

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Tuesday, March 16

editorial opinion

Really now, do people enjoy waiting in line for days?

This past weekend marked University Park's annual version of the lemmings' frenzied stampede to the sea. Dorm contract applications were to be accepted 4 p.m. Sunday, and after a few determined youngsters started the parade (as early as 8 a.m. Thursday), the madness began.

By Friday evening, the lines were long, and those in them were — thanks to the rains and melting snows — quite wet.

Surely there must be a better way for worrisome students to get a spot in one of the dormitory system's limited spaces. Staying out in Penn State's early Spring Term weather is not only no fun, it can get downright dangerous.

When the weekend's weather is nice, as it was Saturday and Sunday afternoons, the long wait can be a bash. But when the weather turns sour, as it has been in the past few years, standing in line is just plain stupid.

But most students don't think they have any choice. As the first paranoid dormies start to line up, and the line begins to grow, it becomes apparent to the more sane that they must get in line early to get one of those precious little boxes.

But standing in line is not the only alternative. There are choices.

One choice is to decide that a dorm room isn't that important and forget about the whole thing.

But the dorm room is obviously important to the applicants, or they wouldn't be sleeping in a soaked sleeping bag on a rainy night.

However, there was an even better choice, and that's the saddest aspect of last weekend's fiasco. There was the opportunity for a better system. Last term, the administration was considering an

"11th-line" system that would have combined the best of both the lottery and the first-come, first-served systems.

By allowing an imaginary 11th line — proportionate to the other 10 lines — for those who would take the chance on a lottery system, students who thought it idiotic to withstand the elements for 72 hours wouldn't have to.

For those committed to self-determination, the other 10 lines for the first-comers would have provided the opportunity to guarantee a room for oneself.

But the students, given the opportunity to improve the present system, turned it down. When polled for their thoughts on the proposed 11th-line system, the students, perhaps grossly under-informed or just not interested, decided against it.

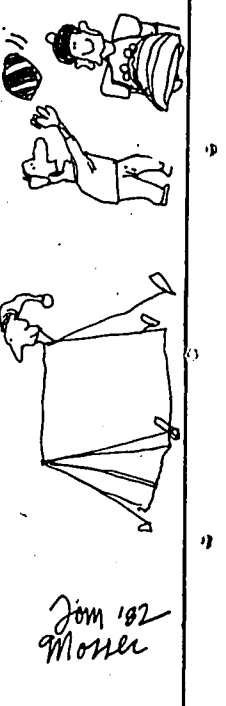
Overall, only 27.4 percent of the students voted for the 11th line. So for those deter-

mined to get a room, there was only one choice: Get in line.

Those of you who had to bear the lines this year, which assembled much earlier than last year, don't grumble and complain about the University's ridiculous system. By either not voting for the 11th line system, or by not convincing your peers to, the blame for those lines falls directly on your own shoulders.

And it's up to you to see that it doesn't happen again. The University isn't going to be building more dorms. The demand will probably be larger than the supply for some years to come.

Push for the 11th-line system, or come up with something better. University officials don't like the present system anymore than you do. They've shown a willingness to change, but it's still up to you to see that it does.



reader opinion

A terrible mistake?

This letter is to inform the students of Penn State about a terrible mistake that is about to be made by the State College Borough Council. The basic elements of Rand's philosophy are individualism, reason, egoism and capitalism. The council is seriously considering moving the taxi company out of the bus station some time around April 15. This would mean that the bus station would no longer be open all night and would close when the Greyhound and Trailways people leave. The bus employees leave before many students come in on the various buses.

As a taxi driver during the winter of 1980-81 when the bus station closed early, I took several people on several occasions to the hospital to be treated for frostbite. Some people have a lot of luggage and would be forced to stand out in sub-zero, windy weather if the council closes the station by moving the cabs out.

The financial situation of the cabs is getting better and it is not as bad as some would have us believe.

Please write or call the members of the State College Borough Council and let them know that you don't want to freeze next winter. The bus station is the logical place for State College's taxi company.

Tim Craven, State College taxi driver
March 15

Death of a philosopher

March 6 was marked by the death at age 77 of a great thinker, Ayn Rand. Miss Rand was well known as a best-selling novelist, but her novels and the philosophy they expressed placed her in total opposition to the dominant culture of our age.

The goal of Miss Rand's writing was to project the image of an ideal man. An ideal man is a man

of supreme courage, integrity and rationality. In short, an ideal man is a hero. Rand fully achieved her goal, but in order to do so she had to develop a completely new philosophical system. The basic elements of Rand's philosophy are individualism, reason, egoism and capitalism. She acknowledged no philosophical debt except to Aristotle. Her philosophy stands out as a bulwark against the tide of collectivism, mysticism, altruism and socialism which may yet destroy Western civilization.

Miss Rand's writing style is truly remarkable in that it combines rigorous clarity with implacable moral fervor. Her novels are full of long philosophical passages which are absolutely essential to the development of her ingenious plots. This integration of art with philosophy sets Miss Rand apart from all other twentieth century writers. Her books have inspired millions and what is more, they remain popular despite the fact that they are almost totally banned from university classrooms.

Miss Rand was uncompromisingly opposed to the most influential orthodoxies of our day. It is therefore no surprise that she was the target of fanatical vilification from many quarters. Religious mystics, socialists and altruists all denounced her at every opportunity. Now, on the occasion of her death, some of Miss Rand's old enemies have seized the opportunity to unleash further barrages of personal invective.

That is in part why I decided to write this letter. But in addition, I wanted to express my admiration and respect for a great artist and a truly original philosopher. To me and many others, Ayn Rand was the living embodiment of her own heroic ideal.

Stephen G. Simpson, professor of mathematics
March 12

Job well done

On behalf of the Association of Residence Hall Students, we would like to extend our thanks to all the line monitors, resident assistants and Residential Life staff in all areas for their excellent assistance in coordinating the dorm contract lines. The weather, environmental conditions and students lining up early presented problems which every area handled very successfully. Coordination of the overall program was made a great deal easier by the tremendous contribution made at the area level.

In this year's dorm contract survey, over 50 percent of the students surveyed favored first-come, first-serve. While ARHS is still evaluating this system and other alternatives, first-come, first-serve remains as the approved policy. We would welcome any and all suggestions from monitors and students who stood in line on how to better the system. Feel free to write, call or stop by the ARHS office in 20-A HUB or contact your area government representative.

Once again, congratulations on a job well done.

Chris Calkins, ARHS president
Karen Gravin, ARHS vice president
Steve Cummins, ARHS executive vice president
March 15

Making Love

Why should homosexual characters in a film, who like other humans, as one such individual in "Making Love" points out, bleed when cut, be

labeled unrealistic when they are presented in professional situations? It is this narrow attitude, I think, that Arthur Hiller was trying to abolish with his new controversial film, "Most Viewers." Collegian staff writer Elaine Wetmore says in her review of the film, "are expecting an honest glimpse into the homosexual world with the purchase of admission, but many aren't going to be satisfied."

It is really an "honest glimpse," she means, or is it the reaffirmation of established stereotypes?

"The gay bar scenes are glossed over with barely an attempt to depict the atmosphere within," Wetmore continues. "What is she hoping to see? The bar scene in this movie showed no more or less than bar scenes in most movies where the plot does not center around bar happenings."

Was Wetmore disturbed that the bars were not sleazy enough? That the men were not limp-wristed enough, or poverty-stricken enough? Her review would have been more accurate had she omitted these comments and acknowledged Hiller's valiant attempts at presenting the healthy aspects of a homosexual lifestyle.

What can be more realistic than what he's done? The obviousness of this realism is almost ridiculous. Human life will always have its opposites, heterosexual or homosexual, healthy and unhealthy, professional and nonprofessional, rich and poor and on and on. Why should Hiller be criticized for portraying the positive side of homosexuality?

L. Baehl, graduate-English
March 14

Think about it

The future we prepare for is the future we create. Do we ready ourselves for the treadmill

of materialism and greed? Then so be it! Who else but ourselves will design the state of things to come? With the passage of each individual life, humanity is once again defining itself. Shall we wait for others to show us the way? Shall we not question the wisdom of those upon the well-trodden path which lies before us?

Behold, fellow scholars! The future we prepare for is the future we create!

JoAnn Horton
12th-psychology

But are we ready?

Semesters are coming... but is Penn State prepared for them? Recent criticism of the change to the new calendar has been manifested in a lengthy report by several University faculty members (reprinted in yesterday's Collegian).

Is there still deep-seated resistance to the semester calendar? Do unanswered questions remain about class size, laboratory space, teaching load and availability of course offerings? Or will these thorny problems be ironed out in time?

Will the calendar adversely affect students and the University for years to come? Or is it, as its supporters claim, a step in the right direction?

On Wednesday, March 24, The Daily Collegian will devote its Op-Ed page to the semester calendar. If you have input about this topic, please bring a forum (two to three pages, double-spaced) or a letter (one page, double-spaced) to the Collegian office, 126 Carnegie Building, March 21 at 5 p.m.

Penn State's hope lies in its undergrads

Now for a few kind words about those oft-maligned hominids, Penn State undergraduates.

Even though I am the same person who criticized all-to-common undergraduate academic weaknesses and poor attitudes toward learning eight months ago, I've seen some better performance and better attitudes since then.

In earlier criticisms, I said many undergraduates were inadequate at the basic skills of reading, writing, understanding elementary mathematics and thinking analytically. The writing and analytical thinking have been improving, but are still nothing like what they should be.

Unfortunately, the other areas still look grim. Many of the letters to the Collegian, for example, show pitifully poor reading comprehension. I'd award my personal "Bonehead of the Month" award for February 1982 to the idiot who didn't realize that a Collegian writer was being sarcastic when she said she looked forward to being raped and having her first abortion.

The more important changes seem to be in students' attitudes. I still teach students who want to crank out answers blindly. I still teach students who wear their intellectual weaknesses and tender egos as if they were badges of honor and cry "I'm hurt! I'm hurt!" when I'm not sympathetic. However, these people now seem to be part of a shrinking minority.

I had the pleasure Fall Term of teaching durable students like the guy who grinned proudly when I said, "Hey! You on the first

row! Do number 17 on the board. We haven't had a good laugh in here for a long time!" He'd given correct but funny presentations before, and knew he'd just received a compliment from a fellow classroom comedian.

I've also noticed one sure-fire indication of an improving intellectual climate at Penn State: the graffiti in the mens' rooms is getting better.

One political thing that undergraduates should do, though, is write those fools in Washington about the short-sightedness of cuts in student aid.

But I don't think Penn State's biggest problem really has much to do with University politics or policies, and whatever it has to do with the administration can only be changed by the administration. That problem, simply, is that for all its reputation as a party school the University isn't very happy.

This biggest problem is the one the undergraduates can do the most about. They're the ones who can make this place happier, not with hysterical pseudo-happiness, but with the durable happiness of a person having a good day. They're the ones who can change. They're the ones whose business is change.

What they should do is something I'll have to be vague about. It comes down to being more generous to themselves and those around them, including their instructors. That's a personal thing, but here are several suggestions:

Learn. Learn how to be more straightforward. Learn how to argue without losing your head or your heart. Learn to think in terms of "I" instead of "we."

Work on being more tolerant. Don't take yourself off who you believe for granted. Make your mind promiscuous and fertile, not righteous and pure.

Don't let your father or the want ads choose your major — don't settle for anything that doesn't have at least part of your heart in it. Get an education. It can be done — even at Penn State — it just requires initiative. Go by office hours. Stay after class. Go by professors' or TAs' offices at night. You'll be told, "I'm busy," some of the time, but practically every teacher enjoys teaching someone who's curious and appreciative, and will give you more time than you'd expect.

There was a good cover drawing on the New Yorker that showed a crowded freeway full of gray cars and smoke. Right below the freeway was a pretty little village with a creek, flowers and happily smiling people. What I've seen of Penn State in the last few months reminds me of that drawing.

There is hope here, hidden in plain view. There are students who want to learn, and teachers who want to teach. Those who can do the most to fulfill it are the undergrads.

Steve Braekin is a graduate student in mathematics and a columnist for The Daily Collegian.

the daily Collegian
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The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters for length, and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste. Because of the numbers of letters received, the Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all the letters it receives. Mail letters to The Daily Collegian, 126 Carnegie Building, University Park, Pa. 16802. Names may be withheld on request. Letters may also be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian.

reader opinion

Draft registration

Editor's note: The following letter is regarding a column that appeared in The Harrisburg Evening News on Feb. 23, written by Collegian columnist Justin Catanoso. The original column appeared in The Daily Collegian on Feb. 5.

Recently, Mr. Justin J. Catanoso of The Daily Collegian wrote a column in The Harrisburg Evening News. He expressed his points of view on House Bill 1599. I would like to take this opportunity to refute his correspondence. As a co-sponsor of Mr. Cunningham's measure, I think that Mr. Catanoso erred, and erred seriously, in his assessments of legislative initiative.

At present, the state department of education allows the school district the option of releasing, or not releasing, the names of high school seniors to military recruiters. About half do so; the rest do not. Our bill is designed to have all districts release a list which, for most schools, would probably not run to more than half a dozen pages per year — the number of graduating students that any principal must maintain in his files.

The military now, like it or not, presently spends over \$100 million a year to compile lists of these students in order to contact them. I personally cannot see wanting even one-hundredth of this money when, for five cents a page, the Xerox machine can attend to the matter. If students do not wish to take the time, because of sheer laziness or outright indifference to their rights that's too bad. There is absolutely no element of compulsion in this bill! Many schools release names to salesmen of class rings, and other memorabilia, so to forbid the military to obtain such lists is discriminatory. A New York Times column published Feb. 25 is a warning of what will come if the all-volunteer system does not work. Making it progressively more difficult, and more expensive, for the military to contact people only brings the reinstatement of the draft that much closer and that much more certain. And, even if the military enjoys a good recruiting year, there is no guarantee that such will always be the case. Propaganda of the draft will be only too happy to rush in and fill the void.

We are not seeking to "revoke traditional

policies" nor are the co-sponsors of this bill seeking to "incur increased expenses." Xerox copying is very inexpensive. I am a former Marine officer (who voted for George McGovern in 1972), and by no means consider myself as anything, politically, except progressive and moderate in my thinking. House Bill 1599 is designed to help, not hurt, education in this state.

H. William DeWeese
State Legislator
50th Legislative District
March 3

Still the same

When I finally arrived home from my spring break skiing trip, I was met by my Dad in the driveway. He was shoveling the snow. "Welcome home," he said, handing me the shovel. I smiled. Same old Dad.

As I came in, he was cursing my little brothers out for not doing their homework. He had Mom get me my dinner and show me all the mail that had come in my absence. Through dinner, I listened to him lecture about the fact that I had bounced three checks at school and we argued over the merits of a mandatory military draft. He complained about my grades being too low again, for the seventh time in seven terms.

That night we went out for a beer together, for the first time now that I had turned "legal." Dad wouldn't have approved otherwise.

"You ought to write your mother more often," he said.

"Yeah, I will, Dad."

"And chop some wood for the fire before you leave tomorrow."

"OK."

As I sat watching Johnny do the monologue that night, I looked over at my dad sleeping on the couch. I couldn't help thinking about him. Still looks the same, I thought. Hair is maybe a little grayer and his wrinkles make him appear to frown, but he still sleeps with his mouth open. Sis says he still yells when he catches her watching a soap in the afternoon. And I know he

still enjoys the Sunday paper, walks in the woods and could beer out of his favorite mug.

I had to leave the next afternoon before he got home from work. My break at home had been cut short due to my desire to go skiing. As I drove back to school, I realized how much my dad meant to me. I stopped for gas and when I opened my wallet, I found a \$20 bill paperclipped to a short note.

"Thought you might need some gas money," the note said. "Call me when you get there. Sorry I didn't get to see you off."

Well, Dad — I'm sorry, too.

Jeffery J. Kittka, 8th-mining engineering
March 11

Conflict

Being a transfer student from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in my first term at University Park, I have just had my first experience with the much-dreaded Penn State conflict exam. I had heard from many of my friends that these exams, regardless of the course, should be avoided at all costs due to their virtual impossibility as compared with the scheduled exams. In my case, a straightforward, 20-question, multiple-choice QBA 102 exam suddenly turned into an incredibly difficult, 14-question brain-teaser.

It is amazing to me that some of the professors at this University are able to get away with this type of exam inconsistency. I realize that giving conflict exams is another hassle in the life of a college professor and that by making them much tougher than the scheduled exams, they can deter many students from taking the conflict exams. What I cannot understand is why a student with a legitimate, unavoidable reason for missing a test should be "punished." Now in my case, my professor could argue that my



problem with this is that with several hundred students taking an exam, the normal bell-shaped distribution cannot be guaranteed when dealing with students who are unable to attend a scheduled exam. Requiring conflict exams of similar difficulties as well as similar types (i.e. multiple choice or essay) to be given within 24 hours of the scheduled exams, is the best solution I can put forth.

In the first place, though, I'd like to know how much more I should have to learn to get the same grade as someone who could make it to the easier scheduled exam? Secondly, why did it even have to be a week? Why not a day, or even a couple of hours after or before the scheduled exam?

I have also heard it suggested — in fact, this is sometimes the practice — that the answer is to curve the conflict exams only with each other

and not together with the other exams. The problem with this is that with several hundred students taking an exam, the normal bell-shaped distribution cannot be guaranteed when dealing with the small number of students taking the conflict exam (about 12 in my case, compared to the 600-700 who took the scheduled exam).

This problem of unfair conflict exam policies is one which must be solved if this University is going to represent itself as an unbiased reflection of the abilities of each of its students. It is a shame that nothing has been done to correct a simple problem like this. Maybe by speaking out and voicing our opinions, we can remedy this ludicrous situation.

Steven G. Sanner, 8th-finance
March 11

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