

Aid cuts would hit Pa. students hard

By VALERIE L. GLENZ
Collegian Staff Writer

More than 60,000 Pennsylvania college students would lose more than \$183 million in financial aid if President Reagan's proposed budget is enacted without any changes, according to a study released earlier this week by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.

If the proposal is passed as it now stands, there will be a 24 percent reduction in aid, costs of student loans will double and campus-based financial aid would be eliminated.

Kenneth Reeher, executive director of PHEAA, said the impact of the proposal would be so severe that "it is difficult to believe these changes will be implemented as proposed."

William Boyd, associate director of the University's Office of Student Aid, said parts of the proposal will survive, but the budget as a whole will not be accepted by Congress.

"The Senate budget committee presented its own budget resolution several weeks ago — that's a very clear rejection of the President's plan," Boyd said. "In effect, that says, 'we don't like what the President's sending up to us, so we're (forming) our own budget.'"

"What the President has proposed is not going to happen," he added.

Boyd said it is too soon to measure the budget's impact on University students because no one knows how the proposals will turn out.

Coupled with the proposed state budget, which lacks funding for many of the federal reductions, Reagan's proposed budget would eliminate the possibility of postsecondary education for thousands of Pennsylvania

students, the report states.

"Low-income students have been dropping their plans for and careers in higher education at an alarming rate," Reeher said. "PHEAA had a 16 percent decrease in applications from students whose family income was less than \$18,000 last year, capping a three-year trend that can't be accounted for by other factors."

Under Reagan's proposed budget, Pennsylvania would receive \$699 million from the federal government for 1986-87; for the current year, the Commonwealth received \$811 million.

Tom Fabian, executive deputy director of PHEAA, said PHEAA officials also think quite a few changes will be made in the proposed budget.

"(The proposed budget) is so drastic that we expect and hope that it won't pass," he said. "There will certainly be some changes in the Guaranteed Student Loan program, but right now, we can't tell exactly what they will be."

The study said the most severe problem would be caused by proposed cuts in the GSL program, which provides low-interest loans to about 60 percent of Pennsylvania's undergraduates. Students borrowed \$600 million under the GSL program last year.

The cuts would reduce borrowing or eliminate eligibility entirely for 43,000 Pennsylvania students, amounting to \$73.3 million. Interest rates would also be increased, and a student would have to pay interest on his or her loan while attending school, more than doubling the cost of the loans.

"Overall, in the long run, the cost for students to get the loans could be

twice as much, depending on the repayment options they choose," Fabian said. Pennsylvania student borrowers who complete four-year educational programs now leave school with an average debt of \$7,000.

Gov. Dick Thornburgh, in his proposed budget for 1986-87, did not recommend any appropriations for student loan programs.

Pell Grants would also face severe cuts, amounting to \$51 million or 24 percent. Effects of the proposal include changes in the need analysis formula which would eliminate awards to 20,000 students.

The State Student Incentive Grant program, which adds \$3 million to the state funds available to Pennsylvania students through the State Grant Program, would be eliminated entirely under Reagan's budget; National Direct Student Loans would face a loss of \$9 million and awards to 25,000 students would be eliminated.

"They've been trying to eliminate NDSL and SSI for quite a few years, but they've met with a lot of resistance from members of Congress," Fabian said.

PHEAA's study said Pennsylvania would be hit harder than many other states, because the average family income of a Pennsylvania student is 13-16 percent less than the national average. Also, the costs of attending colleges in the Commonwealth are from 13 to 16 percent higher than costs elsewhere in the nation.

Pennsylvania students' need for financial aid is greater than the national average and has been growing because the cost of education in Pennsylvania has risen at a greater rate than have financial aid and family incomes, the report said.

Talking computer, support group make life better for the blind

By JANE KOPACKI
Collegian Staff Writer

With support groups and the wonders of modern technology, members of the University community with sight-loss problems can find assistance in both State College and on campus.

A standard personal computer, equipped with an echo voice synthesizer and appropriate software, can provide numerous opportunities for people with a sight-loss handicap. Sight-loss refers to people who are blind or partially blind.

Three talking computer units are actively used by a University secretary and members of the Sight-Loss Support Group of Central Pennsylvania Inc., 256 E. College Ave., said Don Hazle, coordinator of the University's Human Development data laboratory. He said he teaches short training sessions on micro-computers to prepare as many people as possible for work with the talking computer.

The equipment has been used at the University since February and at the group's office since last summer, Hazle said. He said the project received help from Michael Gorn, a blind man in Philadelphia who aids the development of skills for the blind. Gorn donated both the software and one of the voice units, totaling about \$250, to the University and the support group.

However, peer support and sharing is the atmosphere needed after completing medical procedures to successfully undergo rehabilitation and training, said Dr. Sheldon Kaplan, ophthalmologist and specialist in retinal and laser surgery at Geisinger Medical Center.

'If you don't feel handicapped, you won't be treated like you are handicapped.'

— Rana Arnold

People who suddenly go blind or lose partial sight face a mourning period filled with feelings of shock, anger, despair, depression and isolation, he said. Some people get stuck in the mourning period and cannot continue with their lives, he said. Groups, such as the Sight-Loss Support Group of Central Pennsylvania, Inc., provide the opportunity many patients need after surgery, Kaplan said.

"Until they want to accept their handicap, rehabilitation won't take place," he said, but "once they make the decision, remarkable things can take place."

Rana Arnold, president and co-

founder of the local support group, said she decided the need for a group was great when she was 18 and her life-long sight problems began to get worse. Her doctors took the time to introduce her to other college students with similar problems, at which time she asked to start a support group.

The local program has been working to provide sight aids, service and support for three and a half years, Arnold said. She said most of the 80 regular members are highly motivated and need rehabilitation training. She added that the training provides for an all-around better recovery.

"If you don't feel handicapped, you won't be treated like you are handicapped," Arnold said.

Kaplan modeled a sight-loss program at the Geisinger Medical Center after Arnold's group. He said the support angle of sight-loss treatment is too often overlooked by doctors.

"Patients would feel resentment toward their sighted doctor because he was not in a position to understand what they were going through," he said.

"I was truly inspired by Rana because there had been something missing in my practice that was not included in the realm of the procedures I performed — the element of caring and concern," he said.

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