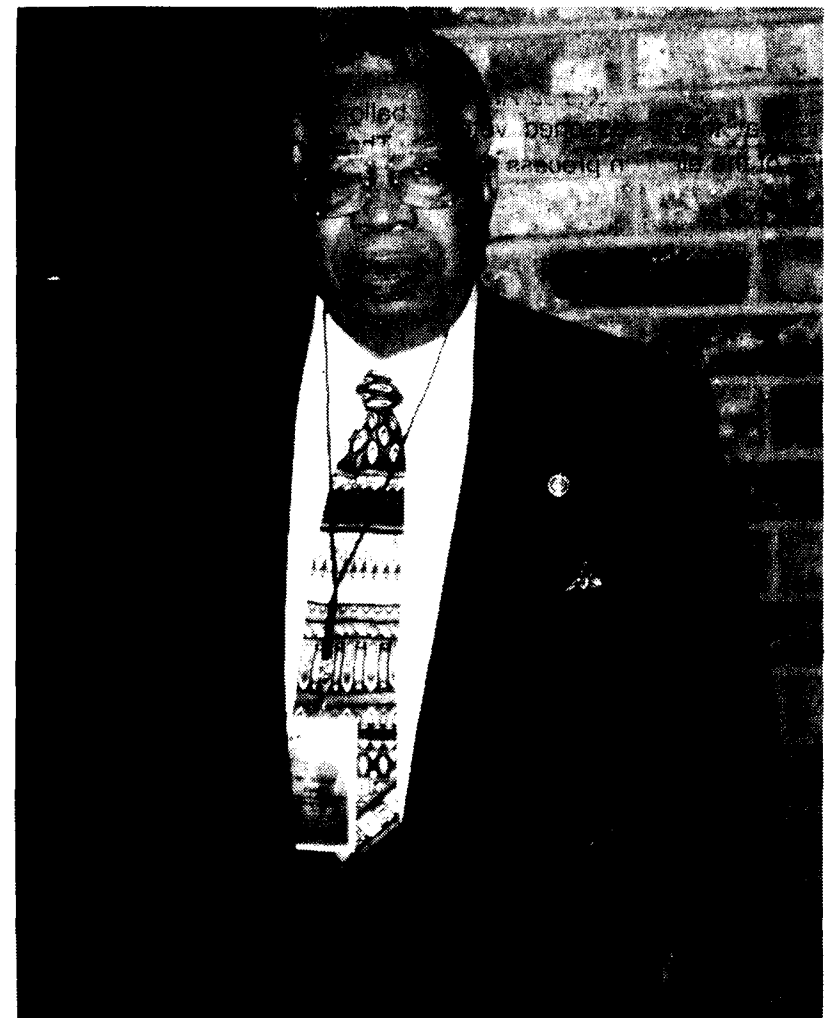
John Howie, 18, a finance and IST major, was one of four Penn State Capital College representatives. He said, "Overall it was very enlightening and it is very good to network African Americans across the campuses." He also said that, "With all these workshops and seminars, the biggest advantage is that we are all here together to hear from successful blacks about inside information on leadership and success." In one of the workshops he attended, "The Element of Success," the pre-

senter said that it takes team work to make your dreams work."

Janel Bowles, career coordinator, Temple University, and the presenter of the "Making Wise Career Choices" workshop said, "The conference met all its objectives by expanding student knowledge and bringing people together."

The conference raised a lot of questions. On a personal level, I was faced by the question, "Have I been evaluating my thinking to apply intellectual standards?" And considering that I am African and have been in the United States for four years, which obviously implies that I am black and enjoy a different accent, will it make my challenge a bit harder than native blacks? One thing that keeps getting stronger inside me is that the more I learn about my self and the environment around me, the stronger my potential for success is.

The conference was attended by 22 different campuses and about 186 students. Thompson said, "We are waiting for the evaluation to see how students felt about the overall conference."



Photos by Osman Abdalla

Robert Lynch, founder of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education.



Photos by Osman Abdalla

A group of students receive awards for outstanding leadership at the recent Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education.



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