

Editorial opinion

Just a figurehead

University Planning Council must prove its worth with solutions

The University Planning Council — one more bureaucratic figurehead to add to Penn State's list.

Intended to be an overarching think tank for the university, the planning council was appointed by Penn State President Graham Spanier in October 1995. It reviews college and departmental strategic plans, offers advice and recommends funding.

It is the top tier of a hierarchical process. But how much can the council actually accomplish in trying to cover such a broad range of areas and issues?

It seems that the planning council functions more as a nebulous figurehead than as an active, goal-accomplishing body. One wonders if its purpose is merely to exist for show and placate those who question what university-wide initiatives Penn State is involved with.

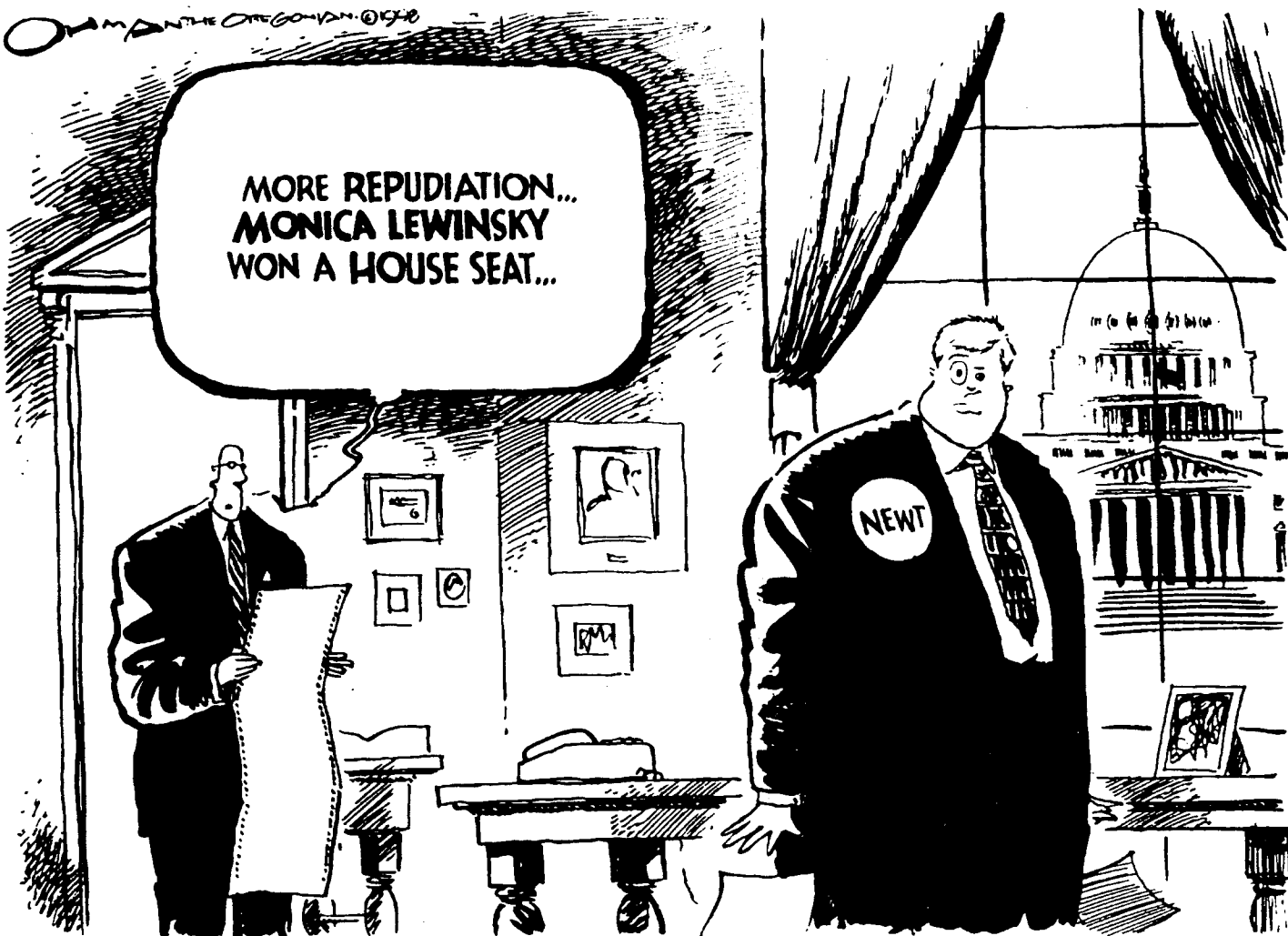
A single body can hardly consolidate so many colleges and units in order to impact upon them individually.

And the proof is simply that there isn't much that students can point to as tangible results of the planning council's efforts since its inception.

Students still lack academic advisers who are accessible and informed; class scheduling procedures are unfair and difficult; class sizes are too large and the student-to-faculty ratio has not been significantly decreased; the university lacks diversity in its students, faculty and staff members and the retention rates of minorities are low.

Teaching assistants leading 400-level classes and language barriers between instructors and students are still adding to a difficult learning environment, and yet students never seem to hear about the results of SRTes — the forms used to evaluate teachers.

Yes, the concept of a university-wide planning council is good in theory, but practically, students' interests are not being addressed by its initiatives. Like many other administrative councils in the past, students are forced to question its purpose and search for evidence of its worth. Both are difficult to find.



Letters to the editor

Collegian can print tobacco advertisements

Thank you University Health Services for your little bit of insight and your comments on what a student-run university newspaper should or should not allow as advertisers. The fact of the matter is that the Collegian is protected under the First Amendment and can print whatever it chooses. What a strange idea?

I'm not saying tobacco use is something everyone should do, but it is not the place of University Health Services to regulate the choices of the Collegian. This is just another blatant example of the university's attempt to regulate student behavior and choices. We are all adults who are perfectly capable of making our own decisions.

Smoking and tobacco-related deaths take around 500,000 lives a year from our country. Smoking or the use of smokeless tobacco is not a healthy choice for students, but at the same time is the right of the students. We all have completed at least 12 years of schooling and have been given the necessary education as to what tobacco does to the body. Students, faculty and everyone else who smokes at this university is well aware that Health Services is available to aid us in our pursuits at quitting. Tobacco companies claim, although I personally am skeptical, that tobacco products are only marketed to tobacco users. They have the right to promote their products. Likewise individuals can disagree; this is the purpose of the First Amendment.

The Collegian provides its newspapers free of charge to students on campus, in large part due to its advertisers. Health services should do more to provide quality health care to the students, who often have to wait excessively long amounts of time, instead of trying to prohibit certain advertisers from using our newspaper as a venue.

Austin Reed
freshman-special education

Remove stuffed lion from West Pattee

In these times of overt disrespect toward both human and non-human animals, very few things are more archaic than the stuffed lion found in West Pattee. This once beautiful animal has been reduced to a mere object, an offensive dec-

oration of death and innocent suffering. It is poor taste for the university to continue displaying this fascinating animal. If we pride ourselves on the lion, exhibiting a dead one in our library is hypocritical to say the least. Its mere exposure perpetuates and reinforces a perspective that degrades and cheapens the lives of non-humans.

When one passes the lion she or he may be unaware that the creature was once living, breathing and possessing a life. It sends a message that approves the use, manipulation and dominance of humans over non-humans. If Penn State sincerely respected the image of our magnificent mascot, we would not stand behind such disrespect. For these reasons, I propose it be removed.

Christian Kurpiel
junior-psychology

Countries, Americans not laughing at Clinton

This letter is in response to Doug Wilkinson's letter to the editor in Thursday's Collegian. Wilkinson called United States "a laughing stock" because of Bill Clinton's indiscretions, and wondered "how does our country look to other powerful countries." Well, if you listen to all the journalists and public officials in other countries who can't believe this issue is even being discussed, you'll find out. They are not laughing at Clinton. They are laughing at Republicans and the small percentage of Americans that continue to dwell on what was, in effect, a sex lie.

Wilkinson says Clinton was "unbelievably" elected twice, and that "people are laughing at him." Who's laughing? Surely not the American people, 62 percent of which approve of him (the highest approval rating in a non-war time in 30 years, coincidentally). Surely not the voters, who shocked Newt Gingrich and the gang on election day. Clearly, the Republicans have more egg on their face than they expected out of this mess. I find it unfortunate that people continue to blame Clinton for all the country's problems, yet refuse to credit him for the bright spots. You can't blame him for raising taxes and then turn around and not credit him for jump starting the economy. That's not a balanced view.

You are right about one thing, though. Clinton is not Ronald Reagan. Reagan was involved in trading arms to Iranians, and

"Reaganomics" quadrupled the national deficit — a deficit that took 12 years, and President Clinton, to erase.

Ryan Dougherty
junior-journalism

Health services makes most of funds available

The recent "Wait-an-hour" editorial opinion had some good ideas that were undermined by the writer's desire to avoid use of too many facts. So here's a quick summary for students interested in accurate information.

University Health Services offers three convenient ways for students to visit a health care provider.

Schedule an appointment in advance. Or, call in the morning and request a "same day" appointment. This appointment system was incorporated in response to student demand for more access within a short time frame and minimal wait. It was also structured to assist in alleviating the longer wait in Urgent Care.

Or Urgent Care. Students can walk into the clinic and be seen without an appointment. Will you wait? Possibly, based on how many others students decide to utilize this option. But you will also get high quality medical care from a staff more concerned about your well-being than with whether or not you're in the "appointment book." So, for those times when lots of students choose this option, which do you prefer? Expert medical care or "drive-thru" service?

Is it hectic when flu season hits? Absolutely! We've planned ahead and so should Penn State students. Be proactive by taking advantage of one of our several flu immunization clinics.

We have consistently stated that our services and patient volume have far outgrown the space available to us in Ritenour Building. Our patient to clinician ratio is also a point of frustration. However, we do not allocate funds. We make the most with the funds provided to us.

Since the Collegian editorial staff and Undergraduate Student Government seem to share some of our concerns, we encourage them to join us in lobbying for additional health care resources for students at Penn State. We don't think students should have to settle for less either.

Pam Koons
marketing manager, University Health Services

About the Board of Opinion:

Editorials are written by The Daily Collegian Board of Opinion. The members of the Board of Opinion for Fall Semester are: Bridgette Blair, Patricia K. Cole, Stacey Confer, Carrie DeLeon, Aimée Harris, Krista Hawley, Daryl Lang, Khyber Oser, Emily Rehling, Brooke Sample, Cory Shindel and Tim Swift.

the daily Collegian

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Editor in Chief
Bridgette Blair
Business Manager
Scott A. Fallgren

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Letters Policy: The Daily Collegian encourages comments on news coverage, editorial policy and University affairs. Letters must be typewritten, double-spaced and no longer than 400 words. Forums must also be typewritten, double-spaced and no longer than 750 words.

Students' letters should include semester standing, major and campus of the writer. Letters from alumni should include the major and year of graduation of the writer. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification of the letter. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Names may be withheld on request. Members and officers of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their organization.

Students should take opportunity to learn outside of classroom

Stop and think for a minute. Why are you here at college? Really ... why are you here? Is this just something you parents expected of you, are you doing it mainly for them?

Are you here as a stepping stone to get to the job you would really rather be doing?

Are you here because you really don't know what else to do?

Or are you here because you want to learn?

I've been thinking the past few weeks on how to change the college education process to better suit its purpose, and I think what I've found is that the greatest problem is student apathy toward learning.

You can add as many new classes and as many new teachers as you'd like, but if the students aren't here to learn and enrich their lives with knowledge then it's all for nothing.

I go into some of the classes we have now and there's only a half to three-fourths of the class there. And if teachers don't specify that attendance is mandatory, the size decreases even more.

No matter how bad you may think the teacher is, if you're not in class you're

My opinion



Kellie D. Weiss

probably missing out on something.

What's the point of offering more classes when we can't get students to attend the ones we offer now?

But attendance doesn't seem to be the only problem. Students, in general, aren't finding relevance in the knowledge given to them; therefore, they aren't retaining as much as they should be for this level of education. I can't tell you how many people I've heard say that they're just memorizing things for the test and then forget it all soon after.

Teachers are only half of the learning process. Students need to care more about what and how they learn. Teachers can

"Students just don't seem to have the desire to learn anything beyond what is placed in front of them."

only expose us to pieces of the world, but it's up to us what we do with that information. We can either incorporate it with what we already know or we can forget it. If you're just remembering things for the test, maybe you don't belong in college.

So I ask you again, why are you here? Although the classroom is a good indicator of how excited the student body is about learning, I'm more upset by the lack of interest they have about extracurricular activities, on-campus lectures and the arts programs.

These outside of the classroom activities are an even better indication of people's desire to expand their world and increase their wisdom.

I try to attend at least one lecture, outside activity or play a week, and I'm always surprised by how easily I find a seat. Students just don't seem to have the desire to learn anything beyond what is placed in front of them.

There are opportunities every day for

you to make a difference in the community, to expand your thinking and to enrich your understanding of others. You'd be surprised how much you can learn at an hour lecture if you really listen and how good you feel after helping out someone else.

I know that many of the sororities and fraternities are dedicated to one cause or another and that's really good for now. I just hope that when you're out of school, and supporting isn't so convenient, you'll still be able to offer the same level of support.

As for the rest of us, there really isn't any excuse for not doing anything when there's something for everyone. All you have to do is look at any postings on campus and I'm sure you'll find something that sparks an interest.

If you like to get that feeling when you help someone else out, why not try volunteering a few hours a week with Habitat for Humanity? If you like to dance why

not get off of the couch, grab the person next to you and go to one of the free swing classes around State College, or even to one of the dance classes offered by some of the multicultural organizations?

Let's say that you're really into the legalization of cannabis sativa, well then why don't you just get in contact with NORML and I'm sure they'd be happy to get you involved somehow.

Not only does Penn State need more diverse classrooms and teachers, they also need some more support from the students for diversity programs outside of the classroom. So why not expand your multicultural scholarship with a trip to Harlem (an activity of the African and African American Studies Student Interest Group) — one of the cultural capitals of the country. For a small fee you can not only learn about black culture, you can experience it.

The key is to just do something. You'll be surprised at how much more you can learn when you're actually trying.

Kellie D. Weiss (kdw129@psu.edu) is a senior majoring in English and a Collegian columnist.