

eLion site to revamp page's content, look

By Mike Hrick
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Students can expect several improvements to eLion this fall semester.

eLion — Penn State's online academic and financial documenting system — will see changes including the provision of advanced scheduling search capabilities and more access for parent accounts, senior associate registrar Karen Duncan said.

Students who are scheduling courses will be able to search within eLion based upon the name of an instructor or number of course credits.

These criteria options will be listed on the main scheduling page and can be expanded or contracted, university registrar Karen Schultz said.

On the results page, links will also be added to course information so students can find an instructor's e-mail and office. Cross-listed courses will link to each other and classroom buildings will link to Google Maps, Schultz said.

"We've been working on this for a while," Schultz said. "It took a long time to work with the students to get the final design."

Parents will now have the option of viewing their child's grades and schedule on their eLion accounts with the student's permission, Schultz said.

Some students said the enhancements for parent accounts should be kept optional. "If the parents are paying for their child's

education, they should have every right to see the schedule and grades," James Michael (freshman-business administration) said. "However, if the student's paying or an agreement's worked out with the parents to retain privacy, then that works too."

Dave Alexander (freshman-engineering) agreed with Michael.

"I don't see why Penn State students shouldn't have that option," Alexander said.

Alexander said his grades would be up to par with his parents' standards regardless of whether eLion allows them access.

Even with the changes, some students still have concerns about parts of eLion's procedures.

James Cicero (senior-rehabilitation and human services) said setting the semester scheduling dates at midnight might not be prime, but that priority given to upperclassmen is an advantage.

Schultz said the idea for increased parent access came from a meeting with the Council of Commonwealth Student Governments (CCSG) a few years ago.

Schultz said students were very closely involved with the Web site's redesign process.

Student focus groups were used and usability studies were conducted by Information Technology Services, Schultz said.

The registrar's office is targeting a release of the new features in late August or early September, Schultz said.



M. Antonio Silas/Collegian

Science U campers take a look at Penn State's award winning EcoCAR.

Campers learn from EcoCAR

By Zach Geiger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Science U campers witnessed a hands-on demonstration of Penn State's EcoCAR Thursday morning as part of the Advance Vehicle Team's participation in the EcoCAR: The Next Challenge contest.

The event — held at the Hybrid and Hydrogen Research Laboratory of the Larson Institute — showcased the hybrid vehicle to the visiting high school students.

Thursday's demonstration was beneficial in showing the students the future of hybrid vehicle technology, said Mike Casper, a Penn State engineering professor.

"It's nice to convey to students interested in science at this level. Here is an application you can see and understand and see some exciting results," Casper said.

About 20 to 30 Science U campers — all current high school students — were in attendance, Casper said.

In addition to building a working vehicle, outreach is a vital part of the competition. EcoCAR Outreach Coordinator Allison Lilly said.

Penn State placed third in the EcoCAR competition in May and also won other awards for different aspects of the project, Lilly (junior-public relations) said.

For next year's competition, the team is able to use events like Thursday's Science U Camp demonstration as evidence of their outreach involvement, Casper said.

But the real benefit is seeing the kids learn about the vehicle and the different real-world possibilities available to them in college, Lilly said.

"The best part was just hearing how

much these high school students were asking us questions about what we're so passionate about," Lilly said. "They were extremely interested in the program."

The EcoCAR competition is a multi-year event that challenges 16 universities — including Penn State, the Ohio State University, and Virginia Tech — to build a hybrid extended range electric vehicle (EREV) that can also run on B20 biodiesel fuel.

Penn State's EcoCAR team designed a hybrid front-wheel drive vehicle that runs off an electric motor, Ben Koch said.

Koch (graduate-engineering science), a member of the EcoCAR drive train group, said the students were surprised how the car ran silently when using the batteries that power the electric motor.

When battery power runs low, a biodiesel motor is engaged which charges the batteries, Koch said.

Penn State placed third overall in the second round of the competition in May — but the team is already preparing for the third round next year by making improvements to the vehicle, Koch said.

"We weren't getting as much power as we'd like," Koch said.

The team — which includes electrical engineers, business and public relations majors — also receives help from General Motors (GM) in the form of monetary and technical support, Koch said.

GM and the Department of Energy sponsor the EcoCAR: The Next Challenge competition, Casper said.

This year the team's goal is to finally advance beyond third place in the competition, Casper said.

"Not only do we want to beat Ohio State, but we want to do the best we can," he said.

To e-mail reporter: zjg5012@psu.edu

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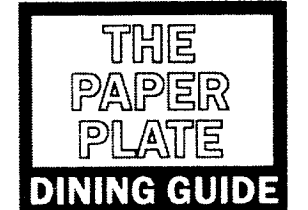
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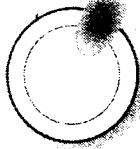
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