

# Opinion

## Letter to the Editor: Reader finds Spanos' article controversial but flawed

Dear Editor,

I suppose you are doing the college community a service by printing opinion pieces like Christine Spanos' "Aid For The Unworthy," (Wednesday, January 24, 1990), in which she grouses about drug-using students getting financial aid.

Her contentions that no one should have a problem with taking a test for illegal drugs, that "it would be only the drug users themselves who claim that their constitutional rights are being violated," and that students who use drugs "have already forfeited their constitutional rights" should stimulate discussion. I can see the bags of mail from right (or should I say left)-thinking students piling up on your desk, all verbally pummeling this form of latter day McCarthyism.

My problem with your running that piece is the atrocious writing and muddled thinking exhibited by Ms. Spanos and foisted on us by your lack of editorial oversight. She writes like one of those drug-

abusers she rails against. A few choice examples follow:

1. "spanning across our nation" (across is redundant)
2. "Latin American countries continue to be our global enemies in the war against drugs" (no, its the drug-running mobs in those countries, not the countries themselves)
3. "negative contributors" (an oxymoron, used twice)
4. "Like any issue, there are...two sides" ("As with any issue...")
5. "If a student is using drugs, they..." ("he/she...")

This is a college student's writing? It's too painful to continue listing the screwy examples of her usage, syntax, and grammar. Ms. Spanos should register for a few more English courses and you editors ought to be more vigilant with your red pencils. Let's just hope the governor doesn't see that issue of the Collegian and take back the check.

Sincerely yours,  
Dr. Don Cogley (Chemistry)

Dr. Cogley,

I appreciate your grammatical critique of Spanos' column. However, I'm slightly disappointed that you didn't express your stand on the issue presented in that piece.

While your position may seem fairly clear, as indicated by your strange use of "McCarthyism," ultimately, you avoid the subject.

We encourage you and all of our readers to continue to write to *The Collegian*. Hopefully, though, future letters will voice the writer's opinion on issues.

To address this letter, your fifth point is valid. The subject/verb agreement is incorrect. As for your other points, I see them as the author's use of voice as opposed to careless grammatical errors.

By the way, my editor's pencil is blue, not red.

Ed.

## 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.

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# LOVE ROB

## Rob admits to financial aid abuse

by Rob Prindle

I'm really in financial trouble, and yet, I cannot help feeling that it is all my fault. I need to feed my addiction.

I'll tell you what happened, but as always, I must warn you that this will not be pretty. Not pretty at all.

You see it all started when the government gave me some money. You all know about the state and federal governments' dedication to higher education. That dedication has somehow led to Pennsylvania rating at the very bottom in terms of money for students. Hell, in a lot of states, the public colleges are virtually free. And the federal government headed by Reagan...ah, I mean Bush wants to cut back student aid to the tune of several billion dollars.

So anyway, the powers-that-be invited me to fill out a few hundred questions on a financial aid request form. When that was done they sent Penn State a check. It wasn't as much as I had hoped for, and when I totaled up the time I'd spent on the application, I figure I made about minimum wage for the hours I put in.

But then my troubles started. You see, because the government felt I was poor enough to warrant aid for my tuition, I was inevitably left with some pocket money. Didn't they realize what trouble I might get into?

Now I'm the type of guy who can't save a buck. You know me, money burns a hole in my pocket. As soon as I find a fiver in my wallet I always like to do something crazy with it - like, oh I don't know - make a car payment, or an insurance payment, or buy something frivolous like food. And that's where all the trouble started.

What I at first thought of as merely a harmless pastime turned into a real need. In the early days I ate once in a while, just at parties... you know what I mean? Then, as my addiction grew, I began to feel hungry almost every day. Some days I would eat two, maybe three times. And I really got worried when I started eating alone. Some pasta, maybe a wing or two. It didn't matter. And the cost of my addiction soared along with my waist size.

My story is an old, familiar one indeed.

Now, as a senior, I am several thousand dollars in debt and all because the government gave me student aid.

Yeah, right.

Lately there have been some accusations that students who receive financial aid are using that money for drugs and therefore needy students should be tested for drugs before they get the big bucks.

This argument is flawed and lame.

First, there are students who receive aid that do use drugs. Somehow they come up with the money, but it would be a very minor habit indeed that could be fed by the pittance that our government turns over to students for their education.

Second, drug testing is bad, all the way around. It is very expensive. It is flawed - some experts say that false readings are as common as one third. It is an invasion of privacy - if urine isn't sacred, what is? It is degrading - a lab assistant stands in the room with you to make sure you aren't importing any fake piss. It is a presumption of guilt - a testee is presumed guilty until his/her urine is found to be clean.

And finally, why are people so worried about students contributing to the drug problem? I don't



Rob Prindle

have any stats in front of me, but it doesn't take a Senate sub-committee report to realize that the biggest abuses of illegal drugs come from impoverished inner city neighborhoods on one end and wealthy suburb dwellers on the other.

Cocaine - also known as "the rich man's aspirin" - is very popular among our higher paid professionals. And cocaine is just the start. The abuse of prescription drugs like Percodan and Valium has always been a problem. And what about the offspring of the upperclass?

I'm talking about the rich students who make up a good part of our universities. For a good look at how prevalent usage is among them, read "Less Than Zero" by Bret Ellis (don't rent the watered-down movie). In the book, the author of this autobiographical account shows just how dependent some pockets of America's young rich have become on drugs.

Aren't these people supporting the drug trade? Since the proposed drug testing would only be for financial aid applicants, does that mean that you can use drugs and attend a state funded school - like Behrend - as long as you can afford your own drugs? Since schools like Penn State are supported by tax money, shouldn't every student be tested?

No, of course not. The only kinds of testing that should be imposed on students are the kinds that take place in classrooms.