

# THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

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## EDITORIAL

# Study days allow time to prepare for finals

It's the Friday before finals week. What would you rather be doing instead of sitting in class? Maybe you'd like to get a head start on studying. Maybe you'd like to be catching up on some much-needed sleep. Or maybe you'd like to be doing absolutely nothing, just enjoying the simple pleasure of taking time to vegetate. Whatever your preference, there are plenty of reasons for Penn State to join many other universities in providing a study day before finals week.

For many Penn State students, the coming Monday begins a week full of tortuous and stressful two-hour finals that include difficult course information taught from January right up to the very day of the exam.

In other words, the material covered in today's classes is likely to show up on the tests next week, right next to questions about information from four months ago.

"It was a study day?"

were scheduled in total isolation from each other, but because of the structure of finals week, multiple comprehensive tests could be, and often are, issued on the same day.

So why not just give students a well deserved break right before the exhaustive battery of tests begin?

That's the logic many other universities follow. And that's the reasoning Penn State should consider as well.

Moreover, Penn State already has a long school year that ignores holidays — like Easter and Passover — that many other schools choose to observe.

Another state-related school, the University of Pittsburgh, began its school year a week later than Penn State did. Although Pitt's school calendar does not include a study day, Pitt's Spring Semester ends today, meaning it's a full week shorter.

In addition, Pitt was closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day — another holiday we spent attending classes.

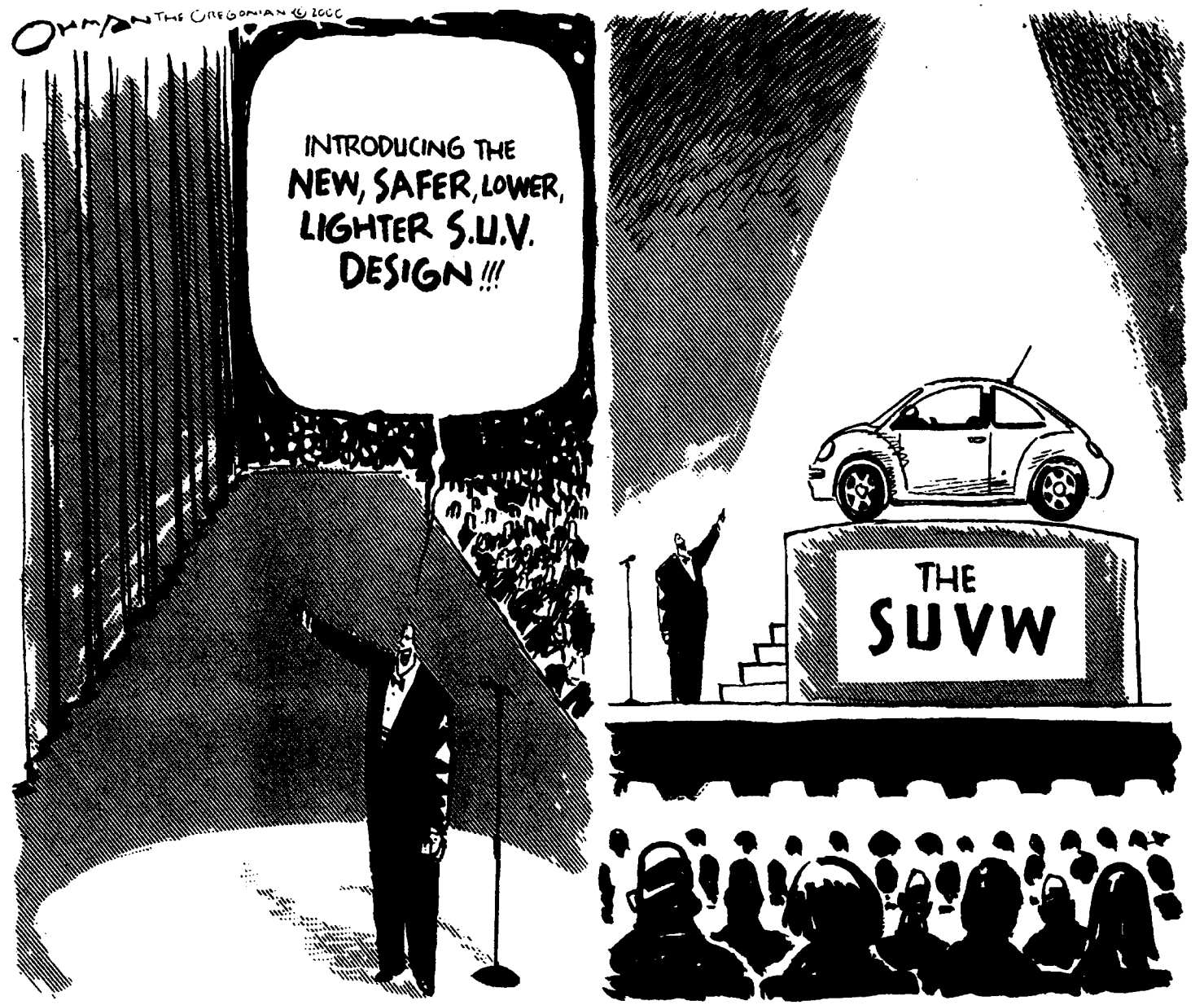
Those who argue against study days claim that extra days without classes immediately before finals encourage slacking off and partying. Students won't actually study, they argue, they will spend it doing just about anything else. It's a serious concern for some people.

So what?

So what if students actually relaxed instead of burying their heads in their books during a day with a school year that starts early, ends late and doesn't offer much time off in between, the least Penn State could offer its students is a break right before the final push of semester-ending exams.

Call it break day, party day, sleep day — call it whatever you want.

Regardless of what students do with that extra time, it's still a day many students want and need in preparation for a rigorous upcoming week.



# Define year based on small successes

By Stacey Confer



MY OPINION

This time last year, I was ready to kick off my senior year and my term as editor in chief of *The Daily Collegian*.

Like most people gearing up for their last year at Penn State, I had it all planned out; I was going to do well in class (but not burn myself out over it), enjoy my time with my friends and figure out some way to leave a mark on this place before I left.

Enter becoming editor in chief of the *Collegian*. That's not a bad spot to be in if you want to affect something at Penn State. It's also not a bad spot to be in if you want every part of your work to be scrutinized by the general public.

Nevertheless, I charged ahead with grand plans for the year. We were going to overhaul the look of the paper, something that hadn't been done in decades. Think back and try to remember that old lowercase "the daily Collegian" and blue bar you were used to seeing, right up until the end of last semester. Yes, it's gone now, so I guess that little project worked out.

But plenty of things along the way didn't unfold quite as imagined, as I'm sure has been the case with most everyone's last year here. But when something didn't go quite according to my plan, not only did I know about it, so did everyone else who was picking up or reading one of the 20,000 or so copies of the paper printed every day.

Even though everything, every day, might not have gone as originally planned, I found that as the year went on, the smaller tri-

umphs and special moments were more than enough to keep me going.

Nowhere in my game plan for an exciting, campus-changing senior year was the time I would devote every day to talking to someone who had just started "the most revolutionary college Web site, with great auctions and that would make a great story."

Also not on that list was an item about speaking to angry readers who were upset with something that ran in the paper. It certainly made its way onto my daily list, though.

And nowhere on that list were things like dealing with the emotions and other issues surrounding a staff member becoming infected with meningitis and nearly losing his life in the process.

Those types of moments were the more public, and more difficult, ones of my senior year that I was talking about earlier.

But even in the midst of being screamed at on the phone, I'd look out my office door and see a new reporter picking up a copy of that day's paper and smiling when he saw his article had made the front page. Or other times I'd notice the look on editors' faces when one of their staff members finally understood what went into a news story. Or the look on people's faces on the first day our staff member who had been infected with meningitis walked back into the newsroom.

No one sees those moments, and no one puts them on a list a year in advance so that they can be checked off and marked as milestones when they happen.

But they matter. Just as much as getting rid of that terrible blue bar across the top of the paper. Just like printing more of our sports pages in color. Just like all those more public things you might have noticed while watching my senior year unfold in the pages of this paper.

"No one sees those moments, and no one puts them on a list a year in advance so that they can be checked off and marked as milestones when they happen."

Accomplishing a long list of goals is wonderful, but looking back over the year, it's not how I'll define it or my senior year in general.

It will be the smaller moments.

It will be the day before classes began last summer that I remember us all coming in on the first day of deadlines, looking around at each other, realizing for the first time that we were on our own, getting down to work and putting out our first paper. It will be the first night of Spring Semester, when the first redesigned issue was on its way to the press and everyone sat down for a minute and took a deep breath. It will be Thursday night staff meetings. It will be Donuts at Board of Editors. It will be last night, which we spent at the press watching our last issue be printed.

Accomplishing a grand list isn't what a year should be based on or judged on, not for my successor Patricia and her staff and not for anyone else heading into another year at Penn State. Set big goals, but don't waste time shooting only for them. You'll miss the moments in between.

**Stacey Confer** (slc192@psu.edu) is a graduating senior majoring in English, and until precisely 6:15 a.m. this morning, she was the *Collegian's* editor in chief.

## Who we are

The *Daily Collegian's* editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Opinion, with the editor holding final responsibility. Opinions expressed on the editorial pages are not necessarily those of The Daily Collegian, Collegian Inc. or The Pennsylvania State University. Collegian Inc., publishers of The Daily Collegian and related publications, is a separate corporate institution from Penn State. Editorials are written by *The Daily Collegian* Board of Opinion.

The members of the board are: Chris Antonacci, Stacey Confer, David Edelson, Cheryl Frankenfield, Angela J. Gates, Allison Kessler, Brooke Sample, Don Stewart, Tim Swift, Patricia Tsak, Tracy Wilson, Matt Wunsche, Susie Xu and Debra Yemrijian.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MP3s will change industry, not hurt artists' incomes

I have to disagree with some of the conclusions in Thursday's editorial. The recording industry is not in a position to make money directly off of online music because MP3 files are not controllable commodities. There is nothing to stop CDs from being copied and distributed as MP3s.

The problem with music piracy is actually part of a larger trend. The Internet was designed during the Cold War to be decentralized so that it would be less vulnerable to attack.

Now, the same design that originally had strategic military purposes has made users, who have never been subject to central control, accustomed to self-determination. A lot of Internet users have a mentality that anything that comes through their Internet connection ought to be free.

Control is elusive for other reasons too. Even if we managed to wipe out every bit of undesirable content hosted on U.S. sites, there would be sites in other countries that would ensure continued availability. No nation has sovereignty over the Internet.

The people who are responsible for piracy are so numerous that it is nearly impossible to prosecute them.

So the recording industry, which wants complete control over music, goes after the purveyors of new technology. But most of the technology that facilitates online piracy was not designed with that purpose in mind. The MP3 algorithm simply compresses sound. Napster is not really new technology. Its individual functions, those of file server and search engine, were around even before the MP3 format.

They are no more responsible for this situation than is General Motors for making a car that a drunk driver uses to kill someone. But perhaps surprisingly, the same college

students who probably do the bulk of the pirating with this technology continue to be avid consumers of music. We still go to concerts and buy CDs of our favorite performers.

As a group, we probably pump more money into the music industry than a lot of the people who paid for all of the recordings they possess.

Record companies have to face the fact that we are entering a new era in which they will be less powerful. This isn't unprecedented; the railroads inevitably lost some business when the interstate highway system was built.

Music and musicians will still thrive, but I predict the record companies will play a smaller role in the years to come.

**Matt Hanson**  
sophomore-computer science

### Elian's abduction violated orders of American courts

We have all seen the horrific pictures that have littered the news stations and magazines around the country because of the events, which transpired on April 22. This was the day that Elian Gonzalez was kidnapped by our government and taken to Andrews Airforce Base to be reunited with his father Juan Miguel Gonzalez.

Whether you agree or disagree that Elian should be with his father, the fact remains that the events, which took place, were disturbing and just downright bizarre.

The government was just doing its job by returning Elian to his father, right? Wrong. The Miami family was given custody of the child after he was rescued at sea by a fisherman.

There has been no court decision that has given Juan Miguel back the custody of his son. Here is a news flash; there was no law that our government was upholding when

## Write a letter

We want to hear your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community in general.

- ✉ E-mail: [letters@psu.edu](mailto:letters@psu.edu)
- ✉ Postal mail:  
The Daily Collegian  
123 S. Burrows St.  
University Park, Pa. 16801-3882
- ✉ In person:  
The Daily Collegian  
James Building  
123 S. Burrows St.

Letters must be typewritten, double-spaced and no longer than 400 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.

The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste.

Because of the number of letters received, the Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives. Letters may also be selected for publication in *The Weekly Collegian*. All letters received become the property of Collegian Inc.

storm troopers with machine guns snatched up Elian.

Which leads me to the conspiracy part of this story.

With all the power and money that our government possesses, was it really necessary to break down the door and run into a tiny lit-

tle house with machine guns to snatch up a child over a custody battle?

I would hope that as Americans we question these events and are not so stupid that we believe the Clinton administration response that the government was upholding the rule of law. It's pretty hard to uphold a law when there was no law being broken, and better yet, bypass some rulings that were already made by judges in U.S. courts.

Here are the main facts of this case since Juan Miguel entered the U.S. a few weeks ago. President Clinton's personal attorney, Greg Craig, represents Juan Miguel in his fight to regain the custody of his son.

The court rules against the family in Miami, giving Juan Miguel more leeway in getting his son back.

The U.S. court of appeals rules in favor of Elian and states that he may have the right to apply for political asylum, and a court date is set for May.

Janet Reno and some House Democrats petition for a court order to seize Elian and return him to his father. They are denied the order.

The Miami relatives negotiate all night on Friday the 21st and into the morning. The phones go dead around 5 a.m. and federal agents storm the house and seize Elian.

Did Clinton make a deal with Castro? If Janet Reno was only trying to uphold the law, why did she disregard the court's decision?

Who is paying Clinton's personal attorney to represent Juan Miguel? Did the administration seize Elian because the courts were ruling against their wishes?

This is a question of the government overruling the courts and doing what they see as the best interest for the boy and possibly what's in the best interest of the Clinton administration.

Is there something bigger or deeper behind all of this? Can you say conspiracy?

**Mathias R. Shaner**  
sophomore-hotel restaurant management

### Boy Scout handbook gives no sexuality restrictions

Being an Eagle Scout, news and opinions about the Boy Scouts of America always catches my attention. The recent news on the Supreme Court case about whether the Boy Scouts can expel an assistant scoutmaster simply because he is a self-identified gay man has defiantly caught my attention. This news has created a lot of personal turmoil for me, since I am a proud Eagle Scout and an ally to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

As I understand the Boy Scouts' argument, they feel that everyone in the Boy Scouts should lead a morally straight life. From my understanding, the Boy Scouts say that leading a morally straight life means that you cannot be gay. I was wondering where the Boy Scout Handbook said that Boy Scouts could not be gay. So, I looked in my copy of the Boy Scout Handbook to see if it said anything about sex and sexuality.

The 10th edition of the Boy Scout Handbook does not say that a Boy Scout cannot be gay, although it does say that your religious leaders can give you "moral guidance" about issues of sexuality. That did not give me any more help, since I am a Reform Jew. Last month, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, The International Rabbinic Association of Reform Judaism, adopted a resolution stating that "the relationship of a Jewish, same gender couple is worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual." However, if one of the three largest sects of Judaism thinks that same sex relationships are moral, the Boy Scouts should reconsider their position. I also wonder if in fact the majority of scout feel that homosexuality is immoral. In my experience, most Eagle Scouts that I have met do not.

**Matt Golden**  
graduate-acoustics