

OPINION

National security: college tuition

The quest to stop big business universities from robbing students broke

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With the semester quickly coming to a close and, for most of us, a new one right around the corner, we find the rather obnoxious beggar, better known as the Bursar, knocking on our doors looking for another semester's tuition. This is not, however, a traditional city pan-handler who will be content by the two dollars you got for change after buying lunch. This is a 92,000 pound behemoth that has been to hell and back, crushed the unworthy with its oozing mounds of flesh, has tasted human meat, and now you look like dinner. The price for your life is \$6,000 plus books, a place to live, a car if you need it, clothes, supplies, and food. Once you appease the monster, it lumbers toward the horizon until you can no longer hear its chant of "We Are... HUNGRY!"

This is obviously a fabrication of my overactive imagination. What is very real, however, is the sky rocketing cost of the all but necessary college education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the average cost of a 4-year college, including room, board, and fees such as books, rose from \$5,504 per year in 1985 to \$17,447 per year in 2006. Even if inflation were the only thing boosting prices, schools like Penn State are still over by around \$7,000. At this point the guidance counselors are standing in outrage, for I have not included in my presentation the copious loans and grants available. If you happen to see someone around you stand up while reading the paper, you found a counselor. Feel free to ask them about all the opportunities you have to not qualify for money.

The simple truth is that even with financial aid, the average family earning \$20,000 in 2000 would put about 40% of their income toward college while those making \$60,000 and up were putting in only 10%. Financial aid, in general, is spread pretty evenly across the incomes with a traditional student receiving around \$10,000 per year. About half of this number comes in the form of loans and will need to be paid back, putting those who already have the money at an advantage. Ultimately, the cost of college is daunting for lower income families; however, not going to college can be much more costly. According to a 2002 report by the U.S. Census Bureau, people with a Bachelors Degree will earn \$45,400 a year. By not going to college, one's annual salary drops to \$26,000, only \$7,000 a year more than someone who did not graduate from high school. Add to this that a person without a college education will not make much more than that through out their life, while the salary of degree holders will go up at a significantly higher pace. A solid rule is that the more education you have, the more money you will make. What you can see here is that those without money cannot afford to go to college to make more money, and therefore cannot send their children to college either, a cycle forms that is extremely difficult to break from.

I have been involved in government since my first campaign in tenth grade. Looking at trends in even that short amount of time, one begins to notice that politicians have a terrible habit of throwing time and money at the wrong part of a problem. Typically, they will aim for what will solve the problem fastest with no regard for the longevity of the plan. Occasionally, the fix will fail before Election Day, but it generally works out. College costs are unfortunately suffering the same fate. Looking at the problem with squinted eyes blurs everything just enough to make one believe the government can effectively throw money at the students and make the issue of paying for college go away. Admittedly, this does help

to alleviate a certain amount of financial burden. Many, however, still struggle to pay for inexpensive colleges or make concessions and reject pricier schools which may be of a higher quality. As costs for college continue to soar, more taxpayer money will also be required to appease the Universities and get the nation's younger generations an education they need to succeed on a national and global scale. The real question politicians and students alike should be asking is not how much money students should be getting from the government, but why the hell are colleges so expensive to begin with?

Universities, our beloved Penn State included, have realized the importance of the service they provide and exploited it. As a postsecondary education becomes

a required level of academic achievement in almost every industry, with some even going as far as to require Graduate school, college remains legally optional. In a prime example of the gray space between laws and morals, postsecondary institutions found that they could raise their prices at ridiculous rates and people would still pay them, in fact, *record numbers* of people would still pay them. Our own Penn State Harrisburg is a prime example of this influx as each year we see more students arrive, this years Freshman class being the largest to date. Simply put, the government needs to intervene and find out why universities need the tremendous sums of money that they take in through tuitions as education is not a commodity that we can wait for the

free market to figure out. I have had ideas for possible solutions to the problem in the past and now I have the podium to voice those ideas from. If I ever run for an office, this will be my first bill.

Because universities do not receive all of their money from State grants, the government cannot step in and control their finances. The U.S. government can instead use the financial aid system to indirectly control the costs of schools. Each state would designate a school which could prove it ran efficiently and maintained a good reputation. For the sake of my explanation, I am going to use Penn State as Pennsylvania's college. When a student in Pennsylvania applied for financial aid, their economic situation would be taken into consideration and they would be

awarded enough loans and grants so they could afford up to a \$12,000 (the cost of Penn State) a year tuition at any school they chose. This would not forbid them from attending a higher priced university and putting their money toward that school, the government would simply not provide any more aid to that student. As a result, students would be encouraged to go to moderately priced colleges as they would be provided the means to do so. In order to be in the budgets of the majority of students and keep a growing student body, schools would have to lower prices or shrink because they would not be able to rely on the government to cover their extortion of our nation's youth. We are being held hostage by our universities, and for the sake of our bank accounts, it needs to stop now.

President's Corner



By **SAHAR SAFAEI**
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History will eventually repeat itself. One way or another it is inevitable; it is our modern day déjà vu. We can try to change it, but in the end most people end up making the same mistakes again. This sort of sounds like a lose-lose situation. Well, thankfully we, as well educated individuals (at least most of us) have figured out a way to not let this happen. It is called learning from our mistakes. (I am hoping you know what the mistake is because I have no clue.)

"If at first you don't succeed try, try again..." sounds like an inspiring quote but that is not the full of it. The rest goes on to say, "...Then quit. No use being a damn fool about it."--W.C. Fields.

That brings me to my next point, that is, if I had made any by now: "No point in beating a dead horse with a stick..." OK, seriously this is just filler and I mean I have nothing else to write about so I am letting you take a glance inside my train of thought.

OK, now it's time for me to act my GPA.?! For those of you who read this paper congratulation you have accomplished something today! And for those who do not read this, I give you my condolences. I suggest you try the sudoku. It is challenging but stimulating at the same time. I am assuming that you have heard the term "read between the lines." Well, this is not the time to do that. Pay attention!

Hear ye, hear ye. PSH is putting on their first production! Being presented by the Back Stage Drama Club is "All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten"! The play is being held Dec. 6, 7 and 9. Make sure you get your tickets in advance! It is going to be spectacular.

A couple other events that are happening this week are: Student Government will be sponsoring Stuff-n-Plush Dec. 4, so get ready to stuff your plush! This event will be located in the Gallery Lounge.

On Dec. 5, Lion Ambassadors will be hosting the wonderful Christmahanukwanzukah Bash from 7 to 11 p.m. at the CUB, so get your holiday gear on and have a blast at the Christmahanukwanzukah Bash!

I would like to thank all the individuals who came to the Town Hall meeting this past Thursday. Thank you for your questions and comments.

Only about three more weeks till the end of the semester. Hang in there. You are almost done. Coming soon is the winter break. Twenty-some days to hang around and chill - no pun intended - so be festive. Take out your holiday decorations and put on that smile because you do not have to deal with school for a nice while. This makes my heart grow three times its size. Just thinking about winter makes me think of snow angels, snowmen, snowball fights and sledding. Oh, so much fun - I just can't wait! Sweet.

Also do not forget about the wonderful holiday shows that will be on rerun till New Years day. I wonder if they will come up with new shows for the holidays.

From me to you I would like to wish you good luck on your finals and a magnificent winter break! So I think I have to say peace for now. I hope you all enjoy the rest of your day. The members of the Student Government hope you have a great holiday.

PSH bookstore: dream destroyer

By **MATTHEW SHORTALL**
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With the semester winding down, you, like many other students, eagerly look forward to the promise the next year brings: new friendships, blossoming romances and the chance to resurrect your GPA after playing nothing but WoW/Guitar Hero/Wii Baseball the term before. And so, like the dawn of so many other semesters, you will march to Olmsted this January, your cheeks kissed a rosy-red by the winter frost, your beaming face bouncing pure sunlight off the freshly fallen snow, with thoughts of hope for the semester ahead.

You might envision yourself with some classmates huddled over cups of coffee in the library until the dead of night, vigorously cramming for the exam the following morning. You may picture yourself summoning an inhuman amount of courage to finally ask that special guy or girl out for dinner and a movie. This will be the semester of change, the moment where you will finally apply yourself and start life anew.

And you'll smile. You'll laugh. For nothing this year will shake your exuberance.

What happens?
Like the end of a wonderful dream, as you, with the other boys and girls make your way from the

parking lot, a strange uneasiness rolls in your stomach as you strain to remember your destination before the classroom, before the land of hopes and dreams. A slight *whoosh* glides past your ear, the sound a wave makes as it gathers from a distance, and then a voice, dark and menacing, rasps in your ear: *Hopes and dreams? Oh my poor, poor friend, this is the place where hopes and dreams come to die!*

Startled, you glance to your left and then to your right, in an effort to identify the trickster, but he is gone. In fact, everyone has vanished. Then, the *whooshing* sound begins to pick up and you begin to remember where you were headed before the classroom. As the wind pounds your face you grind your teeth and clench your toes into the ground in an effort to hold on to one last shred of jubilation, but it's too late. The realization crashes over you, and you remember that it's that time of the year again: the semi-annual pimp-slapping that is the trip to the Penn State Harrisburg Bookstore.

As you close the door to the bookstore behind you, you cough and wave your hands wildly, as the dread is as thick as fog. Before you lays a sprawling sea of young men and women doubled over, convulsing and shrieking in pain like it's the battle of Normandy. You climb your way past masses of hysterical engineering students (their heads wildly oscillating as

they blurt out ridiculous gibberish through nasally voices, a miserable collection of bobble head dolls from hell) to a young woman crumpled to the ground, rocking back and forth as she violently and repeatedly slams her face inside a chemistry book. You gently lift the book from her face and gaze into her vacant eyes and ruddy, tear-streaked cheeks and ask her for her name. She continues to teeter back and forth, sobbing through fits of unintelligible speech, until you lean closer and hear: *I don't know...I don't know...I don't know....*

You notice a cash register receipt next to her, and picking it up, gasp as you read the grand total of \$445.35. You realize why this young girl fails to remember her own name as she has befallen the Penn State Harrisburg bookstore's endgame: dehumanization.

What better way to show young struggling students that they are worth less than gum off the bottom of a shoe than to charge them exorbitant prices for textbooks? You follow the trail of receipts (some of them upwards of \$400, even \$500) to the counter, where a middle-aged man is meekly raising his concern over the hours of availability to one of the employees (I call them "Joy-Breakers"). This Joy-Breaker, a young man with his arms folded and his mouth slightly pulled back in a terse, smug grin (so obviously indoctrinated in the bookstore's love of sadism) spit back: *A bookstore*

open and available to students past five and on the weekends? What do you think this is, a university? And with a pivot the Joy-Breaker makes his way through the wailing bodies gnashing at his heels to the Back Room, where he will remain throughout the day, ignoring those who pleaded for service.

A classmate of mine recently shared the observation that no one leaves the bookstore with a smile on their face. Walking past the hopeless gray hue that comprise the walls of Olmsted and having just laid down \$3,500 for a down payment on a burger and fries from Stacks, I just can't help thinking that as students we're paying top-notch money for all the charm, amenities and service of a military reform school (I swear the bookstore gauges customer service on how painful an employee can grimace). Why support something that only makes life harder? And so, for the especially frugal student who wishes to have textbooks and eat for the semester ahead, I provide this useful list of alternative methods of procuring the books needed for class (If you dare to venture in, jot down the ISBN's of what you need from the bookstore, or ask your professor if they could kindly e-mail the class a list of the texts in advance).

Amazon.com, Ebay, half.com, textbooks.com, starvingscholars.com, cheapesttextbooks.com, campus.com or order it directly from the publisher.

Grey's Anatomy: the show some love to hate

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"Grey's Anatomy." Is it a popular television series or a pandemic addiction sweeping the nation, sparing none (with the exception of those younger than its TV-14 rating, of course)?

For diehard fans who anxiously await each new episode and find themselves distracted in their daily routines when the life of Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) is yet again threatened, this series is most definitely the latter. It's an obsession, addiction and fixation, but naturally without such negative connotations of these words.

But shocking as it may be, there are those who can't help wondering why "Grey's Anatomy" is a huge deal and simply roll their eyes at friends, colleagues or classmates irritatingly rehashing details of every episode.

Creator Shonda Rhimes is now undoubtedly one of ABC's most valued assets. Rhimes captured viewers' interests and hearts with the first dramatic and hopelessly complicated, yet comical episode. The night before her first day as a

surgical intern, protagonist Meredith Grey has a drunken one night stand (showing such responsibility already!) with a man who turns out to be a brain surgeon attending Dr. Derek Shepherd (Patrick Dempsey), also known as "McDreamy," and Meredith's new boss at Seattle Grace Hospital. Whoops!

But who exactly are the viewers? Are they all obsessed or are there people who only like this show a little? How extreme are some of the dedicated fans?

A search for "Grey's Anatomy" groups on Facebook sheds light on these questions. There are over 500 global Facebook groups, notably few of which are anti-Grey's Anatomy. Some proclaim House the superior show while others claim "Grey's Anatomy" stole its plot from Scrubs. These groups are by far the minority, however. "Bug Me During Grey's Anatomy and I'll Insert This Scalpel Into Your Spleen," boasting 117,063 members, describes itself as a group for "the ones who are almost serious about the scalpel thing, the ones who McName their McLives, the ones who put Grey's above their other obligations, and the ones who

quote episodes in their daily lives at random moments." I'll admit it. I'm guilty of all of the above, and according to Facebook, so are quite a few other people.

While this group is by far the largest, a few others deserve honorable mention if only for their creative and drastic names. "Breathing Comes Second to Grey's Anatomy" is one group with which I believe many would disagree. Another is "The World Is a Better Place with Grey's Anatomy." Tell that to the people of Darfur. "If the Quotes of Grey's Anatomy Were Written in a Book, It Would Be My Bible" is a group that shows the radical loyalty and dedication some fans possess. I'm a huge fan, but again, the words of Grey just don't hold as much power as the words of Jesus for me.

Obviously "Grey's Anatomy" is more than just a television show to some, but how do we feel about it here at Penn State Harrisburg? Well, everyone can relax. No one is going to try to saw their leg off in the middle of Stack's because they saw it on "Grey's Anatomy." As surprising as it may be, only 9 percent of those

64 surveyed responded they love "Grey's Anatomy" so much that they schedule their lives around Thursday evenings. Twenty percent replied they try to watch it every week, but if they miss it, they watch it online when they get a chance or pray that a friend TiVo-ed it. Twenty-seven percent surveyed claimed they've seen the show a few times and if they're around when it's on, they'll tune in. Another 27 percent asked what all the hype was about and 17 percent selected the "Other" choice. Most who selected "Other" claimed they don't watch it or have never seen it.

One student wrote, "My roommate watches it. It's not that great."

I think this statement shows the campus's general indifference toward "Grey's Anatomy." It is just a show, after all.

So no, you're not alone in your feelings about "Grey's Anatomy." If you like it, love it or need it, you're in the minority at PSH, but I'd be glad to talk Grey's with anyone anytime! To all who wonder if they're the only people on this planet who don't watch "Grey's Anatomy," you're at the right college!