

A Brief History of the Delaware County Campus

by Carol Stocku
and Pam Kelly

Have you ever wondered how the Delaware County Campus of Penn State evolved? Probably not. Every day for two short years you arrive on campus with only the desire to return home. You take this campus for granted. The facilities, the courses, the faculty, the activities, and the opportunities. But it had to start somewhere, somehow.

Early Years

The year was 1966 and the Delaware County Commissioners requested that a Penn State campus be opened in Delaware County. The University executive committee took an analysis of the situation and decided that yes, a campus was needed. Thus, the present campus land and a grant of 1.2 million dollars were given to Penn State by the Commissioners.

It was at this time that Mr. John D. Vairo was appointed campus director. He became the person responsible for building this campus. Vairo was a professor at the University Park Campus who knew nothing about Delaware County.

The first personnel were soon hired. Mr. Vairo needed people in Delaware County to keep him informed of what was going on. He hired the campus' first secretary, Mrs. Sheetz. She was a Penn State graduate who knew Delaware County, and with her enthusiasm, Mr. Vairo knew she was perfect for what was needed.

Mrs. Sheetz began her job in an office in Swarthmore. There, with the telephone and Penn State Catalogue, she carried out business. Many times during the day she talked with Mr. Vairo at University Park. As Mr. Vairo sees it, "This campus was started and put together by the telephone." The interviews for faculty members were largely conducted from a motel room, an office in Swarthmore, and University Park. Arrangements were then made and the temporary location of the campus was found. It was located at 6th and Penn Streets in the middle of Chester. It was in a building that above was a roller skating rink and below was a grocery store and once a fish market. On street level was the vacant shell that would become the home for the Delaware County Campus.

Mr. Vairo, along with the



The first campus

building's owner and a small construction crew, put the campus together. Using cardboard cartons for blueprints, the plans were drawn up. This building was to hold offices and classrooms for eighty students. With the aid of Edward Linder, the new Dean of Student Affairs, Mr. Vairo placed the finishing touches on the building.

First Faculty

During this same time, Mr. Vairo was personally interviewing for a faculty. He wanted the best faculty he could find; one that would be committed to higher education, discipline, and most importantly, the students. He finally chose an eleven member full-time faculty. This faculty consisted of: Elizabeth Buckmaster (English), Jane Cooper (Biology), Greg Morris (Chemistry), Art Martindale (Engineering), Sue Griffith (Speech), Charles Arthur (History), John Sidoriak (Engineering), Alex Olynech (Spanish), Priscilla Clement (History), Robert Ginsberg (Philosophy), and Michael Tinkler (Mathematics).

First Delaware County Campus

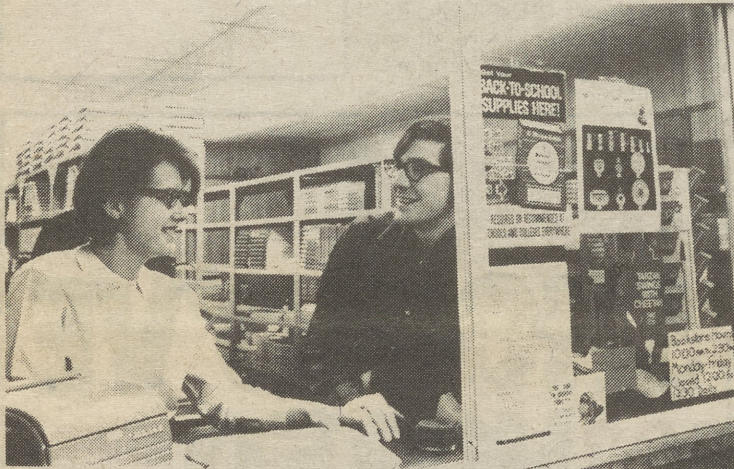
On September 25, 1967, the doors to the Delaware County Campus were opened. At the temporary location which had no promotion, in walked 236 students. There was not enough space for all of them, but they remained. As a result, larger

classes and smaller spaces had to be endured. Relief arrived when the grocery store below, closed and a library was opened. Conditions were still crowded, and the office sized cafeteria was filled with vending machines, tables, and smoke. Everybody wanted out of that building, and while contracts

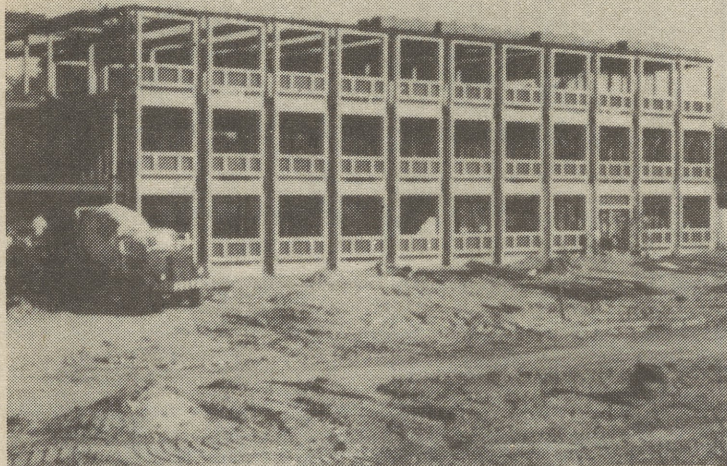
Mr. Vairo says, "it is due to the world-wide reputation of greatness that Penn State has."

Library Learning Center

For the next ten years, the students suffered from the much crowded conditions, until the opening of the



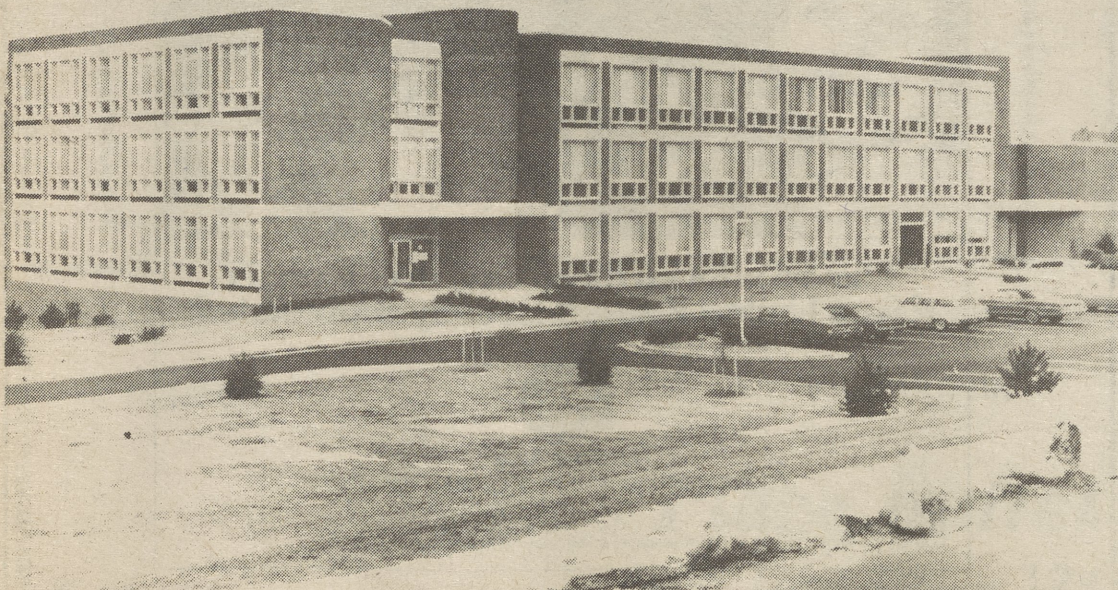
The first Bookstore



Main building under construction



Proposed Main Building



Completed Main Building

for a new building were being discussed, the students just had to be patient along with everyone else.

Present Campus

It was not until December of 1970 that the move to the new and present day campus began. There was only one building, The Main Building, and a parking lot. The enrollment was 700 students. The conditions were still crowded. The building program could not keep up with the enrollment. As a result, the students were crowded into the corridors. Gym class was sometimes held in the corridors, and to take a shower afterwards was done in stalls in the janitor's closet. Your friends would keep watch over the door, so no member of the opposite sex could enter. The student lounge was packed with all the vending machines. Enrollment hit over 1,000. Nobody expected the enrollment to increase until almost 1980. As

Library/Learning Center in 1980. This building which was constructed at a cost of approximately 4 million dollars, now houses 40,000 volumes, in addition to many classrooms and offices. This center had relieved much of the congestion in the main building. But with the ever increasing influx of students, Penn State's Delaware County Campus is still adapting to its students needs. A Gymnasium/Learning Center is a project that is awaiting appropriate funding. Governor Thornburgh has signed a construction bill which will provide 3.9 million dollars for this project. But because of President Reagan's cutbacks, this project has come to a temporary halt.

This campus would not be where it is today, if it had not been for the cooperation of the students and the outstanding faculty. The combination of these two has led to the excellence of the Delaware County Campus.