

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: Bookstore Returns

by Jen Mintz

After coming back from an enjoyable, fun-filled, relaxing Christmas break each of us is confronted with the monotonous task of purchasing outrageously priced books. This particular episode in which I was exposed to and involved with is of relative importance to every student who invests their hard-earned money into this institute of higher education.

I thought the early bird catches the worm, but it was obvious that day everyone had the same idea. How many of us have ever experienced chaos in a small confined store? That was definitely the scene early that morning. The shelves that were supposedly in alphabetical order. I felt like I was in a grocery store going back and forth between the aisles. Also, every book that was picked out for me was a new edition costing the most money. I felt like I was dealing with a bunch of used car salesmen trying to sucker me into buying the most expensive "lemon" in the store. I thought my eyes were deceiving me when a whopping \$250.69 appeared on the register. Two hundred and fifty dollars!! Think of the things a person could buy with \$250.00 Reluctantly, I wrote my check and thought that was the last time I would have to step foot into that bookstore.

Unfortunately, I spoke too soon.

A conflict arose in my schedule which left me no other alternative but to drop a class. This is where the whole trouble started.

According to the rules and regulations of the Penn State Bookstores, one must have a signed, processed copy of a drop/add slip from the registrar before the book can be returned. I filled out my drop/add slip and decided to return my book the following day. The book I was returning was brand new and unused. If I had been in any other store returning a new item with a receipt there would be no problem.

Why do students always have to experience a problem when returning unused books to Penn State Bookstores? My only explanation to this is that the Penn State Bookstore is out to get every penny that poor college students own.

The following day I turned my drop/add slip and asked the Registrar for a copy so I could return a book. The answer that I received was that the bookstore could punch up my schedule on the computer, allowing me to return my book without a drop/add slip. No problem right? Wrong! I went to the bookstore to return my \$42.00 book. They asked me where my drop/add slip was, and I told them what the Registrar has

said. To say the least, the people who were working there were not helpful; on the contrary, they were very critical, and heightened my temper. My drop did not appear on the computer; therefore, they would not return my book. I was absolutely furious. I had dropped the class and now I had to wait for the computer. The response was, "We don't have to tell you all the specific rules, just the general ones." For those of you who know me, you probably can imagine how mad I was. I commented on how ridiculous the rule was, and I was told, "Go complain to Staudenmeier." My response was, "I will."

Absolutely furious, I told my story about being hassled and "ripped off" to my fellow Penn Staters. One by one stories similar to mine from other students came to my attention. Stories such as people being led to believe that a new edition was being used when in actuality it was the same book that has been in use for the past four years. This information was told to a student by a manager of the bookstore with the intention to mislead and deceive the student in order to obtain a dishonest profit.

I started my pursuit once again by going to the Registrar and getting a copy of my new

schedule. The bookstore workers knew me by my face and probably expected a war as soon as I set foot in the door. This time I had my new schedule as proof. I walked in and immediately was told that the drop had not come up on the computer. By this time I had enough. I exclaimed, "I have my new schedule!" The reply I was given was, "Don't be fresh with me." As for that remark, I firmly expressed my frustration from the past two days, just to return an unused book. Finally, they returned my money.

I think that all the students in the Penn State system should examine the bookstore's "rules and regulations." We pay a sufficient amount of money to this university and they should at least formulate policies which help the students, not hinder them. As far as for the price of books, they too are outrageous and the system should recognize that it is hard enough to pay for ones education, expenses, and books, let alone being worried about getting "ripped off" by the system itself. The return policy at the bookstore has to go. We, the students, have the power to do so. Voice your opinion and get involved.

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