

Country reacts to shuttle explosion with grief

By TAMARA JONES
Associated Press Writer

Jubilant turned to horror across the nation as Americans cheering for the country's first civilian astronaut watched the shuttle Challenger explode on live television yesterday in the world's worst space catastrophe. At first there was just stunned silence. Silence in the classrooms at Cape Canaveral, where families, friends and fans of the seven Challenger astronauts watched the liftoff. Silence in classrooms where schoolchildren were rooting for space teacher Christa McAuliffe.

"This isn't real, is it?" McAuliffe's students at Concord (N.H.) High School murmured as the television in the school auditorium flashed the horrible images of the Challenger suddenly turning into a fireball. Disbelief turned to deep sorrow, and silence to sobs as it became clear that no one could have possibly survived the disaster. At the White House, President Reagan wordlessly viewed video replays of the Challenger explosion. Watching the launch in family quarters, first lady Nancy Reagan exclaimed, "Oh my God, no!"

Reagan postponed the State of the Union message he was to deliver last night. Instead he delivered an Oval Office address on the tragedy to the nation and sent Vice President George Bush to convey his sympathies to the families of the crew. "It's a terrible thing," Reagan told reporters. "I just can't get out of my mind her (McAuliffe's) husband, her children, as well as the families of the others on board." In Houston, Mission Control workers clutched each other in tears. Several states flew flags at half-staff and legislatures drafted statements honoring the seven astronauts who perished. The New York and American stock exchanges planned a minute of silence at 11 a.m. EST today in remembrance of the Challenger crew.

Secretary of Education William J. Bennett issued a statement in Washington urging American schoolchildren to be proud of Christa McAuliffe, one of your teachers, and of the other brave Americans who were willing to take great risks for the good of our country. National Education President Mary Hatwood Futrell expressed shock and sorrow, but also voiced the hope that NASA would send another teacher into space soon. "I would hope that the lessons that Christa planned to teach will be taught. . . I think that's what Christa would want," she said. Futrell spent most of the past week at Cape Canaveral in pre-launch seminars and festivities with the nine other finalists and more than 100 other teachers who represented their states in the teacher-in-space competition. She returned to Washington Monday after the third weather postponement of the launch. At Cape Canaveral, about 200 NASA guests, many of them relatives and friends of the astronauts, watched the Challenger liftoff from bleachers. Their cheers turned to screams and anguished wails when the shuttle exploded.

Nine-year-old Scott McAuliffe's third-grade classmates, standing behind a "Go Christa!" banner, were among the witnesses. Scott and his 6-year-old sister, Caroline, were with their father and other family members in a nearby observation building. But Christa McAuliffe's parents, Ed and Grace Corrigan, saw the tragedy that claimed their daughter's life from the grandstands. The Framingham, Mass., couple stood in

Apollo 1 fire: 19 years and a day before

By LAWRENCE KILMAN
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — The space shuttle Challenger exploded 19 years and one day after another fiery disaster shocked the nation and threatened the American space program.

On Jan. 27, 1967, three Apollo 1 astronauts were incinerated in their space capsule as it sat atop a Saturn rocket on the launching pad. Killed were Air Force Lt. Col. Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, Lt. Col. Edward H. White and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Roger B. Chaffee, who were performing tests for what was to be the first manned Apollo flight. They were the first U.S. astronauts killed in a space vehicle. Three other astronauts had died in airplane crashes.

Grissom, who was 40, had been a space pioneer. One of the seven original Mercury astronauts, he had piloted the United States' second manned flight in July 1961 and had to swim to safety when the capsule sank after its ocean splashdown. He had also been the first astronaut to maneuver a spacecraft in flight and the first to fly two missions — the second Mercury flight and the first in the Gemini series. White, 36, had been the first American to walk in space. Chaffee, 31, was a rookie astronaut eagerly awaiting his first flight.

The three men were in the cockpit Jan. 27 to check several major systems in preparation for the scheduled Feb. 21 launching, which was to be the first of the three-man Apollo flights that led to landing men on the moon. At about 6:30 p.m., there was a shout on the communications system. Second Lt. Charles S. White, press secretary of the Department of Energy, said, "We've got a fire in the cockpit!"

They never had a chance. In the cockpit's pure oxygen atmosphere, the fire was intense. Flames from the burning polyurethane foam floor cushion flared between the astronauts and the hatch was their only exit. Technicians listened helplessly to a garbled transmission. A sharp cry of pain was heard. In less than 25 seconds, pressure ruptured the inner hull and clouds of toxic smoke filled the cockpit. For a moment, fire enveloped the outside of the capsule. Twenty-seven men working on the 310-foot gantry grabbed gas masks and rushed to the cabin level. Their gas masks were ineffective, and all 27 were treated for smoke inhalation. They were valiant, but they couldn't help. The astronauts died in seconds. What caused the fire? More than 1,500 experts dissected the charred cockpit and studied blobs of melted metal from the 15 miles of wiring. They said the fire probably started when a broken or bruised wire contacted metal, shooting sparks into the cockpit's nylon netting, which prevents loose objects from floating into crewmembers' weightlessness.

In 1981, a dozen years after Americans walked on the moon July 20, 1969, the United States sent aloft its first space shuttle. The doomed Challenger was NASA's 15th. Yesterday in Mitchell Ind., Grissom's parents said the disaster had brought back a lot of memories. Dennis Grissom said his son was always aware of the odds. "He said that he knew it was dangerous," Grissom said, "but if anything happened to him, they (Grissom and the other astronauts) wanted the space program to go on."

Challenger crew had no means of escape

By SCOTT MCCARTNEY
Associated Press Writer

SPACELAND, Houston — The astronauts aboard the space shuttle Challenger had no way to escape the vehicle once it left the launch pad, a NASA spokesman said yesterday. Astronauts aboard Apollo, Gemini and Mercury missions could be ejected from their spacecraft, and astronauts aboard the first four space shuttle missions had ejection seats as well, spokesman Terry White said. But the ejection provision was removed once the program advanced from the testing phase and the size of crews grew, White said. It is doubtful any escape mechanism would have helped the Challenger crew in yesterday's explosion, White said.

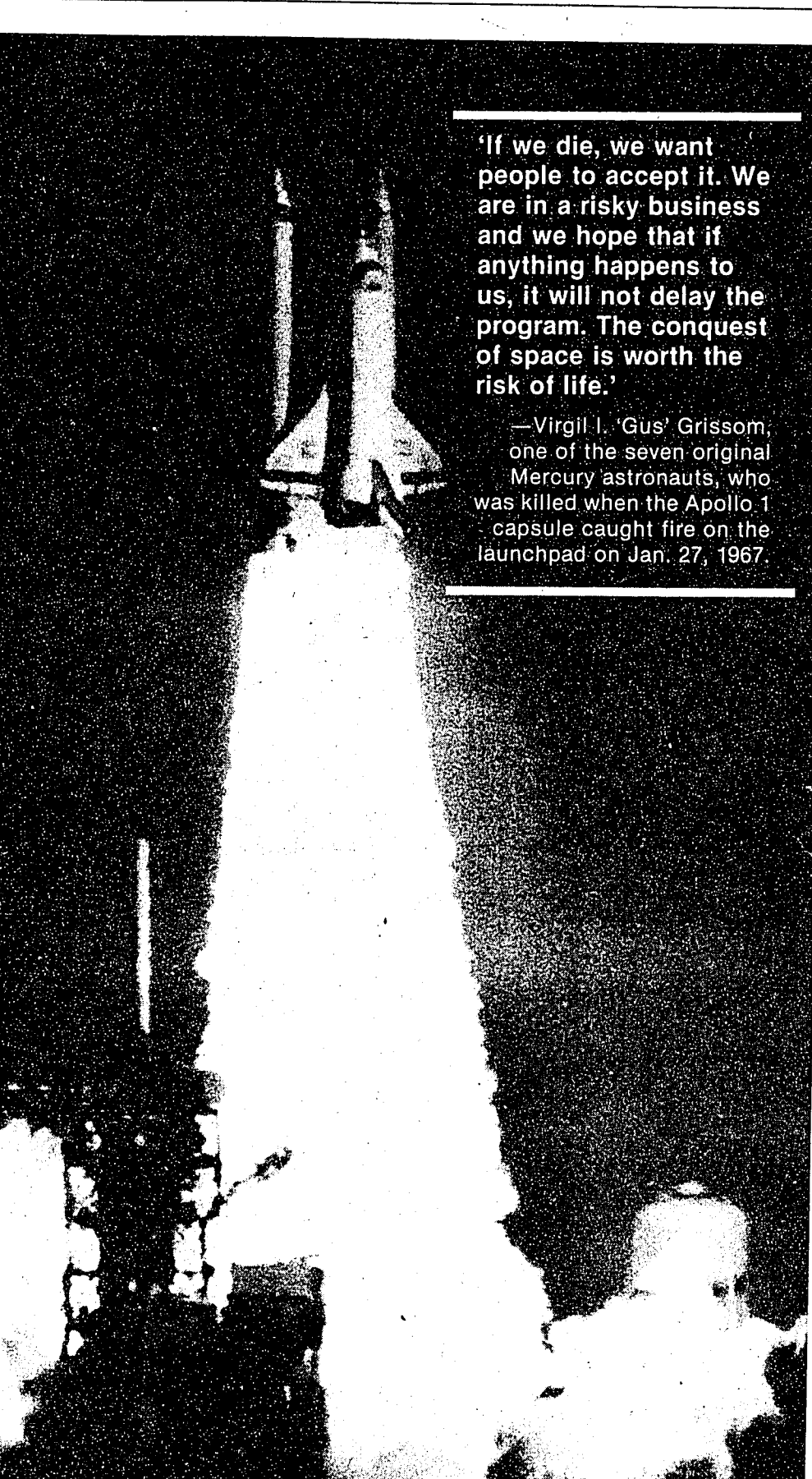
"After launch, there is no egress except for an intact landing," White said. "It's basically like a commercial aircraft. How do you rescue 300 people?" The shuttles and other NASA space vehicles have emergency slides on launch and on landing, but the shuttles have hatches through which the crew could escape in the event of an emergency landing or a belly crash into the ocean. The shuttle carried life rafts and survival kits but no parachutes, White said.

Engineering students flew on the last shuttle mission. Melton said yesterday's disaster will probably put the shuttle program on hold while investigators unravel the cause of the explosion. "I think it may be a long time before there are any more launches in the shuttle program," Melton said. "(NASA) may have taken some alternate steps in preparation for launch, but I don't think they would have done anything to compromise the safety of the crew," he said. Lawrence said a communication satellite manufactured by the Space Communications Group of Gaithersburg, Md. was destroyed in the fireball. The satellite was to be released into orbit by the Challenger crew.

Shuttle

Continued from Page 1.

Conversion between mission control and the Challenger seemed normal until the radio went silent at 11:39 a.m. EST — just 60 seconds after liftoff, he added. However, Melton said, internal communications between the shuttle and ground control exist, which are not released to the public. Also, Challenger's onboard computers are in constant communication, called telemetry, with mission control, Melton said. "It's possible there could be some cues in the telemetry," Melton said. There were no experiments from the University aboard Challenger, Melton said. A series of three experiments designed and built by University



Moments after liftoff yesterday, everything seemed normal for the space shuttle Challenger.

"If we die, we want people to accept it. We are in a risky business and we hope that if anything happens to us, it will not delay the program. The conquest of space is worth the risk of life."

—Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, one of the seven original Mercury astronauts, who was killed when the Apollo 1 capsule caught fire on the launchpad on Jan. 27, 1967.

The Challenger crew



- Francis R. "Dick" Scobee, 46, born May 19, 1939, Cle Elum, Wash. Scobee, the spacecraft commander, also piloted the Challenger in 1984 on a mission on which the crew repaired an ailing solar satellite. Scobee entered the Air Force as a mechanic after his high school graduation in 1957. In 1965, he earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Arizona and entered flight school after being commissioned as an Air Force officer. Scobee's son, Richard, 21, is ranked No. 1 in his senior class at the Air Force Academy. Scobee and his wife, June, also have a daughter, Kathie, 25.
- Michael J. Smith, 40, born April 15, 1945, in Akron, Ohio. Smith, a Navy commander and the mission pilot, was a decorated Vietnam war hero who had been an astronaut since 1980. An Annapolis graduate, Smith held a master's degree in aeronautical engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif. He was awarded the Navy Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals and other military decorations, including the Vietnam Service Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star. Smith and his wife, Jane, had three children: Scott, 17, Alison, 14, and Erin, 8.
- Judith A. Resnik, 36, born April 15, 1949, in Akron, Ohio. Resnik, one of three mission specialists aboard, became the second American woman in space, after Sally Ride, on a 1984 mission aboard the shuttle Discovery. She was a classical pianist and also the first Jewish astronaut. Resnik trained on the shuttle's robot arm; on the 1984 flight, she was the first woman to break away a chunk of ice that had formed on the side of the spacecraft. An electrical engineer, she received a bachelor's degree from Carnegie-Mellon University and a doctorate from the University of Maryland.
- Ronald E. McNair, 35, born Oct. 21, 1950, Lake City, S.C. McNair, a mission specialist. He was the second black man in space, following Guion S. Bluford. McNair earned a bachelor's degree in physics from North Carolina A&T State University, and a doctorate in physics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He earned a bachelor's and master's degrees in aerospace engineering from the University of Colorado. He was an aerospace flight test engineer with the Sacramento Air Logistics Center at McClellan Air Force Base. Onizuka and his wife, Lorna, had two children, Janelle, 16, and Darlen, 10.
- Ellison S. Onizuka, 39, born June 24, 1946, Detroit, Mich. Onizuka, a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force, was a mission specialist. An astronaut since 1978, Onizuka was a crew member on a secret Defense Department shuttle flight a year ago. He earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the State University of New York in Buffalo and a master's in electrical engineering from Northeastern University in Boston. He served as a satellite engineer in the Air Force and achieved the rank of captain.
- Gregory B. Jarvis, 41, born Aug. 24, 1944, Detroit, Mich. Jarvis was a Hughes Aircraft Co. engineer who was flying on Challenger to test the effects of weightlessness on fluid in tanks. It was hoped his experiments would give engineers new information on the design of liquid-fueled rockets. Jarvis graduated from high school in Mohawk, N.Y. He earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the State University of New York in Buffalo and a master's in electrical engineering from Northeastern University in Boston. Onizuka and his wife, Lorna, had two children, Janelle, 16, and Darlen, 10.
- Sharon Christa Corrigan McAuliffe, 37, born Sept. 2, 1948, Framingham, Mass. McAuliffe was a high school social studies teacher in Concord, N.H., and the first private citizen selected as a national competitor to fly on the space shuttle. She had a bachelor's degree from Framingham State College and a master's from Bowdoin State College in Bowtie, Me. She and her husband, Steven J. McAuliffe, a Concord lawyer, have two children, Scott, 9 and Caroline, 6.

Gramm-Rudman act hits federal student aid programs hard

By VALERIE L. GLENZ
Collegian Staff Writer

College students will be one group hit hard by spending cuts under the new Gramm-Rudman law. Under Gramm-Rudman, a federal budget-balancing law, the Department of Education is required to cut spending by \$179.5 million for the fiscal year 1986 — with federal student aid programs suffering substantial reductions. Many Pell grants will be reduced, original fees for Guaranteed Student Loans will rise, and federal aid programs administered by colleges — Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, National Direct Student Loans and work-study programs — will all be cut.

This reflects a 4.3 percent automatic cut in all federal student aid programs, said Ed Raphael, chairman of the Government Relations Committee for Washington, D.C. The GRG is an Undergraduate Student Executive Council committee responsible for coordinating University lobbying efforts in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. "Of all the domestic programs subject to

cuts, student aid does not represent a disproportionate amount," he said. "The programs are cut by a flat percentage, across the board." Fifty percent of all University students receive some type of federal aid, Boyd said. Raphael said including Commonwealth campuses, 27,000 students receive GSLS, which is a total of \$50 million for this program. Fourteen thousand students receive Pell Grants and 3,000 students receive NDSLs, which amounts to \$12 million and \$4 million, respectively, he said. Boyd said it is too early to tell how many University students will lose their loans or grants. Reductions in the GSL program will go into effect on Mar. 1. Under Gramm-Rudman, the current origination fee of 5 percent will rise to 5.5 percent for loans made on or after Mar. 1. This means that for a student borrowing the maximum \$2,500, the bank will retain \$137.50 (for the government) as compared to \$125 now withheld. Also, the interest paid to lending institutions will be reduced from 3.5 to 3.1 percent, Boyd said.

"The interest paid to banks will be reduced by 0.4 percent," he said. "The less attractive the loans are, the less (banks) will want to participate, but there's no way to measure (if fewer banks will give out loans) on this point." Reductions in the Pell Grant, NDSL, SEOG and work-study programs will be imposed July 1 for the 1986-87 school year, and will represent a 4.3 percent cut. "What we are hearing at this point is for the 1986-87 school year, the Pell Grant program will be cut approximately \$150 million," Boyd said. "This appears to require that individual awards be reduced, but we don't know what the average size of the reductions will be." When the Pell Grant program is cut, linear reduction will be used, Boyd said. This means that grants to the neediest students, or the largest grants awarded, would remain the same, and grants to the less needy would be reduced, he said. "A student receiving \$1,500 now might be receiving something less than that next year," Boyd said, adding that he is not sure if smaller Pell Grants will be cut completely. Raphael said the GRG doesn't expect its

lobbying efforts to be too successful this year, but has high hopes for the next few years. "We are establishing the mechanisms with which to fight even harder in the next few years," she said. "Next year, student interest will be a lot higher when we'll actually be able to see the missing dollars, and we expect to be a lot more successful."

Raphael said the GRG urges students to get involved by writing letters to legislators stating their concerns. University students and expressing their concern about the reduction in aid. "It's a painful task — students can just write to their legislators and state their feelings about cutting student aid," she said, adding students can also telephone legislators but writing is more effective. Boyd said when cuts get larger in the future, the reductions could affect enrollment in colleges and universities. "There's no way to measure right now if the 4.3 percent (cuts) will affect enrollment. It could have an impact on certain students — in a very narrow band — not being able to attend school," he said.

Pa. to get \$100 million from Exxon judgment

By JANE KOPACKI
Collegian Staff Writer

Pennsylvania will be awarded up to \$100 million for its energy assistance programs after a federal court found the Exxon Corporation guilty of overpricing oil. The Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal by Exxon Monday and let stand a 1983 court order forcing the corporation to pay over \$2 billion back to their consumers. Pennsylvania will probably receive its share from the Exxon judgment within the next few months now that the oil company has exhausted its appeals, said William Vandenberg, press secretary of the Department of Energy.

According to the Warner Amendments, a set of congressional guidelines on overpricing settlements passed in 1981, the funds are distributed by the U.S. Department of Energy to the states involved on the basis of petroleum consumption at the time of the violation. Each state will receive a percentage of the settlement based on the amount of petroleum the state used compared to national figures. The court ordered that \$200 billion be paid to the U.S. Department of Energy. Under the 1983 order, states are to spend the money on energy assistance programs and the needy.

The Exxon Corporation was charged with violating former federal regulations on overpricing oil in a Texas field from 1975 to 1981, Vandenberg said. He said the award is estimated at about \$92 million, but with the interest it may amount to almost \$100 million. Vandenberg said the lawsuit against the corporation began in 1978 and was carried on by the U.S. Department of Energy since 1980. Though needs must be approved by the state legislature, funding should aid the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program considerably, said Richard J. Miller, president of the Pennsylvania Gas Association. He said the Exxon case is the largest overcharging case to be awarded to consumers.

Other agencies to receive funding include the state departments of Public Welfare and Community Affairs, Miller said. He said the money will most likely be used for cash assistance and emergency grants for these departments. Miller said the program's funds are spent for the authorization of homes, schools and hospitals. The program also offers assistance to the needy for emergency heating. The goals of the energy assistance program parallel the 1983 court order that the money must be spent on programs to weatherize buildings that house the needy, help low-income residents pay utility bills, promote energy conservation or find cheaper energy sources for schools and hospitals.

"This court award has been earmarked for this purpose," said Jack Stollsteimer, North Central Director of the Pennsylvania Public Interest Coalition. He said the bill follows the guidelines of the Warner Amendments but provides for energy assistance programs in Pennsylvania. "The national organization is a

3-yr project to attract business to Bellefonte

By SUSAN HOUSEMAN
Collegian Staff Writer

With the help of state funding and University research, downtown Bellefonte, the Centre County seat, is getting a facelift that will revamp store fronts and adorn businesses with attractive awnings and signs. Through a three-year program called The Main Street Project, which began last July, Bellefonte joins 26 communities in Pennsylvania that are revitalizing their downtown areas. A four-point approach developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation is guiding Bellefonte in the renovation. This approach has worked since 1979 in many communities across the country, Bellefonte's Main Street Coordinator, Kevin Clark said, and includes organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring.

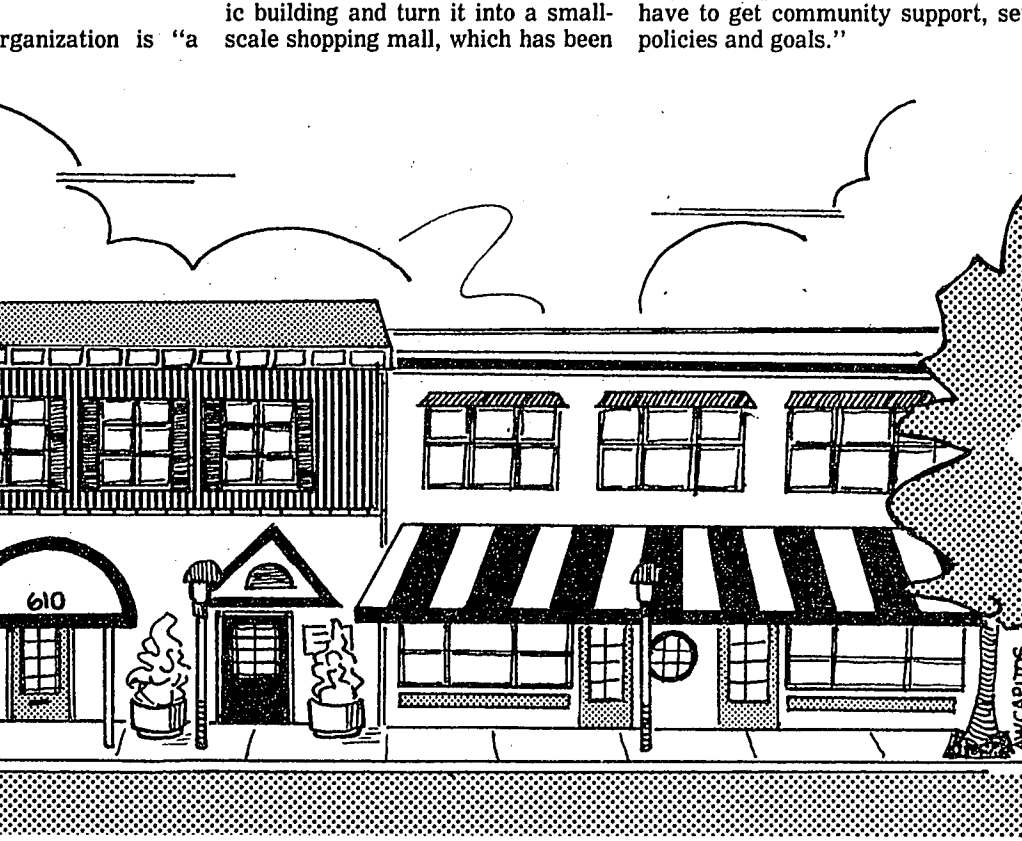
The University is involved in the project through two classes conducted by Peter Everett, associate professor of community studies, and Robert Griffin, associate professor of planning. Last semester Everett's class studied the kinds of businesses consumers would like to see in Bellefonte, considering the amount of space the town has, Everett said. "We looked at the overall market needs and came to the conclusion that it might be successful to take a historic building and turn it into a small-scale shopping mall, which has been

done in cities like Baltimore and New York," Everett said. Griffin divided his class into groups and had them develop proposals for the use of a specific building in Bellefonte. They used the Bush House, built in 1883, which was one of the largest hotels in Pennsylvania at one time. "Students are given the opportunity to be creative. It's a broad role they assume," he said. Using the Bush House as a model, students make decisions on financing, marketing, and the laying out of a business in downtown Bellefonte.

Although the students studied many aspects of the renovation project, Bellefonte is also using the four-point plan to conduct its three-year project. Organization is presently the most important point, Clark said. We have to get community support, set policies and goals."

"Another financial incentive to get business owners to renovate their store fronts is to establish low interest rates for loans. We want to involve the local banking community and have them offer attractive interest rates through 'The Main Street Project,'" he said. The final point of the approach is economic restructuring. This is aggressively recruiting new businesses to expand where there is a needed service or product in the commercial district, Clark said.

A town meeting will be held tomorrow at the Centre County Courthouse concerning the project. A slide presentation will be shown and the four points will be explained. "The goal of the meeting is to make people more aware and to ask them to join in our efforts," Clark said. Although state funding for the project ends in three years, Clark said they could continue the renovation through community efforts.



Higher admission units approved

By VALERIE BAILEY
Collegian Staff Writer

The Faculty Senate voted unanimously yesterday to increase the number of secondary school units necessary for admission to the University beginning with Summer Session 1989. Currently 13 high school units are required for admission to the University, but after the change, 21 credits for four years will be needed. The new units must be in academic preparation subjects as opposed to vocational areas, said David P. Gold, chairman of the admissions, records and scheduling committee. A unit is equivalent to one quarter of a year's worth of work, which is usually a high school marking period. Gold said the change was in response to the challenge of Gov. Dick Thornburgh's April 1983 address to the American Association of Teachers in which he stressed the need to increase high school curriculum standards and emphasized more rigorous requirements for high school graduation. "Thornburgh said, 'Schools have permitted students, in many cases, to do their own thing' and pick their way through a diverse array of electives. It appears that interest has been emphasized over need."

Faculty Senate Chairman Donald C. Rung said this was the first time the senate was directly involved with University admission requirements. "I'm very pleased that we have done this with the cooperation of the deans," Rung said. Thomas Daubert, professor in the College of Engineering, raised doubts about the section of the proposal that allows students to transfer college credits to be reviewed on an individual basis. Daubert said he was concerned over who would be in charge of the final admission decision. Gold answered that flexibility is given to the admissions office. —By Carolyn Sorisio

Set a time for worrying, prof says

By VALERIE BAILEY
Collegian Staff Writer

Excessive worrying is a main cause of psychological insomnia, a University professor has concluded after three years of research. Thomas D. Borkovec, professor of psychology, said his research may be the first to obtain clear data on the effects of worrying on insomnia. Borkovec's data collection involved asking participants about the content of their thoughts before falling asleep in the University's anxiety laboratory located in Moore Building. "Since worrying seemed to be the main cause of anxiety," my colleagues, Rich Metzger and several graduate students in psychology, and I decided to devote the bulk of our research on worrying," he said. Borkovec defines worry as "a chain of negative and relatively uncontrollable thoughts and images."

Borkovec's conclusions are based on 10 research studies he conducted over the last three years that involved 250 to 300 people. The people were mostly University students who volunteered to help psychology research projects to earn points towards their final grade in their Psychology 2 class. Borkovec's research appeared in an article in the December issue of "Psychology Today." Part of his research asked one group of people to worry for 15 minutes, another group to worry for 30 minutes, and a third group not to worry at all. "The results showed" when people brood for a brief period, both those who consider themselves chronic worriers and those who consider themselves non-worriers show signs of hesitation and slower decision-making," said Borkovec. "The study showed the most adverse reactions came from the least amount of time given to worry. Borkovec said he was not surprised by the results. "After all, that's how we worry. Very few people sit for hours straight and worry."

Borkovec's advice to worriers was to set aside a specific time each day to worry, and refrain from worry until that time. "During brief periods of worry (15 minutes), we may provide ourselves with just enough fearful thinking and imagery to create worry but not enough to extinguish it," he said. One University student, Chris Conti, (senior-telecommunications) said he could not worry on demand. "Worrying slows you down, instead of coming to a conclusion about the problem, you tend to worry about it," he said. Borkovec said, "Often, worrying seems to be a method of resolving problems and anticipating or preparing for future events. But when a person is worried about something, the thoughts and images appear to take on a life of their own."

Another student, Luther Miller, (senior-speech communication) said he feels that worrying provides a chance to de-emotionalize and rationalize the situation. "After worrying," Miller said, "you are left with a clear picture of the problem that is not as emotionally frustrating." When asked about her thoughts on worrying, Sheree Hassell, (senior-telecommunications) said, "Worrying can motivate you to do something, but you shouldn't worry all the time. Life is too short to worry."

Characteristics of the Centre, Region make it well suited for a regional plan because the several municipalities are in a small area, and the University can provide certain resources, Cassidy said. One of those resources is specialization. Steff said, "The University has a safety program with employees who keep informed of potential hazards and new procedures. The present services for EC Management. "This is the first time a regionalized plan has been developed in Pennsylvania, but similar plans have been successful in other parts of the country," Cassidy said.

Region plans coordinated emergency support crew

By ERIC SCHMIDT
Collegian Staff Writer

The Centre Region Council of Governments, with advice from a managing consulting firm, has developed a new plan to provide emergency services on a regional basis rather than the municipality-based system in place now, said Jim Steff, COG director of administration. Under federal law, all municipalities are required to have an emergency action plan, said Sandra Jablonski, executive director of emergency services for Centre County. In the county, emergency services coordinates necessary responses between agencies on all levels, federal or local, said Jablonski. "If there is insufficient emergency food, supplying police services or calling in fire departments to respond to a fire are some of the functions handled by emergency services under current regulations. In general, the service is a tool used to help communities prevent, respond to and recover from emergency situations," Jablonski said. A municipality calls in the service only when the scope of the emergency is beyond the municipality's ability to respond. Jablonski said, "The municipality requests it. A plane crashes into an apartment

complex in State College. Police, fire and ambulance services respond, but how many emergency services are not sufficient enough to cope with the situation. More water is needed to control fires and more ambulances to carry the injured. The borough can call emergency services to provide both the water and the ambulances as well as damage assessors after the fire is out. However, under current regulations emergency services has no power to require a municipality to request its services; it does not have the jurisdiction to intervene unless the municipality requests it. Jablonski said.

COG first realized the need for the new plan when several local emergency management leaders expressed concern over the inadequacy of their existing plans, Steff said. The proposed plan, set up with advising from EC Management Planning Services, will help to better distribute resources within the Centre Region, said Jim Cassidy, manager of organization and management services for EC Management. "This is the first time a regionalized plan has been developed in Pennsylvania, but similar plans have been successful in other parts of the country," Cassidy said.