

# Aid for the unworthy

Columnist says students using financial aid for drug money

by Christine Spanos

With the United States invasion of Panama, the drug issue is hotter than ever spanning not only across our nation but the entire western hemisphere. Yet while Panama and other Latin American countries continue to be our global enemies in the war against drugs, state institutions like Penn State are negative contributors as well.

Every semester, institutions like Penn State offer student loans, academic scholarships, and work study programs that produce a weekly paycheck for thousands of eligible students. But in the last year, state schools have been questioned as to the standards set for eligibility. The question is: How many students who accept state funds use and abuse drugs?

Ultimately, Penn State and other state schools are giving an open invitation to any drug abusing student who falls into the "eligibility" category. Where do all the students who don't use drugs and who were denied financial aid fit into scenario?

That's the funny part, they don't. Those are the students who get left out in the cold, struggling to get by while their drug using counterparts are financially set for the semester.

Like any issue, there are always two sides needing representation. There is a cluster of truly qualified students that employs the financial aid system, but our concentration must focus on those who fall between the cracks. Those students hinder our war against drugs and, at the same time, make a mockery of the system we so desperately rely on.

Should Penn State and other state schools step back and close their eyes to this growing problem, or should they take a stand and demand students to take a drug test before becoming completely eligible for financial aid?

If the testing were only for illegal drugs, no one should have a problem with taking a drug test. It would only be the drug users themselves who claim that their constitutional rights are being violated.

Here is my answer to that: If a student is using drugs, they are a negative contributor to our country's war against drugs and therefore, by contributing in this negative manner, have already forfeited their constitutional rights.

What some people fail to realize is that drugs are illegal and nowhere in our constitution does it say that drug use is acceptable. As citizens of this country we are given certain inalienable rights, but those do not include the right to smoke a joint and snort a line at the costly expense of others.

So is it morally right for drug abusing students to accept government funds? I feel that students who accept state funds in order to further their education are to be respected and commended on their responsible choice to do so. Yet now we stumble across a gray area that defeats the good of the financial aid system and enhances, in its own way, the drug users ability to succeed.

Of course it is also morally wrong for drug abusing students to accept state funds and yet it happens every single day and will continue to happen until local, state, and federal governments put their foot down and stop the disease that is spreading throughout our country.

# Opinion / Editorial

## The Post-Martin Era

Everyone knows that the Eighties are over. It's the end of a decade and the end of an era. Everyone's talking about the Nineties now.

Everyone except *The Collegian* staff, that is. Here in the office, this new time period is known as The Post-Martin Era, named for Jim Martin who served as *Collegian* Editor for the past two years.

Last Fall was Jim's final semester here. Somehow Jim finished in just three and half years despite the unbelievable number of hours he spent producing *The Collegian* each week. He even survived Rock Class 101 and Bowling 58 during his last grueling semester at Behrend.

Jim once said that *The Collegian* was his college career. It's what he did, and he did it well. During his two year reign, Jim made many notable improvements in the newspaper. The most significant of these was the change to a

weekly format which brought a greater sense of timeliness to our humble newspaper. His professional level of journalistic skill propelled *The Collegian* to a consistent and respectable publication.

I hear Jim's married now and he's getting paid to work on a newspaper. I was surprised to see that *The Collegian* office hadn't disappeared right along with him over the break. I'm not so sure that I'd have been very upset if it did.

Most of the mail is still addressed to Jim, except that which is addressed to Steve Aller, Jim's predecessor. Even the directory in the Winter Garden still bears the name J. Martin next to *The Collegian*.

Obviously, not many people realize that Jim's not the editor anymore. That's not necessarily a bad thing. If people still think Jim's the editor after this issue, I'll take it as quite a compliment.

In fact, it might save me a

great deal of grief if there are any severe problems in this issue. When infuriated people come storming into the office demanding to see Jim, I'll calmly plead ignorance to his whereabouts and continue packing my bags.

Hopefully, this won't be my first and only issue, though. I don't have his experience yet, but, like Jim, I do want *The Collegian* to continue improving.

I have a strong, dedicated staff that I truly believe in, but I also need something else. I need some feedback and response from you, the reader.

Let me know what you think about the newspaper, current issues, or our editorial stance. Stop by the office, or better yet write me a letter.

Oh, by the way, don't forget the J.

-- Todd J. Irwin

## Writer asks: How long will the dream be deferred?

by Rob Farnham  
Collegian Staff Writer

Last Monday, January 15th, marked the observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. That afternoon in Erie Hall, a good-sized, though hardly capacity, crowd, gathered for a ceremony in honor of the slain civil rights leader.

Behrend students, both black

and white, read excerpts from several of his best-known speeches, as well as from the presidential proclamation which established King's holiday. A black student vocal group sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and several other compositions. Afterward, punch and birthday cake were served.

The audience was attentive and seemed genuinely enthusiastic,

responding to every speaker and each song with a round of applause. But as I sat in the bleachers, I couldn't help noticing that, though the crowd was racially mixed, it was divided into smaller groups primarily by color. The whites sat together, and mostly apart from the small clusters of blacks.

Seeing that division, while (continued on page 7)

### Editorial Policy

*The Collegian's* editorial opinion is determined by the editor, with the editor holding final responsibility. Opinions expressed in *The Collegian* are not necessarily those of *The Collegian* or the Pennsylvania State University.

**Letter Policy:** *The Collegian* encourages letters on news coverage, editorial content and university affairs. Letters should be typewritten, double-spaced and signed by no more than two persons. Letters should be no longer than 400 words. Letters should include the semester and major of the writer. All letters should provide the address and phone number of the writer for verification of the letter. *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.

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