

CCSG addresses student issues on tour

By Megan Rogers
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Council of Commonwealth Student Governments (CCSG) leaders said their three-day trip to Commonwealth Campuses brought important issues like transitioning and the quality of student services to the forefront of their focus.

Discussions were very individualized based on the campus, CCSG Vice President Peter Khoury said — but one issue that came up at several smaller campuses was the quality of student services.

Some Commonwealth Campus leaders said only having part-time student services like health and career services is not adequate

enough, Khoury (junior-biology) said. After hearing that complaint, Khoury said CCSG will make plans to equate the quality of all Commonwealth Campus student services to that of University Park standards.

"We're definitely going to start looking into what the Penn State standard is and where we can help in the effort of bridging that gap," he said.

Another issue student leaders and chancellors of the Commonwealth Campuses discussed with CCSG leaders was making the transition to

University Park or other campuses as smooth as possible, CCSG President Mohamed Raouda said.

Commonwealth Campus chancellors and leaders wanted to ensure their students were doing well at whichever campus they were transferring to, Raouda (senior-history and international relations) said.

Specific initiatives to make the process easier include creating a listserv for transfer students to let them know what activities and opportunities are available at whichever campus they transfer to.

Some student leaders from Commonwealth Campuses said the meetings were beneficial and productive.

Zena Lewoc, Student

Government Association president at Penn State Hazleton, said transitioning was the main topic of discussion during the visit. She said the group talked about putting together a handbook so transferring students can be made aware of what new opportunities they will have.

"It was a great visit. I'm really excited it happened," Lewoc (junior-business) said. "It bridges a gap between us and CCSG at the main campus."

Raouda said that many students who were prominent student leaders at their initial campuses often have trouble getting involved in student groups when they come to University Park. CCSG hopes to work to better connect incoming students with stu-

dent groups before they transfer so the transitioning process will run more smoothly.

Penn State Abington Student Government Association President Brian Martinowich agreed that the visit strengthened relationships.

Abington has a strong transitioning program. Martinowich (senior-English) said — but he felt CCSG leaders at the University Park campus will be a strong advocate for other issues they discussed, like the possibility of on-campus housing.

Raouda said the outcomes of the discussions will be incorporated into CCSG's extended 90-day plan.

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Khoury

Engineers to plug up oil well cap

By Greg Bluestein
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW ORLEANS — The only thing keeping millions more gallons of oil out of the Gulf of Mexico right now is a rush job: an experimental cap that has held for more than two weeks but was never meant to be permanent. As soon as this week, crews will be pumping in some insurance.

Engineers are preparing to launch a so-called static kill as early as Monday evening, shoving mud and perhaps cement into the blown-out well to make it easier to plug the gusher up forever and end the Summer of the Spill.

The effort carries no certainty, and BP PLC engineers still plan to follow it up days later by sending a stream of mud and cement into the bottom of the mile-deep underground reservoir through a relief well they've been digging for months.

But the oil giant's engineers and petroleum experts say it's the clearest path yet to choke the blown-out well and make it even easier for the crews drilling the relief well to ensure oil can never again erupt from the deep-sea well, which has spewed as much as 184 million gallons since the rig connected to it blew up in April and killed 11 workers.

The developments have the makings for an interesting week. "It could be the beginning of the end," said Darryl Bourgoyne, director of Petroleum Engineering Research Lab at Louisiana State University.

When it begins, crews will slowly pump heavy mud through lines installed last month straight down the throat of the leaky well. If the mud forces the oil back into the massive underground reservoir and scientists are confident the pressure remains stable, then engineers can pump in fresh cement to seal it.

"The only thing that separates the oil from the sea now is the valve. This puts thousands of feet of mud and cement in between," said Eric Smith, associate director of the Tulane Energy Institute. "The idea is to have as many barriers as possible between the ocean and the reservoir. We're adding an extra level of safety."

Officials may then begin the process of choking the underground reservoir feeding the well by pumping mud and then cement down an 18,000-foot relief well. BP officials have long said the process is the only sure way to choke the well for good — plugging up the source of the oil, not just its route to the sea.

No oil has leaked from the busted well since engineers were able to fix a tightly fitting cap over its outlet two weeks ago, and boats skimming the oil and



Cleanup crews work on Pensacola Beach, Fla., on Sunday morning.

spraying subsea dispersant have been able to contain some of the spill.

But critics have raised questions about the long-term effects of the dispersant on sea life, and congressional investigators said Saturday that the Coast Guard routinely approved BP requests to use thousands of gallons of chemicals a day despite a federal directive to cut its use.

Retired Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen said Sunday that federal regulators did not ignore environmental guidelines, but that some field commanders were given the authority to allow more dispersants to be used on a case-by-case basis.

BP's engineers, meanwhile, focus their time on their latest bid to stymie the oil for good. If the static kill attempt sounds familiar, that's because it is. The company tried a similar process, called a top kill, to choke the well with mud in May.

It failed partly because the mud couldn't overcome the flow of the oil.

There's reason to hope this time will be different. For one, the oil is no longer freely flowing from the well, thanks to the temporary cap that has contained the out-of-control gusher for two weeks. That means that engineers won't have to pump in mud with as much force, said Kent Wells, a BP senior vice president.

There's always the risk that the pressure exerted by the mud will rupture the casing holding in the oil and potentially cause an even greater mess, but experts say it's very unlikely.

"I can't imagine it failing. It's holding pressure and there's no indication of any loss of fluid from the well," Smith said.

"It's a vanishingly small risk of failure."

The whole procedure is still set to be completed by late August despite a brief evacuation for Tropical Storm Bonnie last week. And federal officials are downplaying its importance in case of a failure. Allen, the government's point man on the recovery effort, said Sunday that "static kill is not the end all, be all."

BP has had more than its share of failures experimenting with other ambitious efforts. So if the oil is already contained and the completion of the relief well appears to be just around the corner, why is the oil giant even bothering to attempt the complicated static kill?

One answer is that it should make it easier to finish the relief well, which BP and government officials have long said is the only permanent solution to the blown-out well. Crews are also drilling a second, backup relief well a few thousand feet behind the primary one, which is about 100 feet.

Ragland talks law

Legal Services will make its debut this year

By Paul Osolnick
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Student Body President Christian Ragland met Friday with Carolyn Larrabee, director of Student Legal Services, in an effort to assist international students and students unfamiliar with local laws.

Ragland (senior-political science) said many international students experience problems with visas and other issues that require legal aid.

"I had the opportunity to talk with international students and their leaders," Ragland said. "I asked them what's their No. 1 problem, and they said just a lot of legal issues in terms of visas and housing."

Ragland, president of the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA), said the legal services office could provide legal counsel that otherwise would not have been available.

Ragland said the legal services are funded by the student activity fee to provide students advice.

"We used to always say, 'We can't really do anything, you've got to get a lawyer,'" Ragland said. "And sometimes that's hard because students can't afford lawyers."

Ragland said another legal issue concerning students is the lack of awareness with the local drug laws in State College.

Ragland said he has noticed that students do not understand the full consequences of certain drug-related offenses.

Ragland said even smaller drug offenses can warrant a jail sentence due to stricter drug enforcement in the school zone.

"I feel like if there is a lack of awareness, it is up to student leaders to make sure we make stu-



Ragland speaks at a UPUA meeting.

dents aware of how different things are," Ragland said. "And also encourage them not to get involved in those activities."

Ragland also proposed a marketing campaign to inform students that the legal services' advice is readily available to them.

Larrabee said she will attend a UPUA meeting sometime in the early fall to raise awareness of the legal services offered to students and explain her role.

Larrabee said the office offers advice to students and if the legal services office staff cannot help the student directly, they will point the student in the right direction to receive the legal aid and resources the student requires.

"I'm just excited to have a new resource, with a law degree," Ragland said. "We have some initiatives now with the educational pamphlets, the programming events and bringing her to UPUA."

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