

Iowa, PSU form new degree program

By SCOTT FERRY and JODI WERNER
Collegian Staff Writers

Although Penn State defeated the University of Iowa this weekend in football, the two schools have put aside their athletic rivalries to become partners in education and help students earn advanced degrees.

The two universities have teamed up to make it possible for any U.S. citizen, in the country and abroad, to earn a bachelor's degree without ever entering a classroom.

The program, titled "LionHawk" to combine the mascots Nittany Lion and Hawkeye, is the first collaborative effort between two Big Ten schools to increase degree accessibility to nontraditional students.

Currently, Penn State students enrolled in distance education are only able to earn two-year associate degrees.

With the new partnership, students who complete those associate

degrees can be admitted to the Bachelor of Liberal Studies external degree program at the University of Iowa where they can earn bachelor's degrees.

Emmett Vaughan, dean of the University of Iowa Division of Continuing Education, sees that partnership as a logical move.

"The idea of combining makes sort of a natural fit," Vaughan said. "Of the Big Ten universities, our two are those that have the longest tradition of serving nontraditional students."

Stephen Wright, associate director for the Department of Distance Education at Penn State, says the move benefits the current distance education program.

"The advantage to us is that we can now say to our students, 'It's now possible to earn a four-year degree (through distance education)'" Wright said.

Students who cannot get to attend a campus because of either distance, jobs, family or military obligations will benefit the most

from this new program, said Elizabeth Bechtel, assistant director of marketing communications for Penn State's continuing and distance education.

"One of my friends just had a baby, and she's taking a course through the mail," said Roshani Herath (sophomore-labor and industrial relations). "It's a little tougher because she doesn't have the one-on-one interaction with the professor."

Distance education classes and traditional classes are the same, from the professors to the transcript grade.

"We use the mainstream faculty that we have here on campus," Wright said. "One of the advantages of our program is that there is no distinction made on your transcript of how you took the course."

Students participating in the LionHawk program also pay the same tuition as other students. For the first two years, students who are taking their courses from Penn State pay Penn State tuition. For

the second two years, when the students take their courses through the University of Iowa, they pay University of Iowa tuition.

Full-time resident students who are locked out of classes that they need to satisfy requirements can also take independent learning courses.

Paul Mitchell (sophomore-engineering) said he would consider taking a distance education course in order to make sure he graduates on time.

And Bechtel said independent study classes give students more options.

"Distance education is sometimes a misnomer. Students can even take courses over breaks or over the summer," Bechtel said.

Although the first union of its kind, LionHawk is only one representative of the teamwork existing among large universities.

"This partnership is indicative of the cooperation going on throughout the Big Ten," Bechtel said.

Shenango SGA president resigns

Shenango Student Government Association President Robert Wallace resigned from his position Tuesday, making him the second SGA President to do so in the past few weeks.

Shenango Director of Student Affairs Kathryn Watson said she was not aware of any problems until she received Wallace's letter of resignation.

"It simply says he regrets resigning, and it is in the best interest for all concerned," she said.

In accordance with the constitution, Joyce Cannone, who was SGA vice president, stepped up to the presidential position and will assume duties until regular elections are held later in the year.

Two elections had been held during a one-month period, and it was decided the Shenango Campus students were ready for another election.

"For the best interest of our students, our vice president assumes the duties of the president until regular elections," Cannone said.

"If the students want an election, then we feel we will abide by their decision. Otherwise, according to the constitution, we will wait until the regular election," Cannone said.

Cannone attended the Council of Commonwealth Student Government conference this weekend as the Shenango Campus SGA president. Wallace was unavailable for comment.

Penn State Erie SGA President Mike Woycheck resigned Oct. 1.

Woycheck resigned due to a busy schedule and an overload of work. The SGA Vice President was acting as president until another candidate was elected.

— by Megan Donely

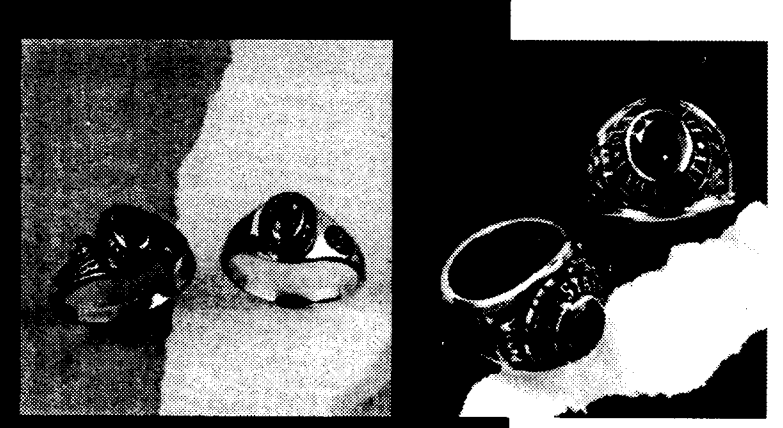
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