

the daily collegian opinions

editorial opinion

Long-distance navigation

How to strengthen and broaden the student rudder on an academic ocean liner

In answer to student complaints about not having an effect on University policy, one administrator at Encampment used this metaphor:

The University is an ocean liner and the only people on board for long periods of time are administrators — only they can view things in the long term. Students, by contrast, aren't capable of making decisions based on where the University will be decades from now.

Students do make a difference in the course of the University, the administrator said. But just as it takes miles for an ocean liner to turn, it takes years for an organization as large as Penn State to change. So students are often gone before they see the fruits of their efforts. And as a result, they are often reluctant to make any effort toward long-term change or planning.

In the next two years, the ocean liner that is Penn State will be hitting very choppy seas... and students are going to have to start making an intensive effort to weather the storm. In the same year, the semester calendar will turn the University's academic system around and the administration will have a new president to

work under.

The rest of the University in a state of flux and at times chaos, the students' role will be, for what may be the first time, that of ensuring continuity. This time it will be the students, and not the administration, who will have perhaps the best opportunity to provide the transitions from the old and comfortable Penn State to the new and uncomfortable.

If students, and particularly student leaders, don't have their collective act together during this crucial time, maybe no one will.

But as things stand now, whether student leaders do have their act together depends very much on their individual skill, background and personality. And even the most competent person finds himself wasting incredible amounts of time simply learning how "the system" works, while at the same time struggling almost in the dark to deal with the immediate, tangible problems that plop themselves at the office door.

Then, when their attempts at solutions to the short-term problems will turn the University's academic system around and the administration will have a new president to

back.

A big part of the problem is that few members of student organizations have been at the University for more than two or three years, and there's little to provide student leaders with a sense of history — what has succeeded and failed in the past and what, if any, progress has been made toward solving Penn State's perennial questions. Or even, for that matter, what those perennial questions are.

If any long-range planning happens to be done, it just happens, not by pattern but by chance.

And in the cases in which student leaders have acted with foresight and have tried to plan for the future, there has been no guarantee that the next year's leaders would build upon that planning.

Student groups — including, of course, the Collegian — need to escape the cycle of years-to-years, and need to begin thinking about decades.

What's needed, as Undergraduate Student Government President Bill Cluck pointed out at last week's USG Executive Council meet-

ing, is their own Plan for the '80s document.

A document can endure longer than memories; tangible goals, printed on paper, can complement real people who try to work toward those goals.

A complete statement of long-term student issues and objectives can also help an incoming University president be sensitive to the specific needs and concerns of students over the years.

In a year when so much of student representatives' energy has gone into building a new student government structure — such as the revised USG constitution — planning for a student Plan for the '80s might also help students get into substantive issues, and might help students get a sense of common purpose.

Finally, returning to the administrator's ocean-liner metaphor, a student Plan for the '80s might function as a sextant, helping students see whether their efforts over many years can actually change the course of this gigantic University.

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Opinion, with the editor-in-chief holding final responsibility.

reader opinion

Declining quality

Well it happened again. Pink slips have come out and I failed to get any of the computer science courses for which I preregistered. I was under the misconception that once you were a scholar (10th-term) you had some priority in scheduling, but I failed to note that the only people you have priority over are underclassmen in the art department. Out of eleven preregistrations, I have gotten all preregistered courses one week. I've had to petition for required computer science courses, my last two terms, and it appears I will have to do it again for winter classes.

The Computer Science Department has become overcrowded as evidenced by the department's decision to limit the number of students outside the major who can take computer science courses. The cause for such policies has been the loss of professors in the department.

Professors leave teaching positions because they are not interested in working on outdated equipment and can receive larger salaries in industry. As a result, all students get the shaft.

The real depression and anger sets in when talking to students in a few of the other majors. Many have gotten all of their preregistered courses one week. Their department heads and advisors are far from undermanned. Many students have easy access to department heads and advisors. These advisors often know students on a first name basis. Until lately, it has been a chore, in computer science, just to get a form signed, let alone to see an advisor who takes a genuine interest in the student. So you are left with a sense of being a number one in a line.

I hope this letter will arouse both students and teachers and cause them to raise a little hell. There seems to be some sad deficiencies in the computer science department's planning, along with many other departments. The computer field is playing a larger part in almost every career field, and the computer's involvement is growing with every day. Students see this growth and are trying to use this foresight to their advantage by taking computer science courses or declaring computer science as their major. The department has grown every term, but faculty and funds for the department seem to be falling behind. I know money is tight all over the University, but it looks like the administration better step back and look at how money can be used more wisely.

Some changes need to be made. I'm not advocating the cutting out of any colleges or departments in the University, I would just like to see some equality between the colleges and departments. I want to feel like I have the same chance to become involved in my major as any other student. I want my teacher to do his or her best possible job. Teaching overcrowded classes does not allow a teacher to work at a peak level. Why should teachers in any major that is overcrowded be forced to teach classes where the teacher knows that the quality is not the best?

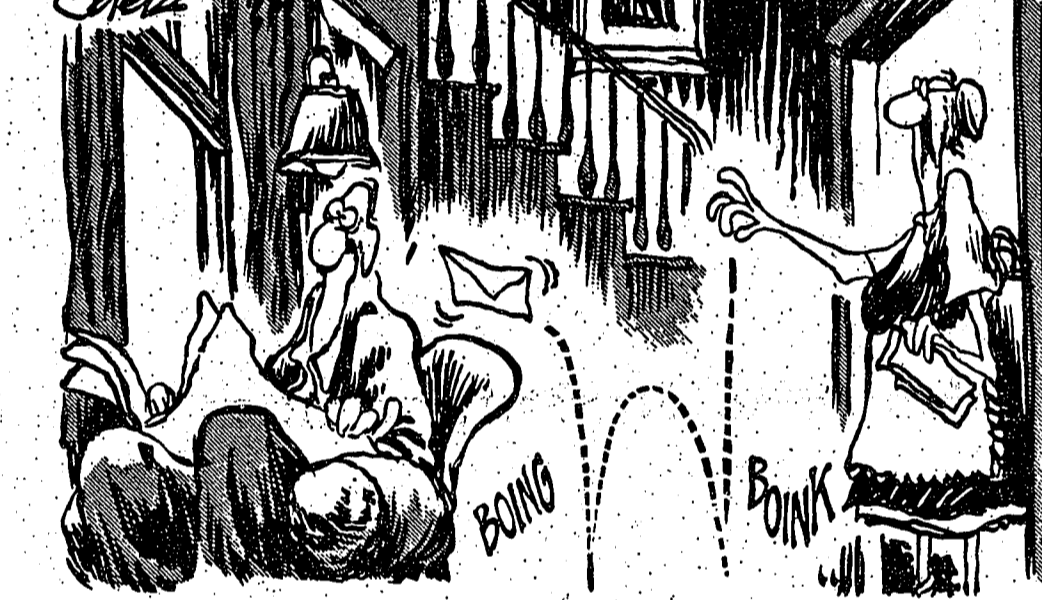
If no solutions to the problem exist, then the problem should be spread among all of us, not just a selected group. Penn State has a good reputation nationwide for many of the school's

major courses of studies. However, this reputation may soon fade unless some changes are made to clean up the departments.

Scott Tinsley, 10th-computer science Nov. 9

Racial help

A recent forum article by David O. Byrd of the Black Caucus raised some very interesting and enlightening points about the integration issue which Penn State, as well as most other institutions of higher learning, face. There is little that a university can do, aside from outreach programs, such as public school tutoring, to adjust the attitudes of incoming students. As Mr. Byrd says, racial attitudes have 18 years to get before college matriculation begins. To try to change them in four years is a difficult, through not insurmountable, task. Mr. Byrd goes on to state that the University "perpetuates the problem" by developing separate cultural and social programs.



IT'S ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR CHECKS FROM THE SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE...

while the University looks for long-range solutions.

Bruce Lubich, graduate-economics Nov. 9

Falsely accused

Recently there have been several letters printed in the Collegian questioning the reserving of seats for Ballon Derby participants as well as their conduct at the West Virginia game. As our own figures out what course to follow to the questioning put forth.

Seating is reserved for Ballon Derby participants as well as for other groups that are on the football field prior to the game; this is done for several reasons. Firstly, by the time these people come off the field, the stadium is already full and attempting to find a seat would be extremely difficult. Secondly, imagine the amount of confusion, anger, and other problems that would result if these people had to scramble through the stadium to locate seats. Obviously, it is better to reserve seats in an effort to avoid problems.

Both letters pointed out that the reserved seating took place in the senior section. We agree the senior section is crowded, however, the only direct access to the stadium from the fields is unfortunately located in the senior section. If seating were reserved in another section of the stadium, entrance would have to be through the senior section. Reserving seats in any other section would defeat the whole purpose of reserving seats.

Upon entering the stadium, the participants of Ballon Derby found people not associated with their event sitting in the reserved area. About 20 people were wrongfully seated in this area. When the situation was explained to these people, the majority left without incident. However, nine people (black and white) were unwilling to leave and had to be asked to leave by the police. In our opinion, having those nine people removed by the police does not constitute racism, of which we have been wrongfully accused.

This year, our Ballon Derby was organized and run in a similar fashion to those of past years. In the past, there has never been a problem with the reserved seating. It appears that the stadium is becoming more and more crowded with each game and reserved seating is now creating problems. Reserved seating, as occurred with Ballon Derby, is an honest attempt by the University and the participating groups to keep the stadium organized and problem free as possible. If there are better ideas regarding more equitable procedures for such situations, we are all open to suggestions.

Eugene J. Dorff, 12th-political science
Galen Berby, Chairman
Kenneth Albert, 10th-mechanical engineering
Vice President, Alpha Kappa Lambda Fraternity
Nov. 9

Fame and fortune

Stand up, speak out and sign in.

Too often, those people with something to say don't take advantage of the avenues open to them for expressing their ideas, airing their gripes, dreaming their dreams. Now, The Daily Collegian is offering some of those potential writers out there with something to say a place to say it.

We need columnists — literary, a good imagination and a willingness to go hard are the main requirements. Beyond that, the column is yours to do with what you will.

We'd like to encourage women and minorities to apply, because they are not very well represented on our page.

If you believe you have the energy to face the challenge of writing a literary masterpiece once every one or two weeks, come to 126 Carnegie and see the assistant editorial editor.

A litterbug is the slimiest species of maggot

There is a disease that is already growing and squirming its way like a tapeworm into the bowels of the State College area, the Penn State campus and into the hearts of many students and townspeople alike. This disease cannot be cured by any type of medicine or therapy.

The disease or, if you will, sickness is known throughout the country by the short and not-so-sweet term, litter.

Scott Fritzsche



walk up to a can and throw away that empty beer can or pack of cigarettes.

What difference does one pull-tab, cigarette butt or a little tin foil make, the maggots might say? When multiplied by the thousands of people who religiously take time out to litter, it makes a big difference.

Hey, I'm a party kind of guy, and I know that sometimes there just isn't enough room in the trash barrels for that extra empty quart bottle that freshly-crumbled cigarette pack. If there is a lack of room in the cans for garbage, it seems to me that there is more than enough room to lay some of the blame on the administration. Why when they can allocate so much money for outfitting the campus police with the latest and finest in equipment, can they not spend a small sum of extra dollars toward the purchase of a few extra trash cans down by The Wall?

Something here stinks. I don't want the people who clean up after these maggots to lose their jobs, but with the amount of money that they earn from the administration, the needed trash containers could be bought.

The folks who clean up after these worms do a pretty fair job and I applaud the maintenance people for their diligence cleaning up the scum left behind by the maggots with such an amazing effort. But they cannot take the time to find every cigarette butt or little speck of garbage that is left behind.

This crap piles up and multiplies, like so many cancer bacteria, hiding in the grass of the Old Main lawn and behind the Wall, finding its way into bare feet and dog stomachs.

The final and inevitable question arises. How can we make these worms disappear from our eyesight forever? We can't. Instituting the death penalty for littering would seem more than just, but with the speed of our court systems, prisons all over the country would quickly become gigantic stoneware and steel worm holes filled with garbage.

The only solution that I can see would be the formation of a coalition called Sons of S&M (Students Against Maggots). With any luck at all, the coalition could have its gun permits validated by the end of the term and the extermination of

OK, now that the introductory crap is finished, let me just say that some of the supposedly educated and conversationally intelligent people around here are no more than a bunch of litterbugs who don't seem to care about beauty and safety, and are seemingly unaware of the smell produced by their rancid habit.

Perhaps litterbug is not a word for them. These people who insist upon discarding their trash on the ground are a bunch of maggots that cause the campus and town area to look like a festering gash infected with the scum that they seemingly enjoy creating for others.

A Sunday morning walk through town finds many people wading ankle-deep in the wrath of a weekend gathering of maggots and their fellow worms. Why is this? It can't really be so hard to

reader opinion

Re-examine

With the apparent desire for the semester system I ask that students in favor of Block 45 re-examine their motives. Having recently transferred from a university using the semester system, I have seen advantages and disadvantages of both systems. I must say I prefer the trimester system. Ten weeks is more than enough time to cover a term and then go on. Furthermore, I don't believe that the convenient location of winter vacation in the Block 45 system is a valid reason for its enactment. Though it is convenient winter vacation at the end of the term, a 15-week semester becomes quite monotonous, simply making the vacation vital to one's sanity.

I do believe, however, that Block 45 should be an issue decided by the students and if the semester system is really what the students want, then Block 45 is what they should get. I only ask that students carefully examine their motives that may decide their college careers for the extent of their study at Penn State.

Curtis Zilberher, 5th-English writing option
Nov. 10

Editor's Note: Apparently some people have the semester calendar and the Block 45 class schedule confused. Semesters are on their way, like it or not, in time for the 1983-84 academic year. The decision to scrap Block 45 in no way affects the decision to switch from terms to semesters, which was made last spring. Block 45's demise means only that the University must choose another class schedule plan to fit the semester calendar.

David Reagan, 11th-food science
Nov. 9

Unfortunate

Well now, Haunted House has been over for about a week, and I have now reached the bottom of my list of priorities as co-chairman of the 1981 Haunted Crow House.

Regarding the letter from Karyn Reest concerning the window advertisement at the Student Book Store, I find it rather unfortunate that she should take offense at the rendering of the woman. The original concept for the window was to have an Amazon-like female exhibiting control over the entire scene, somewhat reminiscent of the heroines one often finds in "Heavy Metal" magazine.

If Miss Reest was aware of the tremendous amount of time and effort Alpha Chi Rho fraternity and Alpha Phi sorority put into our philanthropy, I believe that her criticisms would cease. All of our resources were taxed to the maximum, since the Haunted Crow House fell on an academically severe time during the term. We needed a design for the window, and our new brother Jim Eichelberger came up with one. I saw no need to censor his work. Suppressing creativity is not my idea of good management.

The only flaw that I could see in the mural is that we may have lost some definition and contrast during the transfer from the drawing board to the window. In that respect we may not have done the woman figure justice. I guess the old cliché that you can't please everyone all the time still holds true.

Regardless, I'd like to once again thank the Alpha Phi sorority, and our little sister organization for making this a record-breaking year for the Alpha Chi Rho Haunted Crow House!



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View imprisons

In response to Kevin Brockenbrough's ludicrous opinions presented in the Collegian on Nov. 3, I too would like to be heard. During my high school career, I was faced with the same situation. I would like to be in gauché. I went to a predominantly black high school. It was 80 percent black, 10 percent Puerto Rican — with me belonging to the minority white segment. Yes, that's right — I was white and a minority too. Hard to believe, huh?

The key for me in eliminating "race retention" or "race detention," as he puts it, was not to worry or care whether or not I was a minority. If I wanted to do something, I went and did it. It was that simple. The fact that I was 5'9" and couldn't jam a basketball didn't stop me from

trying out for the basketball team. (I got cut, by the way. Maybe I should have yelled discrimination?)

What I'm trying to denote is that whether you're black, white, Indian, etc., the University and its community of students won't retard you from doing something you want to do, but your "attitude" can. With statements like, "Only in America would it be possible to bridge the void from here to the moon faster than we can bridge a cultural gap between two people," how can you expect to accomplish anything? Maybe you should knock that chip off your shoulder, because it's your attitude that imprisons you! The University is what you make of it... skoal blood.

Michael Brone, 7th-petroleum and natural gas engineering
Nov. 6

Leaving an unwelcome environment

BY ANTHONY TYRONE NEAL
Graduate-political science

After reading Kevin Brockenbrough's forum in the Nov. 3 issue of The Daily Collegian, I was inspired to write this department. I was especially inspired by the line, "Who wants to be seen with one of 'you people'?"

I'm sure I'm not the first black student to leave Penn State for reasons stated in Brockenbrough's forum. I'm also sure I won't be the last. Nonetheless, I had to write this letter to state the way I feel and address it to "whomever it may concern" or "whomever is concerned."

I don't quite understand the dynamics of this situation. I've always perceived myself as an American. Yet, during my brief stay at Penn State, each passing day has played its part to diminish this weary trace of a perceived heritage. This is the gist of a combination of reasons why I am transferring to a predominantly black institution of higher "grasp" at the end of this term.

One might wonder what is the foundation of personal disenchantment with Penn State. Well, the edifice of my disenchantment rests on the foundation of perception and reality.

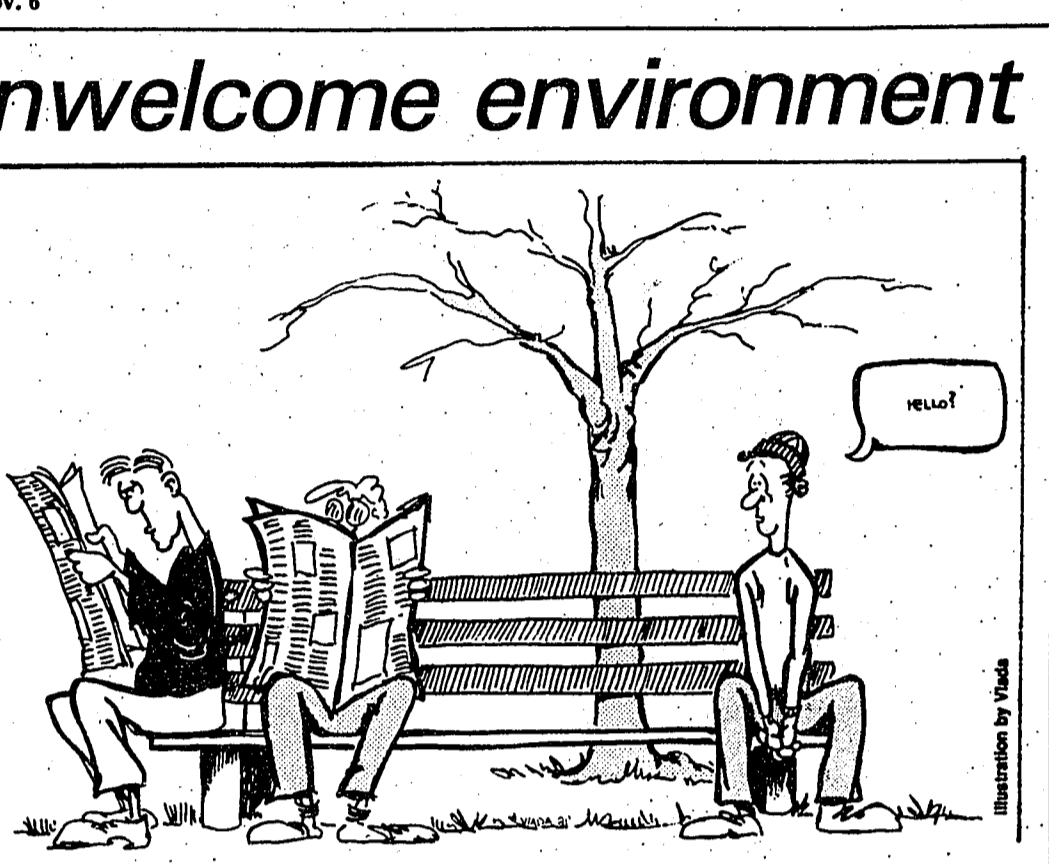
I originate from the southern United States. This factor afforded my long-distance perception of Penn State via television and printed materials. I perceived Penn State as a large and socially sophisticated institution with an atmosphere conducive to "triangular learning." That is, for example, learning among

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students and learning between students and professors. I perceived this to be a norm for all students.

However, personal experience has shown me that when black American students are involved, there is a severe strain on the triangle, even to the point of its collapse.

With this hurting factor in mind, I glanced at my clock and saw that it was Nov. 3, 1981. How could it be, I wondered, that in this highly technically advanced "First World" society, primitive issues of race and artificial separation still govern? How could it be? This is the way I feel.

Yet I'm not alone. I met a foreign student who wondered the same thing. He said that as far as technology is concerned, America is what he expected. What he could not grasp, however, was how such a materially mature society could be so socially immature in regards to its citizens of color. Apparently, the legacy of bigotry and fear is a visible ghost that haunts us all.

Sometimes I wish the dignity of all humankind was the space shuttle. Then it would be a concern that would capture our most astute imaginations. We would persevere to enhance and protect it. Even if it should crash, we would rebuild it and try to make it crash-resistant.

Evidently, the answer lies within each one of us. Look around and see if any person on this campus is less human than yourself. I think not.

forum

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