

Right-To-Know Law (Continued from front cover)

Though the amount of State money Penn State receives is a comparatively small portion of the schools total budget, it is used to "offset tuition for Pennsylvania residents," said Mont Alto Campus Chancellor Dr. Gnage. "Without that money from the State, Pennsylvania students would pay the same amount."

Penn State has begun a website (Openness.psu.edu), perhaps as a middle ground between total compliance with Right-To-Know and losing public funding. The site includes a breakdown of the budget, among other information. However, many financial specifics, including research contracts, specific salaries, and donations, are not given.

"It is not open enough," said Cate Barron, executive editor

of The Patriot-News, about the new website. "We need to know meeting minutes... A lot of actions, a lot of documents... We also had to go to court to get salaries, and that's never as transparent as it should be."

In addition to the court case The Patriot-News led in 2007 for Penn State to release their employee's salaries, the university was involved in a court case last year about the records of the 1998 investigation into Jerry Sandusky, according to PennLive. The Office of Open Records ruled in favor of Penn State and the records remain unavailable to the public.

In the wake of the Sandusky scandal, Penn State officials have been pledging a policy of openness and transparency, yet continue to resist compliance with

Right-To-Know. Many feel that in keeping with a policy of transparency, complete compliance with the Right-To-Know law is a necessary step.

"I feel that Penn State should absolutely comply with the Right-To-Know Law," said the student government president at Mont Alto, Coty Covert. "After the scandal and everything that happened [Penn State] is preaching transparency, [saying] 'change the rules so there's more transparency'. And they don't give you any, and it's frustrating... It's hypocritical."

Dr. Gnage is among those in the university who opposes releasing all of Penn State's financial information.

"I think it's very important that there be financial accountability," he said. "My concern is... there are various decisions that are made in the course of running a campus or running a university, certain discussions go on, that really should be confidential."

These include donations and the conversations between the university and the donors regarding the size and intended purpose of their gift. "Some donors don't want their names used," said Dr. Gnage. "Even [with anonymous

donations] we don't get into all the discussions that go on with that individual."

The chancellor also feels that personnel and hiring issues should remain confidential, though these are typically considered exceptions to the Sunshine Act, a law related to Right-To-Know.

There are those, including SGA President Covert, who feel that Penn State compliance with the Right-To-Know Law will bring about more positive than negative consequences.

"The State would have a more favorable attitude toward Penn State," Covert said, "and it would plant seeds for future increases in allocation, rather than preparing for the decrease we receive [every year]."

This wave of public pressure on the University comes at the same time that student pressure is increasing on the Board of Trustees. Chief among these student pressures is the recent Six Points for Change legislation passed by the three largest student organizations in the Penn State system - the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA), the Graduate Student Association (GSA), and the Council of Commonwealth Student Government's

(CCSG).

The primary point on the list demands that the Board of Trustees change its bylaws to allow a permanent student trustee position and that representatives from the UPUA, GSA, and CCSG be given access to the standing Board of Trustees committees. If accepted by the Board, the student body would have more power than ever before in university policy.

The fact that this legislation comes at the same time as public pressure on Penn State about the Right-To-Know Law is viewed by some, such as Dr. Gnage, as a coincidence. Others, such as Coty Covert, view the two as strongly interconnected

"The student government associations of Penn State are coming to a point where we need to be aggressive about how we feel about Penn State's position on the Right-To-Know Law," said Covert.

Penn State's ultimate decision about the Right-To-Know Law remains unclear.

"They've got to become transparent," said Barron, "...but at least they're thinking about it and they're hearing from their alum's and other people... so there's a lot of pressure on them to become more open."



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Student Gov't Planning Student Outreach and Events

BRITTNEY WILMER

The Mont Alto Student Government Association (SGA) has been busy planning many events for our student body. The members of student government have planned a dinner, a meet your SGA night, and a trip to Harrisburg for a day.

In the coming months, students will have the opportunity to meet with the members of the student government at the Meet Your SGA Day. During this event, students will be able to come to meet and talk with the members of Mont Alto's student government. Current SGA president Coty Covert states: "The SGA is the

vehicle to effect change for the students." It is a chance for them to interact with their SGA and ask them any questions they might have about what is going on at Mont Alto and express any concerns they have.

The Student Government has also planned a Pride Dinner for later in the semester. Like the Meet Your SGA Day, the student body will be able to interact with SGA members. The dinner will also be a chance for students to come out and show their Penn State pride by sporting their Penn State attire while listening to speakers and learning how to build leadership and

pride within in our Penn State Community. It's a great time for you to come out and show your pride and support Penn State Mont Alto!

In addition to these on-campus events, SGA is planning a trip. On Wednesday April 4, 2012, there will be a trip to Harrisburg for Capitol Day. Capitol Day is the time for us as students to go to our state capitol in Harrisburg and talk to our legislators and express any interest or concerns that we have about any issues involving Penn State. Covert hopes to have a bus load of students to take to Harrisburg. Everyone is welcome to attend. "It's your chance to have your voice heard as students," says Covert.

Students are always welcome to attend the Executive Board meetings that take place every Monday at 2 p.m. in Conklin, room 205. In addition, all students are welcome to attend General Assembly meetings as well, which take place after every CCSG weekend, and are listed in the Mont

Alto activities calendar. Overall, what our SGA hopes to accomplish this year is for students to take an interest in not only the student government, but government in general and realize that they have a voice. "I want the students to know how much power they truly wield," says Covert.



SGA President Coty Covert showing his Penn State pride with the Nittany Lion.