

Editorial Opinion

Do something

Student leaders must act in the New Year

Student government must set some New Year's resolutions that will help it be more productive in 1994. Here are some familiar suggestions for our fearless leaders to add to their resolution list:

■ **Lose weight.** USG President Chris Saunders put the organization on a diet to be more efficient. But following through on promises becomes difficult as members get caught in red tape and bickering. It's obvious USG lacks focus when it uses meeting time to argue about trivial items such as tape recorders — instead of issues.

Abolishing the University Student Advisory Board was supposed to replace it with something better, not with a fancier name like Executive Student Action Council. Let's see some of that "action."

■ **Exercise.** You can hop on the NordicTrack, but never go anywhere. So far, USG has discussed establishing new University internships and addressing student concerns between Association of Residence Hall Students, Organization for Town Independent Students and USG. It also formed a committee for mid-semester evaluations and talked about forming joint committees made up of ARHS, OTIS and USG. While planning is good, execution of these ideas is essential for change.

■ **Be thrifty.** As college students know, having money is crucial to a successful semester. The ESAC student activity fee could prove successful to student organizations. Let's hear more about the plan USG announced in November to allocate a percentage of tuition increases annually to the Office of Student Aid. Saunders also suggested monitoring tuition increases by having a tuition jury in the Office of Student Aid and distributing grants to students who can't pay tuition. But good intentions don't pay the bills.

■ **Visit old friends.** Remember those campaign promises — increased campus lighting and campus emergency phones? Promises are promises so students expect results from committee meetings and discussions. The course selector guide concept made the Saunders/Shore ticket unique, and now we want to see real results. Rumor has it the course guide will be out early this semester. Rumors don't get anyone anywhere — make it a reality. The open budget was another good idea, but don't stop halfway and forget faculty salaries, which could reveal inequities across the board.

It's time for student leaders to put away the champagne glasses and party favors and get to work.

must also be typewritten, double-spaced and no longer than three pages. Students' letters should include semester standing.

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Mail other letters to: The Daily Collegian, 123 S. Burrowes St., University Park, Pa. 16801-3882.

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the Collegian

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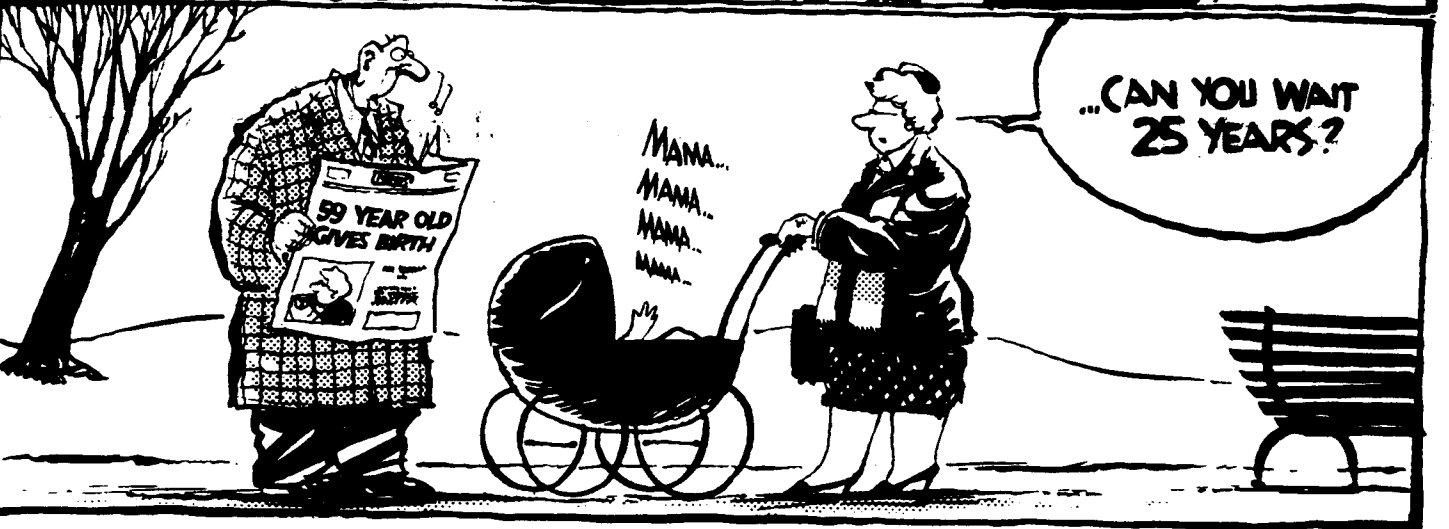
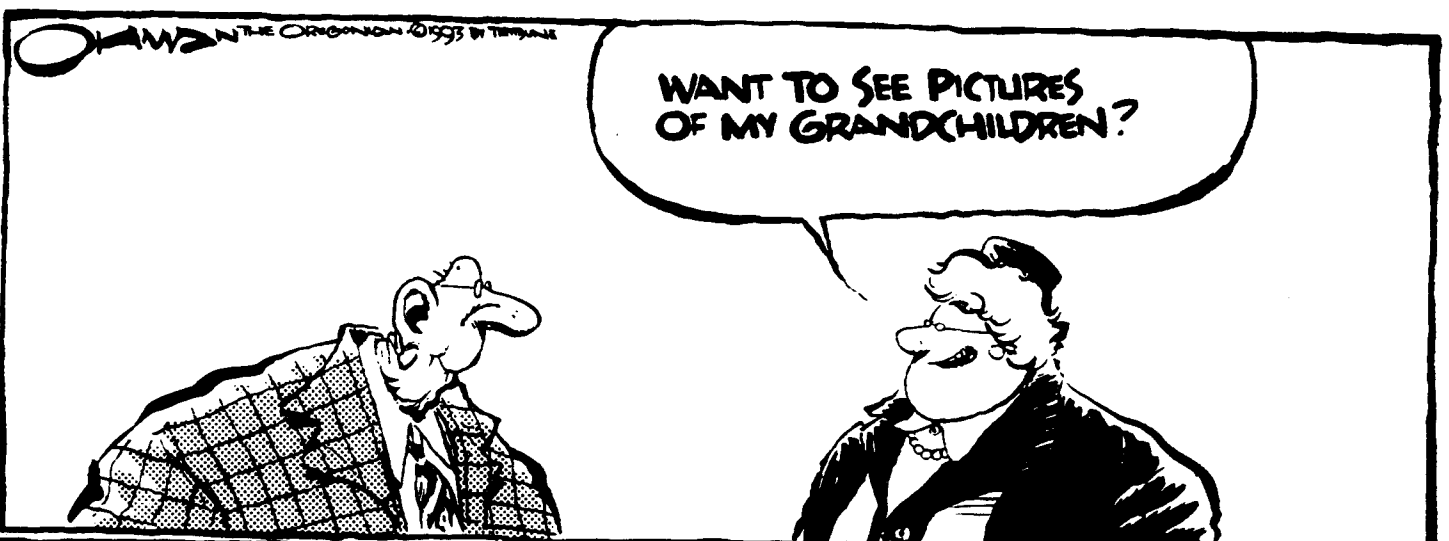
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Put your face here . . .

My Opinion

Your name

... and let Penn State know where you stand.

The Daily Collegian is looking for 10 spring columnists. We are also looking for political cartoonists. Columnists and cartoonists must be enrolled as students at the University and may not be leaders of student organizations or members of the Undergraduate Student Government.

If you are interested, stop by the Collegian's business office in James Building, 123 S. Burrowes St., to pick up an application. Applications are due Jan. 17.

If you have questions, please contact spring opinion editors Jennifer Hall or Stephanie Sprenkle at 865-1828.

Write a letter!

Let the University community know how you feel. Letters must be typed, double spaced, no more than two pages and must be signed by the writer. You can deliver or mail letters to 123 S. Burrowes St., University Park, Pa. 16801. Questions? Call the opinions editors at 865-1828.

USG members should worry about students, not resumes

Spring at University Park brings us record amounts of brown slush, two straight months of rain and Undergraduate Student Government elections. It's hard to figure out which to look forward to the least.

As a seasoned USG watcher (I was the student government beat reporter two springs ago and have been an editor ever since), I've always encouraged people to get involved in USG and vote in elections. Last spring I wrote a column sarcastically declaring my candidacy in part to stir up interest in student government.

But this year, I'm more disgusted with USG than ever. Maybe I've just given up my faith that anything will ever change, and that new leaders I'm excited about for a while won't let me down.

Student government at Penn State seems to have one fundamental flaw that shows up most clearly when election time rolls around. USG is supposed to serve the students. But four years of USG watching has convinced me that many of the leaders in USG are mainly out to serve themselves.

It's obvious in the current

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Scott Dodd



administration. USG President Chris Saunders has given up the fight for an open University budget because he would like to believe that he has opened it already.

But to get his ego boost he had to abandon the long push for open faculty salaries and detailed itemization. If the whole budget is not open to the public, there is no way to make the University accountable on matters of equity in professors' pay or prevent fiascos like D. Lewis Mothersbaugh's alleged \$22,932.13 in misappropriations.

Saunders did a lot to get the budget open to the point that it is, and he deserves credit for that. But his desire for praise is pre-

venting him from continuing his efforts on behalf of students.

Not that I have much more confidence in those who want to come after him. One eager candidate has already informed people of who his running mate is and says he has more than 200 people working on his campaign. Apparently they were meeting for much of last semester. Another candidate has not kept his aspirations or running mate a secret either.

It's kind of funny that I know all this, considering that the USG elections code prevents any candidate from informing people of his or her candidacy or actively campaigning until a designated period two-and-a-half weeks before the election. And if the Collegian's managing editor — who should be the last person they want to find out a secret — knows about it, how quiet can they possibly be keeping it?

Obviously people need to consider running long before the time to actually declare comes. The problem is that at least two people in prominent positions in USG seem to have put most of their efforts this year into organizing campaigns for USG president and

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gaining exposure, rather than doing their current jobs as well as they could.

And there is a reason for that two-and-a-half-weeks rule. It gives everyone an equal opportunity to run for the position. Those already in power shouldn't be able to use their positions to promote their own careers. Keeping the campaigning period limited and controlled gives all students a chance to participate.

Even worse, two of the potential candidates have apparently made a deal to keep discussion of a proposed student activity fee out of the campaign. The Executive Student Action Council is considering having every student pay a fee each semester to fund student groups, but the candidates don't want to be open about it with students because they are afraid it could hurt their campaigns.

There are some honest, hard-working, concerned students in USG — I've met them. But getting a close look at three USG Senates and administrations has convinced me that the good members are far outnumbered. Most USG members would rather piddle around at meetings and throw away the chance that involvement in USG gives them to do something meaningful for students and this University.

There are ways to make student government at Penn State a real force, and they have nothing to do with restructuring USG or renaming USEC to USAB to ESAC or hiding things from students so that they get done in secret without debate or controversy.

They have to do with getting USG members who really care about making a difference, not their resumes, and with students

who aren't willing to lay down and let student government ignore them.

I'm a skeptic now, but I'm clinging to some faith. I want candidates to convince me that they care about attending and staying awake at meetings, listening to student concerns, working hard and getting tangible results. And I want the students to get behind those candidates and vote them into office in record numbers, then support them and work with them for an entire year.

More than anything else, I want to see a USG that works its butt off for the students of this University. I'll tell you right now, there may not be a lot of thanks for it, but I'll be there to shake your hand — because I work for the students, too.

My job is to inform them, and I'm going to do my best to make sure they know exactly how you are doing. If all of us are working as hard as we can, there could be great things ahead. If not, it'll be another year of sloth in 203A HUB.

Scott Dodd is a senior majoring in journalism and the Collegian's managing editor.