

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Monday, March 29

editorial opinion

The art of compromise and the art of writing

It's like 20 weeks of boot camp everyone knows they must take. It isn't much fun while it's going on — but like the Marine who graduates from basic training before his proud parents and girlfriend — it's all worthwhile in the end.

Those necessary evils — English 10 and 20 — are needed to discipline students in the useful art of writing. However, sometimes these beginning composition courses get bogged down in banal compositions and irrelevant assignments.

As part of the transition to the semester calendar, the English department has proposed some beneficial structural changes for beginning English classes. That's a favorable sign that the calendar conversion will be more than regurgitating the same course material under a new name.

The English department's first proposal — to offer a freshman/junior year composition program — was rejected by the powers that be because of a lack of funds.

So the department came up with English 15 (an intensified version of English 10) and four English courses offered anytime during or after student's fourth semester in the middle of his sophomore year. The idea is to allow enough Commonwealth campus students to take the second English course before coming to University Park, thus saving money here.

After a student has mastered English 15, he can move on to one of four English options — depending on his interest or his major or both.

While this plan doesn't have the advantages of offering students a chance to refine their English skills as they approach graduation, it will give them the chance to write about ideas they are interested in. The new plan is also an improvement over the department's original

proposal requiring students to only have one semester of English.

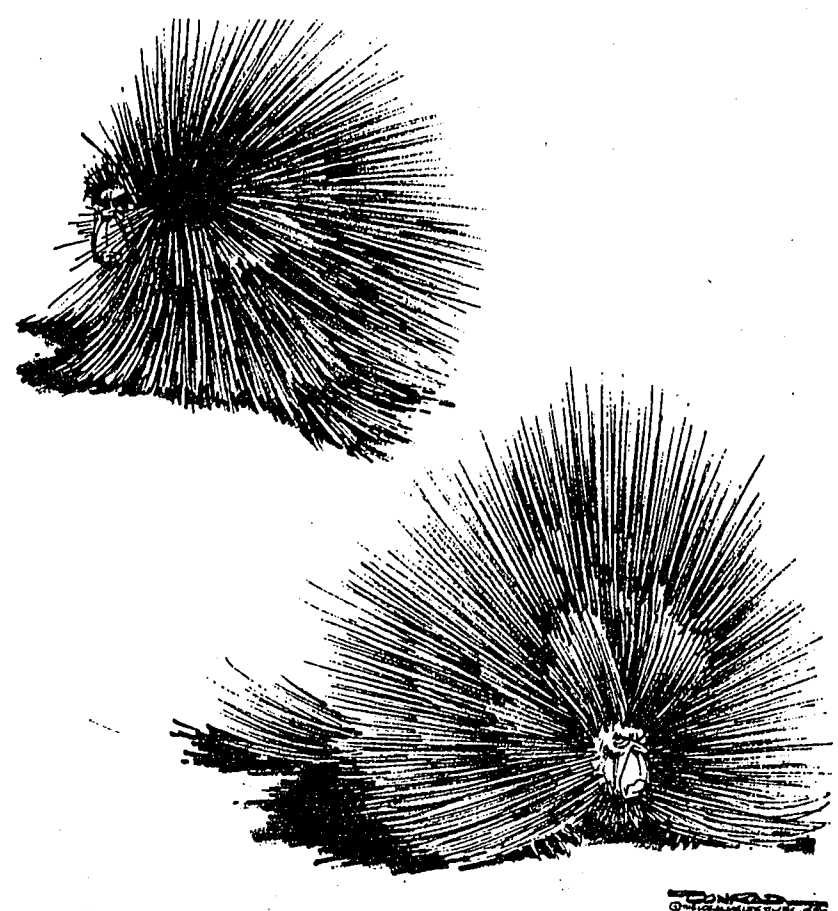
Students would choose from:

- English 201, with a social science emphasis.
- English 211, with an emphasis in humanities.
- English 218, technical writing.
- English 219, business writing.

But the courses still have to be approved by the University Faculty Senate's Curriculum Affairs Committee.

Is the plan that will be presented to the committee the ultimate in English instruction? Probably not — but it is an improvement and as Wendell V. Harris, English department head, says, it won't decrease the writing competence of University students.

It will "kind of improve it, we hope," he said. Ideals are never easy to reach.



QUESTION: HOW DO DISCIPLINED MAKE WAR?
ANSWER: VERY, VERY CAREFULLY!

reader opinion/dorm contracts

Editor's note: The following letters concerning dorm contract issues were submitted by representatives of on-campus housing groups.

Hard pill to swallow

The recurring debate over the value and privileges of interest houses seems to be inspired mainly from ignorance. From without appears to exist a misunderstanding of the sense behind an interest house. From within, one often sees a confusion concerning the mission of the house.

To the best of my understanding, President Oswald authorized the foundation of the interest house program to encourage an atmosphere of heightened academic awareness and involvement in dormitory living. Interest houses are intended to stimulate an interchange of ideas through such mechanisms as an extensive schedule of programs, close contact with a faculty associate and the controversial but essential social interaction. Some houses have a specified departmental attachment and others, such as Renaissance House, aspire to the more difficult goal of a general education.

My argument regarding the situation at hand — namely, reserved space and dorm contract lines — centers on the need for continuity. Students entering into an interest house ought to be immediately struck with the difference in atmosphere and the degree of involvement as opposed to other dormitory floors. This situation is tremendously dependent on a returning core of students versed with the purpose of the house and dedicated to preserving its distinctness and direction. Without these conditions, any sort of continuation of an interest house tradition would survive only by chance.

Now for the pill that is hard to swallow. Assuming that interest houses display a laudable effort to enhance the academic environment of the University, their maintenance should be provided for. I propose that a risk factor as great as revoking reserved space or forcing students to wait in dorm contract lines is unwise.

Considering that interest house members are under a continual pressure to fulfill their purpose, the loss of a housing guarantee could easily undermine the institution. Imagine the level of dedication you might have as a volunteer group from which you might be expelled irregardless of your contributions. For these reasons, I would be pessimistic of the future of interest houses if these supports are not provided.

Above all, though, I would invite any student who is challenged by the types of goals I mentioned above to visit an interest house and

become involved. It may be your most rewarding experience at Penn State.

Dan Bollag, former president
Renaissance House
March 15

Major drawbacks

Guaranteed Reassignment is an alternate system for assigning dorm rooms. This system was used by the University before the first-come, first-served basis, is a system where a person wishing to remain in the same room for the next year, simply submits their contract early and is then guaranteed that room. The remaining rooms are allotted to freshmen, reserve space and branch campus students.

This sounds like a logical, trouble-free system, but there are a few major drawbacks. The University had to abandon this system because the number of people who wanted guaranteed reassignment along with the incoming freshmen, and the number of reserve spaces added up to more rooms than were available. This system may still be used with a few changes so as to eliminate the problem of more spaces requested than available.

As members of the Dorm Contract Acceptance Committee (DCAC), we are studying this alternative method. Another problem that arose was that too many people wanted direct room switches to obtain wanted rooms and this caused problems with housing. DCAC proposes that if this system were to be used, a clause should be included to prevent abuse of the direct room switch policy, except in emergency situations.

Mike Foote, ARHS Representative for West Halls,
Dean Hall, South Halls President
March 21

Sororities entitled

Each year thousands of students are told that dorm space will once again be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Lines begin to form earlier and letters to the editor of The Daily Collegian about the inequity of reserved space also come earlier each year. One such group that is entitled to this controversial reserved space are the women who make up the sorority system at Penn State.

Sororities are socially based organizations. They depend on close friendships and a feeling of

unity to accomplish the various events that Penn State students and the community have come to expect from the Greek System. These events include Homecoming, the Dance Marathon and the Regatta. The only way to organize such events is to be within close access to each other so that communication is not lost through various channels.

Sororities also have a contract with Residential Life that guarantees them a suite in the dorm they occupy and reserved space in certain cases. Girls who live off-campus are required to wait in line to be put in temporary space. These girls are then given first priority to move out to a regular space not on the floor at which time direct room switches to the sorority floor may be worked out. To get reserved space, a girl must be a sister or a pledge by the Spring Term of the year in which she is requesting housing. There are various other restrictions that Residential Life and the Panhellenic Council put on the sororities in the way of housing.

A question often asked is: Why don't sororities move off campus? There are numerous reasons. The top one is that there are no houses left in the area that can accommodate 45-56 girls that the dorm floor and fraternity houses do. Money is also a problem. Most sororities here at Penn State cannot afford to move off campus. A major reason for this is that most national offices would not back a move such as this because a chapter would be so far removed from the other sorority chapters. This would be particularly detrimental during formal rush when there is limited time to accomplish certain goals.

Sororities need unity to function. Living together provides that unity. The University, by way of a contractual agreement provides the spaces for the sororities to live together. Sororities are not a group of "close-minded elitists" by any means. They are open to any female students who want to be part of various campus events and philanthropies and also to enjoy the fun of forming close friendships by living together.

Pam Santoro
Special Interest Group Representative
Residence Hall Advisory Board
March 15

Input needed

Penn State, Home of the Nittany Lion... or Line? It certainly seemed to prove to be the latter as the weekend of the "Great Contract Race" resumed once again with 12,000 available spaces on campus and nearly half of them aren't actually available because these people have special privileges merely because they chose to join one of these groups.

This year, realize that the system of allocating dorm contracts on a first-come, first-served basis was developed by a group of students in 1978. The students were members of the Dorm Contract Acceptance Committee. The committee was set up by the Association of Residence Hall Students. After extensive research, meeting with Housing and Residential Life administrators, and many student surveys, DCAC submitted the first-come, first-served system to the University for approval. DCAC then gave the proposal to the Residential Life and Housing offices.

So, you see, what has turned into an outdoor experience is really not a new form of torture set up by the students to test the endurance of students to the elements. The first come, first served allocation of dorm contracts was actually a system set up by the students for the students. In 1978, DCAC and the majority of students wanted dorm contracts felt that it was the best and fairest possible way to give the contracts out.

It's been four years now since students began to wait in line for dorm contracts. ARHS feels that the time has come to re-evaluate and find out how the students feel after being a part of the first-come, first-served system. A new Dorm Contract Acceptance Committee has been formed to investigate the other options available for a system of handing out dorm contracts. We need your input though. How do you feel about waiting in line for a dorm contract? Would you do it again? Is there a better way than the current system? DCAC wants to make a recommendation to Housing and Residential Life by May 15 on a system that provides the allocation of dorm contracts. Whether it will be the present system or a new one, that's up to you.

Robin Brant, chairwoman
Dorm Contract Acceptance Committee
March 22

No special privileges

Well, dorm contract lines have come and gone for another year. Some of us will get contracts and some of us won't. The thing that bothers me is that some people will get dorm contracts and they didn't even stand in line! I'm talking about all those who have reserved space: sorority members, interest house members and athletes.

There are approximately 12,000 available spaces on campus and nearly half of them aren't actually available because these people have special privileges merely because they chose to join one of these groups.

Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against any of these groups and I think it's great people keep an interest in them and keep joining them. I just don't think that automatically getting a dorm room should be included as part of the deal.

The Association of Residence Hall Students has backed the "first come, first served" system of accepting dorm contracts. ARHS also continuously reviews this system and looks for alternatives. As of yet, no better method has been found. It seems to me if "first come, first served" is supposed to be a fair system, then it should be fair and equal toward everyone. I would like to propose that, if this system continues, there should be no reserved space save one room in each house for a resident assistant.

Many of you may be thinking, "But sororities have to live in the dorms!" Contrary to popular belief, this is not true. The University has agreed to house them, but they are not forced to live on campus.

However, my proposal is not an effort to kick them off campus. It could, in fact, be more beneficial to them.

I propose that when the time rolls around for dorm contracts, all those who have no reserved space should have to stand in line with everyone else. If they all get contracts, they can be put on a sorority floor or in an interest house.

Again, I'm not trying to get rid of these groups. I'm just trying to make the system more fair. My proposal could actually help these groups. As it stands now, sororities and interest houses are somewhat limited in their memberships because of a limited amount of reserved space. If there was no reserved space, whoever got a contract could live on the floor with other members. The only catch here is that they must get a contract. In this way, it might be possible to expand membership far beyond what it is now.

Ye athletes might be out there thinking, "What about us?" I can understand that living on campus is a real convenience, especially when you have long hours of practice. Again, I'm not trying to get you off campus; however, I think that if having this convenience is important to you, you should stand in line to get your dorm space.

I believe that this proposal is the fairest way to distribute dorm contracts if the "first come, first served" system stays in existence. However, if a better system comes up, I'm all for it!

Dawn Smith
ARHS Representative for Centre Halls
March 15

reader opinion

Correction

Regarding the Editorial Opinion/Topics in the March 26 issue of The Daily Collegian:
• Penn State's men's basketball team withdrew from the Eastern Eight three years ago, not two.
• Penn State at no time "asked to be let back in the game." Penn State was invited to return.

James I. Tarman, director of athletics
March 26

Time for creativity

At a recent breakfast sponsored by the Centre County Council for Human Services, state Sen. J. Doyle Corman said he sees this is a time for human service agencies to be more creative in how they go about providing services. Creativity is a positive response to the loss of dollars many agencies are experiencing.

I suggest that the call for creativity be extended further than to just the service providers. When needs reach a point of desperation who do people turn to for help? Their neighbors? Their churches? Their families? Their friendly, local neighborhood corporation? Maybe. But after they exhaust those options and do not get the care they need, they turn to government funded agencies. Those funds did not cost the cost of care for many who could not afford it otherwise, especially people between the ages of 18 and 45.

Because of the president we as a people voted into power, those agencies will not be able to meet needs as well as before. This is where creativity comes in.

Families and individuals requesting help from the variety of human service agencies in Centre County are themselves not without strengths and skills. An offer to donate skills and expertise as part of receiving services could make a crucial difference in the ongoing availability of care.

Find out what needs an agency is experiencing that is giving you or your family care. Volunteer. More than likely there are some demands that you could help with. Plumbers, builders, cooks, typists, car mechanics, seamstresses, electricians, accountants, managers and more all have skills that will help human service providers meet the challenges of funding cuts.

It is ironic that the "New Federalism" brings John Kennedy's quote to mind: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." Put another way, now is the time to ask not only what can human services can do for you. Ask also what can you do for them. That is a creative response to the economic realities of the 1980s.

Dianne Marshall, executive director
Strawberry Fields, Inc.
March 23

Thrilling sport

I am writing in response to Tom Mosser's cartoon about hockey in The Daily Collegian on March 19.

Fighting in hockey is at the lowest point this year than it has been in the past five years. I agree that some people watch hockey to see the fights, but most fans watch the game for the thrill of the action. Yes, Tom, hockey is an exciting game to watch when it is played correctly, as it was this year by our own Nittany Lion ice hockey team.

No team fights every game. Some people are of the opinion that there is a fight in every game and because of this they will not go to the games. All this fallacy does is to keep them from enjoying the skill and beauty of the fastest game in North America which you have mistakenly called a boxing match.

Jim Brusio, 3rd-business administration
March 24

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What's your excuse? Today you have a new, simple, practical way of providing your doctor with a stool specimen on which he can perform the guaiac test. This can detect signs of possible colorectal cancer in its early stages before symptoms appear. Ask your doctor about a guaiac test, and stop excusing your life away.
American Cancer Society

Eco-Action Presents
THE ONGOING CRISIS AT THREE MILE ISLAND
Monday, March 29
12-6 pm Films on Nuclear Power — HUB Assembly Room
7:30 pm Bev Davis, a resident from the TMI area, discusses the continuing effects from the accident three years ago. — HUB Gallery Room

'Well, I can't say right now, but please take my photo'

2 AM (SN) MOVIE — Biography (BW)
"The Winning Team." (1952) Ronald Reagan as the immortal baseball pitcher Grover Cleveland Alexander. Doris Day, Frank Lovejoy, Eve Miller, James Millican. (2 hrs., 25 min.)
—TV Guide, March 23, 1982.

With the possible exception of Hawkeye and Hot Lips on "M*A*S*H" reruns, President Reagan is on television more often these days than just about anybody. Which is both good and bad.

Good because the public should see and perceive the president as being both accessible and responsive. Bad because the president is...other responsive nor accessible.



When it comes to the media, Reagan is mostly visual and very little audio.

Outside of his late-night movies, Reagan's television existence primarily amounts to photo opportunities, where he waves and smiles to the cameras on his way to a plane or car, or when he's greeting an important guest. Occasionally, he'll provide a quick answer to an aggressive reporter's serious question.

Otherwise, the nightly 30-second news shots of the president are of him speaking to the Iowa legislature or building dikes or horseback riding at his ranch in California.

There are enough of the photo opportunities and "action" shots to maintain the public illusion of accessibility, while in reality the president slips into a world of isolation and confinement. This has been especially true ever since the assassination attempt on Reagan, which took place a year ago tomorrow.

"I think every president has over time felt confined in the White House," said David R. Gergen, the administration's head of communications. "The fact is you simply can't walk down the street; you can't go out to lunch; you can't do anything without having a retinue of agents, photographers, reporters, assistants — a long parade of other people going with you."

The media, eager for stories and eager to inform the public, must be placated. The White House has obliged by making available all the president's men, from top advisers Ed Meese, Jim Baker and Mike Deaver to Secretary of State Alexander Haig. They provide the meat and potatoes that normally originates with the president. The media swallows it, partly because the White House correspondents like Reagan personally, partly because they like being spoonfed.

There are times the president still likes to reach the masses directly, but he prefers to do it on his own terms.
As a former radio broadcaster, TV host and veteran of the rubber chicken circuit, he knows how to give a speech and how to effectively read a teleprompter. He also knows how to warm an

audience with simple messages and anecdotes, earning him the label of "The Reader's Digest of politics."

So when the president has made direct addresses via national television, they have been warmly received by both the media and the public. But these are definitely one-sided.

George Reedy, press secretary under Lyndon Johnson, describes such presidential exercises as merely "a means by which a man can conduct a monologue in public and convince himself that he is conducting a dialogue with the public."

Traditionally, the most reasonable fasimile

to a dialogue the president has at his disposal is the news conference. (That's discounting, of course, the ineffective call-in talk show and town meetings of Jimmy Carter).

But Reagan, supposedly the Great Communicator, has shunned this. When the president holds his news conference scheduled for later this week, it will only be his 11th in 14 months of office.

That's far less than any other president since the news conference was first given regular status by Franklin Roosevelt. Since FDR every president, including Richard Nixon — even during Watergate — has averaged twice as

many press conferences as Reagan.
And although all of Reagan's news conferences have been nationally televised, none have been held during prime time. The potential audience is just too big. And the ensuing complications just too great.

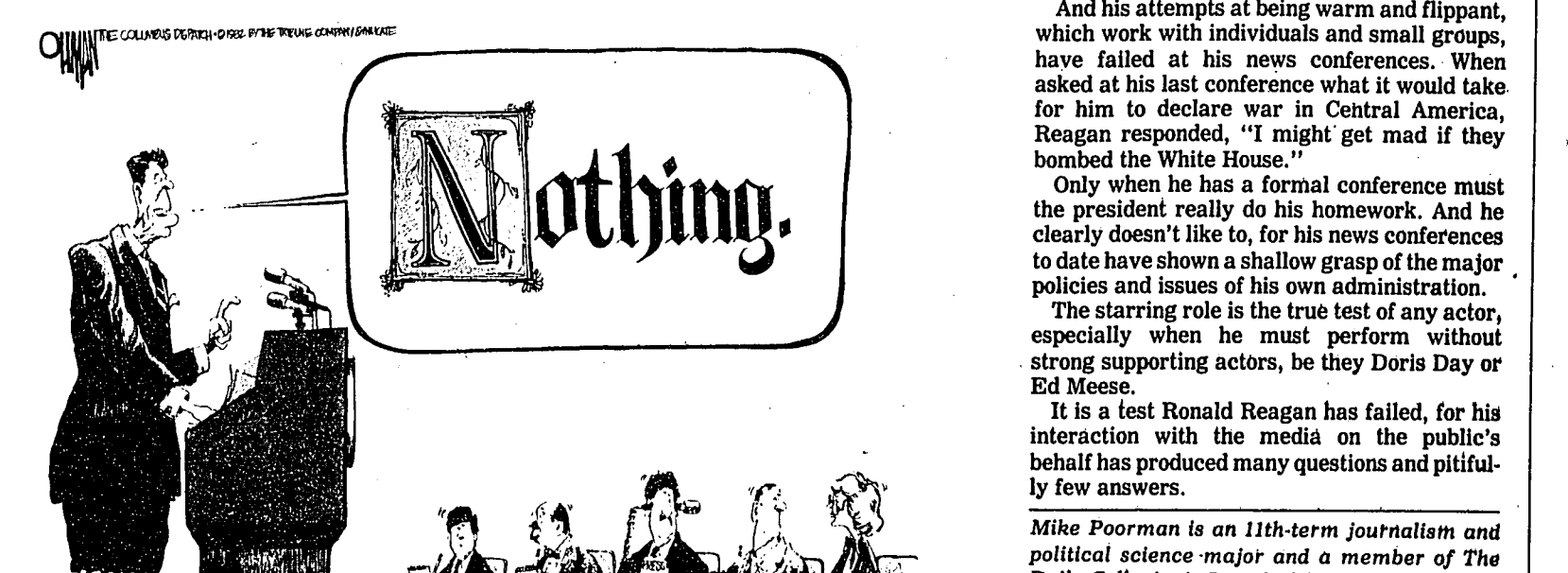
Reagan has a habit, as his one aide termed it, of "winging it." He often sways from the briefing books he is given to study and "mis-speaks" his way through his basic policy. He has rewritten America's role in Vietnam. He has managed unemployment statistics. He has labeled Syrian defensive weapons "offensive."

And his attempts at being warm and flippant, which work with individuals and small groups, have failed at his news conferences. When asked at his last conference what it would take for him to declare war in Central America, Reagan responded, "I might get mad if they bombed the White House."

Only when he has a formal conference must the president really do his homework. And he clearly doesn't like to, for his news conferences to date have shamed how great of the president he is. The starting role is the true test of any actor, especially when he must perform without strong supporting actors, be they Doris Day or Ed Meese.

It is a test Ronald Reagan has failed, for his interaction with the media on the public's behalf has produced many questions and pitifully few answers.

Mike Poorman is an 11th-term journalism and political science major and a member of The Daily Collegian's Board of Opinion.



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