

Cut Feud Proves Nothing Is New

By DON BARLETT

The controversy about the University's system of class cutting is not something new. It dates back to the late 1880's when students really had the right to gripe.

In those days one unexcused absence was considered a misdemeanor and to leave the immediate grounds of the college it was necessary to gain permission from the "Prexy."

In order to be excused from class because of illness it was necessary to get the professor's permission, which could be quite awkward at times. If an offender had two unexcused absences from any class, he was subjected to public reproof, and if he attained one more cut he was suspended from the class.

'Censure Mark'

The administration decided the system of cuts should be more severe. And it brought into existence the "censure mark" plan. This was put into effect in the early 1880's.

If a student was late for any exercise he was given two marks, and if he was absent from any exercise he was given six marks.

The "privilege" of obtaining these marks could be derived from any number of conditions. If a student was absent from any chapel exercise or late beyond the close of the first hymn at the Sunday afternoon service (attendance at chapel was required at this time) or had a tardiness of more than five minutes at any other exercise, it was regarded as an absence and the student earned himself six marks.

Written Notice

When the total of these marks reached 25 a written notice of the fact was sent to the students' parents and one to the student himself; when the total reached 35, a second letter was sent to each; and when the total reached 50, the student was indefinitely suspended and could regain admittance only by application to the faculty.

If at the end of one session the student had 25 marks or less, the marks were dropped. However, if the student had more than 25 marks they were carried over to the next session.

It was evident from editorials appearing in the Free Lance, predecessor to the Penn State Collegian, that the student body was adverse to this attendance system.

In March of 1890 an editorial appeared in the Free Lance condemning the censure mark system. The editorial described the system as being "antiquated, moss-grown, and effete."

The editorials and student resentment to the system must have had some effect on the faculty, for the editorial in the April, 1890 issue of the Free Lance began:

"We are pleased to note the overthrow of the ancient and much maligned 'Censure Mark' system. With the beginning of this term there is inaugurated a definite and more liberal government."

New Rules

With the expansion of the college, new rules were adopted, and in 1906 a new attendance system was drawn up.

Under the new set of laws the student was required to attend "every exercise for which he is scheduled." If a student cut a class, he was required to explain his reason to the professor. And any student who showed irregularity in attendance and low grades in the subject, he was excluded from the class by the instructor, his name being reported to the Registrar and the Dean of his School.

When the absences of any student in any subject amounted to one-fourth of the whole number of classes, the student was dropped from the course.

This time the Free Lance rebelled against the discrimination made between a college student and a university student.

The Free Lance declared: "A University has been defined as composed of men devoted to special and definite lines of study and research—a college, conversely, is composed of students receiving instruction in those branches of learning which be at the foundation of the several arts, pursuits and professions of life."

The editorial went on to conclude that the University man

was given attendance freedom because he sought to continually crowd in more work.

However, it was the belief of the editor that the college man was as capable as the university man when it came down to deciding which classes should be cut and which classes shouldn't be cut.

This time however, there was no apparent effect on the faculty and the attendance system continued until 1929.

In November of 1929 a new plan was proposed. This new system would provide wider cutting privileges for seniors.

Freedom for Seniors

Under the proposed system seniors would have been granted freedom in their class attendance. It was believed that through this, the graduate of tomorrow would be "brought face to face with the responsibility that is his; he would undergo a test of character and ability without feeling academic pressure; and the eventual outcome would indicate to a large degree his future possibilities."

This time the students were backed by some of the faculty.

The Liberal Arts School Dean, Charles W. Stoddart, believed that a cut plan based on scholastic standing would promote "scholarship as well as individual responsibility." The Dean pointed out, in an interview with The Penn State Collegian, that in a survey of land grant colleges it was found

Greetings—The Blair County Penn State Alumnae

that 10 out of the 39 institutions had adopted a system of unlimited cuts for seniors.

On March 17, 1930, the Student Council committee placed its senior attendance plan before the faculty investigating group. The plan proposed that cutting privileges be extended to all seniors with an average of approximately 1.7.

On May 16, 1930, the fateful decision was given. In a canvass of faculty opinion on the proposed cut plan, 25 were noncommittal; 51 favored the plan; and 97 opposed it.

Since 1930, the same cut plan has been in effect. The plan which went into effect in 1906 is almost a carbon copy of the one in effect today. The 1930 rebellion had no effect on the cut system.

Thus, today there is no real cut system and it is still a controversial question among students and faculty—one which has been argued for nearly a century.

Official Sees Name Change 23 Years Early

Chalk one up for Ray H. Smith, who was College comptroller in 1930.

Some 23 years before it happened, he predicted that Penn State would become a "great University" by 1950.

It happened on Nov. 13, 1953. Smith, according to the Penn State Collegian of March 11, 1930, said the campus would be a "collegiate paradise instead of the present building-scarred campus with its mud, trampled sod, and helter-skelter roadways." (Those were the paper's words, not Smith's.)

The College was in the midst of a large-scale expansion program at the time the Comptroller made his predictions.

Old Main, the "Liberal Arts" building, Mineral Industries and the "College Inn" were under construction at the time.

Campus paths and roadways were being built and lightposts were planned.

"The roadways on the campus have been laid out," Smith said, "to provide ready access to every building, but also with the idea in mind to keeping them as far as possible from the main buildings in order to eliminate noise in the latter."

"You can see . . . that there is room for expansion of every school," the Comptroller said. "But when the expansion as planned is completed, there should

'Saucy' Letters, Trustees' Effort Saved University

The University may owe its existence today to the efforts of its first trustees who personally saved Farmers' High School from complete financial collapse.

One of them, Hugh McAllister, went out to the farming areas and got farmers to sign subscription lists. They promised to pay five, ten, sometimes even fifteen or twenty dollars, to help the school get started.

A letter from a Quaker farmer, C. C. Way, of Halfmoon, is preserved among McAllister's correspondence. It was written in answer to a request for payment of his subscription:

"I received a pretty saucy letter yesterday evening. If thee had not wasted half the paper thou did it would have done just as well.

"This is the first time thee asked me for that money. I think thee told me that morning in the corn field if I would put my name on the paper for a starter thee would pay it thyself so I was easy about it or I might of had it payed along go, but as thee is a pretty good Republican and old Abe, I guess, is elected, I will enclose in this five dollars and say no more about it only send that receipt as thee promest. Thine respectfully."

be little need of growth for a while, for within the area that I have described we can care for more than 10,000 students."

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