

Eye On Campus

Adult Students Organization is "Underwhelmed"

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After more than a decade of existence, the Adult Student Organization (ASO) has been disbanded.

Twenty-three clubs declared themselves active at the beginning of this semester. However, the ASO became one of five campus clubs to be unrecognized by the student government at the most recent Council of Club Presidents meeting.

Because of this, the ASO can no longer participate with campus events set up by the Office of Student Life nor ask for club funding from the Allocations Committee, which is chaired by both the heads of Student Life and the Student Government Association (SGA).

"If they want representation and to be heard, someone needs to step up," said Stacie Mann, SGA president.

On Oct. 9, Gloria Boyd stepped down as the president of the ASO.

She declined any comments, but did announce her resignation in an e-mail sent out to the members listed on the Angel Adult Student Network.

"This is due not only to my many commitments during my senior year but also because of a lack of involvement from other members of the ASO," she said in the e-mail, "the turnout at meetings was underwhelming."

According to past literature of the club, the ASO held welcoming dinners, Sandwich Club lunches, featured guest speakers, regular meetings, gave handbooks and guides detailing academic information as well as support services offered for the adult students.

The member's list on the Angel Adult Student Network posted over 170 names, and although Boyd said in her e-mail that she would be willing to stay and help with the new leadership, over a month later, no one has taken responsibility of the club.

"Well, they may never know, cause they never opened Gloria's e-mails," said Sylvia Schaffer, Assistant Director of Student Programs.

Schaffer has also been the advisor for the ASO since its founding in the 1990-1991 academic year.

She puts the blame directly on the adult students, saying that the apparent lack of campus wide interest in the club has forced the organization to explore different avenues of service for the adult student.

"We became a fund-raising engine," she said.

At the annual Penn State Delaware County Honor's Convocation, which took place on Oct. 19, Tammy Edgington won the newly funded Adult Student Organization Scholarship.

The Adult Student Scholarship and the Richard and Sylvia Schaffer Scholarship were the culmination of years worth of major fundraising by the ASO. The amount came to be a total of \$50,000 which was distributed into the scholarship each.

"There's no other student organization on this campus that has raised this much for scholarships," Schaffer said.

According to Schaffer, the ASO had to evolve from being a simple network of socializing adults to what she called a "fundraising engine."

This included such endeavors as selling pretzels outside the 101 classroom of the Main Building to the annual Craft Show, which again took place in the campus' gym this past weekend.

However she stated that the majority of the work was shouldered by the campus' staff assistants as well as herself. While aside from the club's officers, only a few adult student volunteers participated in the fundraising events.

After providing the social network and scholarship benefits, she expressed concern on what direction the club should take.

"We don't know what the needs of the adult students are," stated Schaffer.

"Personally, I'm just really here to go to school," said John McCullough, a 27-year-old Journalism major here on campus.

Out of his 2 1/2 years on campus, McCullough said that not only was he unaware of the club's existence, but thought that the club and the university's administration didn't communicate well with his fellow adult students the possible benefits that were being offered to him.

"There's nothing specifically against the adult students," said Joanna McGowan, the Registrar of the Delco Campus, "the university only considers them as degree or non-degree students."

This was made more evident when it took the Registrar almost an hour to find that about 15% of 1602 current students on the Delco campus are considered adults (officially defined as a student over 24 years of age, according to University policy), while the information on any other minority student was more readily available.

It was for this reason that the SGA two years ago, under the administration of Uzair Qadeer, created the position of the Senator of Adult Students.

"So long as this campus is committed to educating adult students, it is my belief we should also be committed to advocating for what they need.

"One hundred students, or one, each is a student deserving of representation," said Anya Takos, the first Senator of Adult Students.

She said that the relationship between the ASO and the SGA was a success in terms of the work they collaborated on for the adult students, such as setting up the Angel Adult Students Network, and that the students involved with the ASO that year "were particularly cooperative," Takos said.

The SGA senate position was carried on by Taryn Chance under the administration of Kevin Krauss. Although Chance reported that her position did even more work for the ASO than the year before, it was dissolved that year.

"We changed that position," said current SGA president Stacie Mann, who was the Treasurer under the Krauss administration last year, "at the time, there were a good number of adult students being represented."

As the current SGA president, Mann said she felt that the Senator of Adult Students had "fulfilled its position," and decided to not resurrect the position, keeping in accordance with her restructuring of the SGA.

"Really what I learned in my term (so to speak) was that adult learners seem to simply either want to be part of the usual student crowd, or get their degrees as quick as they can," said Taryn Chance, "It really did seem to me to have that kind of polarity."

"I never even heard of it," said 25-year-old adult student, Michael Bruder who is also a reporter for the Lion's Eye. He was referring to the ASO, "Had I heard of it, I don't know what it could do for me."

"You don't really have to tell the 24 year-old how to come back to college," said Patrick McWhirter, a 47 year-old Letters Arts And Science senior.

"The difference between K-12 [grade levels], is humongous," he said, "It [the ASO] needs to be an organization that hand holds the adult student and points out when they need help."

However, both Bruder and McWhirter agree that the special needs of adult students do not apply to school life at all, such as the welfare of their children or keeping their jobs. They say that there is simply no time to socialize with other adult students.

"Because we have lives," said McWhirter.

"Any group of mature adults has the potential to benefit the campus more than the younger students," Bruder said, "but socializing among themselves, it [the ASO] doesn't do that."

Adult Student Series:

Lion's Eye Correspondent, Justin Couch, is reporting on non-traditional students of the PSU Delco campus.

Who says college is just for kids; apparently no one these days. In fact, since the mid-90's there has been an increase in adult students on college campuses around the country.

"I got outta high school, got a job, and now I'm back to hitting the books to secure my career," says 41-year old Delco student Jeremy Gregor.

Gregor graduated from Strath Haven High School in 1982, and went straight to work with American Airlines as a baggage handler.

"The money was great, but as the layoffs have been coming, I've been sweating. I need to be secure," said Gregor. "I swore to myself after graduating from High School that I'd never lift another text book again, but in these uncertain times I need something to fall back on. Union work is not what it used to be," the nontraditional college student admitted.

Maybe you've seen 40-year-old Delco resident Rachael Dickens. "I got married after high school and now that my kids are finishing college I thought I might go back to school and jump start my career," said Dickens, a third year business major.

"For eighteen years I worked as an assistant in my consulting firm, and soon I'll be on the other side of the desk for the first time in my life," she said.

"It's a great feeling knowing that doors that were once closed to me are now starting to open," said 38-year-old student John Halus. Halus is a student at our sister satellite campus in Malvern.

"I got my associates degree from Neumann then decided I wanted to work and make money." Halus has been working at the Vanguard Group since leaving college 18 years ago.

"There's not much room for advancement unless you go the duration, and even then, you can only climb so high," Halus said.

Halus intends to graduate from Penn State Malvern with a degree in Communications Arts and Sciences. After receiving his Bachelors he intends to advance further.

"Vanguard will foot the bill as long as I maintain a 'C' average or better," Halus said. "Once I get my Masters, I can put in for the supervisor's job I want. That will look great on my resume," he said.

There seems to be a recurring theme among adult students. Maybe some time off and a brush with the real world has helped them appreciate and value the importance of a college education. But is the line drawn here? What about those students whose careers are over and Social Security has kicked in?

Part 2 of his series will spotlight the college careers of true "college seniors."

Employment Recruiters Visit Campus during Job Fair 2005

A brief walk around PSU-Delco's annual Job Fair showed just how eager companies are at taking on employees.

Most organizations were looking for anyone with interest in their company rather than a specific focus.

Chip Graham of USI Affinity promptly noted his company hires "depending on your career path."

Matt Bailry of Endless Pools, an aquatic exercise utility company, said that their hot jobs were all in customer service.

Brian G. Millinger, Director of Market and Business Development at Independence Financial Associates said, "The hot jobs this time of year are all in finance or at least I hope they are."

One of the more out of the ordinary organizations in attendance was Longwood Gardens. They offer internships to those who are going to pursue a career in teaching, giving students a chance to teach art and nature courses held on their property. UPS offers tuition reimbursements.

-Dan Delaney