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MESSAGE TO PENN STATE STUDENTS  
FROM  
PRESIDENT JOHN W. OSWALD

In the fall term I indicated that from time to time I would address an open letter to our Penn State student body concerning matters in which students had expressed particular interest. Four topics which have been of special concern recently will be referred to today.

NEW HOUSING POLICY

Student housing provided by the University has been in great demand in recent years and an equitable method of selection for housing assignment at University Park has now been approved which basically includes the provisions recommended by student groups. The proposed lottery system for applications will not be used but rather an equitable opportunity for past residents, for Commonwealth Campus students, for new students is provided. The plan is based on a "first come, first served" premise within categories established in size by number of applications. Applications can be made at a number of locations at University Park and at all campuses. The system provides more certainty and dependability for planning than would a lottery. I commend the very positive and productive work of many students, especially the representatives of the Association of Residence Hall Students, in working out the complicated details of housing assignment procedures. This has been a most encouraging example of cooperative effort on the part of all persons and agencies affecting decisions important to students.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

The calendar of classes is another interest of special importance to students, and discussion on this topic throughout the University by students, faculty, and administration has been thorough and complicated. The primary question regarding the calendar centers on the retention of the term system or changing to a semester. When I came to Penn State in 1970, many students expressed concern about finishing too late in June to secure summer jobs; and in 1973 an adjustment was made in the term calendar to open the academic year early in the fall with students completing the spring term by late May. This arrangement had a disadvantage of the winter term being split by the holiday recess in December; but indications are that the longer the period of instruction before the break, the less the objection. I have now taken into consideration the many representations on the calendar decision, including two contradictory reports of a University Calendar Commission that studied the matter for two years. There is no consensus among the faculty on the semester-term issue but students have overwhelmingly stated preference for the term system. There appears to be no conclusive evidence of over-all educational advantage to either system; certain curricula and certain courses do fit more advantageously to one or the other. I have also carefully reviewed the costs related to both semester and term calendars including the one-time costs of shifting from