Survey says Mercer students ignorant about sex

By Laura Pollack
Senior Reporter

Last semester, the Lesbian, Gay Bisexual Transgender and Friends (LGBTF) club sponsored a Q&A panel which discussed safer sex, sexual health and wellness, consent, communication, LG-BTQ issues, pleasure and more. According to Cat McCormack, a Liberal Arts major and LGBTF club member, who attended juicy justine’s presentation it included a Q&A session, a raffle for sex toys, as well as free condoms available. During the Q&A, participants were given the option to text in questions so that the administrators had prohibited them from posting the flyers because they probably feel they already know. They can read it online or something,” said Mercer student Sara Abbott. While it is true that students can receive sexual education via the television or internet, Prof. Bearce said these sources can often be misleading. “What we know about the population today is that a lot of students learn about sex through their friends or through the media, and as most of us can say, not everything we see on TV is right and not everything my best friend tells me is right,” she said.

Prof. Bearce said that having “someone available on campus 24/7 that could address sexual concerns” would be a big step in the right direction to help educate Mercer students about sexual health. “We don’t just need a nurse that can help you figure out if you have a disease, and it’s not just about having a counselor that can hand you a condom and say if you’re gonna do it do it safely. It’s having knowledge and information,” she said.

As has been reported in the VOICE in the past, Mercer has no health center on campus and the staff psychologist quit last year, there is currently an interim serving in the position. The LGBTF has made efforts to fill in the gaps. Last year they managed to get a nurse to come to campus a few times per semester. Now they are trying to start a “support group” for students who have been victims of rape, or for students who are seeking information about sexual health and don’t have anywhere else to turn.
According to the newest form of the Smoke-Free Campus policy, starting January 1, 2013, students will not be allowed to smoke on any “campus grounds or property.” This will include, “but is not limited to, parking lots, up from athletic fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and any other outdoor area under the control of the college.”

Students, faculty and staff who violate the new policy will face fines. The policy states that “visitors who refuse to comply with this policy may be escorted off the premises by security staff.”

The college’s policy cites the US Environmental Protection Agency’s classification of second-hand smoke as a “Group A” carcinogen as reasoning for the ban.

In an interview with the VOICE, Mercer’s president, Dr. Patricia Donohue, said that the college is not the first school to completely ban smoking on campus. “Other colleges, both four year and two year, are going smoke-free every day... We’re not the front-runners on this.”

She added that the VOICE that the ban has already been approved by the Board, and verified that Mercer’s grounds will be “smoke-free” starting January 1.

When asked about the reasons for the smoking ban, Donohue cited the health hazards associated with smoking. “Smoke-free is about health. And not just our students, but the research studies that are available now about the second-hand smoke, the non-smoker who goes through it, that it is really a very lethal carcinogen,” she said.

Donohue said, “We want to create an intake, positive spirit around this, about this is a health campaign. It’s about everybody. It’s also about the sanitation. When our smokers leave their residue around campus, and in places where it doesn’t belong. It doesn’t work... People, when they have to walk through the mess they feel like it’s smoke city.”

Mark Moses, third year Music major here at Mercer spoke with the VOICE about the policy change. “Aside from the rumors and whatnot, I know that the legitimate reason [for the ban] is because our school president does not like smoking.”

Moses addressed the lack of social spaces around campus as well. “[The smoking] huts are just central hubs to hang out and meet with your friends. You see people with and without cigarettes in their hands all day.”

He continued, “the amount of social interaction that takes place at the hut is a central part of many students’ college experience here at Mercer. If that’s the medium that gets people together, then what’s wrong with that?”

John Wuethrich, Education major at MCCC, said that he doubts the practicality of a smoke-free campus. “People are going to smoke,” Wuethrich said, “Now that I know it’s a campus-wide ban, people are just going to smoke everywhere.”

Wuethrich has been taking classes at Mercer for three years, and said that he doubts the sincerity of the new policy. “I give it two months before it gets repealed.” Wuethrich did little to mask his frustration with the school’s administration: “the new president can go to hell, and you can put me on record saying that.”

Computer Science major, Victor Belasco-Gracia, pointed out the difficulties that will be presented for student-smokers by the ban. “Learning is state sensi-tive,” Belasco-Gracia said, “being in a state of nicotine withdrawal is not conducive for any of the smokers in this school to do well in their classes.”

Donohue told the VOICE that the college will be offering free “smoking cessation clinics” by the end of this semester to help any students and fac-

ulty who would like to quit smoking.

Second year Music major, Lou Borcsik, voiced different concerns with the new policy. “Kids are still going to smoke,” Borcsik said, “it’s going to happen more in the parking lot... That’s going to cause more congestion in the parking lot, and probably more theft.”

There were multiple students in support of the ban on smoking. Zoëfa Kancsok, 2nd year Radiology student at MCCC, said that she thinks the smoking ban is a good thing because smoking is detrimental to your health. She also cited the problem of littering around the smoking huts: “It’s gross, and they’re just throwing their shit everywhere.”

Timothy Hoffman, a current SGA officer, told the VOICE his personal reason for supporting the ban saying: “I think it’s a great idea.” Hoffman, “I actually have asthma, so walking back and forth with the lots with people smoking kind of bothers me. People here had that discussion with the smoking hut, and they kind of abused it. I feel bad for the people who did follow the rules, but it is what it is.”

As for the implementation of the new policy, President Donohue said, “Well, like everything else we’ve done, we will try and have the right process and correct any personal wrongs and letting people know.”

President Donohue went on to say, “I can’t tell them they can’t smoke. I can tell them they can’t smoke here.”

The Mercer County Community College “Smoke-Free Campus” policy, OMB 695, was first written in 1982, and has been discontinued, reinstated and revised several times since then. The most recent revision to this policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on June 21, 2012.

Three days enough to decide if a class is a bad fit?

What happens to Mercer students who discover in the early weeks of the semester that a class doesn’t suit their needs or a specific professor isn’t a good fit? Anyone?

By Dan Povio Senior Reporter

26 out of the 30 survey respondents indicated that they felt three days was not enough time to determine if they needed to withdraw from a class.

Half of those surveyed stated they had been negatively affected by the three day withdrawal deadline at some point.

Students, faculty and administrators continue to congregating at the approved smoking huts on campus prior to the complete smoking ban on campus that will begin January, 2013.

Major in his fifth year said, “The way I see it, Mercer has found a way to legally and conveniently take our tuition money as fast as possible. Though the circumstances were indeed grim, I do feel as though I could have educated myself a little more about the withdrawal policy, if the information was more readily available.”

Dr. Patricia Donohue, Dean of Liberal Arts, said “It’s like smoking. “ Wuethrich said, “Now that I know it’s a campus-wide ban, people are just going to smoke everywhere.”

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Massah Keita, a Criminal Justice major at Mercer, knows she was born in Liberia, but can’t remember how old she was when she moved to the United States. Today, she is a citizen. Keita’s cousins however, who also arrived in the United States as children, are now fighting to stay because they are undocumented. “It’s hard to see what they are going through. I always visit my family in Liberia, but my cousins can’t because they can’t leave the country,” said Keita.

The situation surrounding Keita’s cousins is not uncommon for those brought to the United States by their family members when they are very young. These children may attend elementary school without issue. However, by high school’s end, there are few options available. Even though community colleges accept undocumented students, their job prospects upon graduation are limited. According to a study published by the Center for Immigration Studies on their website cis.org, there are over 10.5 million undocumented immigrants in the country: 400,000 of them live in New Jersey. Two percent or 1.3 million of those immigrants are school-age children — 5 to 17 years old, and New Jersey holds four percent of the total.

The presence of undocumented immigrants and their rights regarding education has sparked a debate during this election cycle. This past June, President Obama announced that his administration would end the deportation of undocumented young people in the US who met certain criteria contained in something known as the DREAM Act.

The DREAM Act (short for Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) is a legislative proposal that has been introduced, revamped, scrapped and introduced again since originally proposed by Senator Orrin Hatch in 2001. The 2010 version of the bill was sponsored by Senate Bill Resister. This past May, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid reintroduced the DREAM Act and President Obama has sought to support it.

In every iteration the goals of the DREAM Act have been to provide a path to citizenship for people who were brought to the country as children, raised here as undocumented citizens, graduated from an American high school, and maintained good moral character. The various versions have shifted how old the child had to be at the time they were brought to the US and how old they could be to apply for temporary residency through the program (leading to permanent citizenship after a number of years and various other steps).

While opponents have long said that allowing undocumented students to go to college rewards law-breaking and potentially strains the education system, those who endorse the Dream Act contend that keeping students in school and producing a better educated populace ultimately reduces law-breaking and creates a more employable populace.

The questions surrounding the legislation have particular relevance to Mercer students. According to the 2010 American Community Survey 5-year data from the New Jersey State Data Center, more than 71,000 or 19 percent of the Mercer County population is foreign born, but only 42 percent of those surveyed thought undocumented immigrants are able to pursue higher education and presently they are able to at Mercer, though what their job prospects are upon graduation is not clear.

According to Joan Guggenheim, Registrar office at Mercer, any student can pursue higher education at Mercer County Community College. “We don’t stop anybody,” said Guggenheim. “Any person can apply, even if undocumented. We assign them a number that will substitute for their Social Security Number at Mercer.” A key question for public colleges that do admit undocumented immigrants is what to charge them, either an in-state or out of state tuition rate, or in the case of community colleges, an in-county rate. Guggenheim said that international students and undocumented students currently pay the out-of-state rate, but Mercer is working on a way to give undocumented students in-county tuition. “There is a plan to offer these students in-county tuition if they graduated from a US high school and having no criminal records.

For Mercer student Massah Keita, Obama’s current action is encouraging, but the prospects Dream Act is even more enticing, as it offers a chance for her cousins to live their lives without the constant fear of deportation. She says, “The Dream Act is giving people hope.”

There are 10.5 million undocumented immigrants in the US. 400,000 of them live in New Jersey.

In 2010, 11 of the 19 NJ community colleges and Rutgers signed a letter urging the state’s congressional delegation to sign the Dream Act.

In a recent VOICE survey of 100 Mercer students 47 percent knew at least one undocumented citizen. Sixty percent of those surveyed thought that undocumented immigrants should be able to pursue higher education and presently they are able to at Mercer, though what their job prospects are upon graduation is not clear.

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Below the busy Princeton streets sits Infini-T Café and Spice Souk, a unique establishment which offers more than a delicious menu of teas and eastern cuisine.

Although only a year old, it is obvious that from Infini-T’s inception much thought went into every aspect of the business, from the menu, to the staff, to the interaction with the local community. The tea room is a welcome antidote to the generic chains like Starbucks.

After descending a small flight of steps, one enters into a modest cafe abuzz with low conversational murmur, a comfortable and stylish environment to do work for school, enjoy a pot of tea with friends, or see local musicians on open mic nights.

According to co-owner Mary Fritschie, Infini-T, located at 4 Hulfin Street in Princeton, is successful because it has become a hot spot for local college students. "If it weren’t for academia, it wouldn’t survive...A huge amount of students from Rutgers come here, students from TCNJ, Princeton, and Mercer. ...to study and relax," she told The VOICE in a recent interview. Fritschie says it is the casual, comfortable atmosphere that draws students in. "[Infini-T is] downtown; it’s close enough for home college kids who may feel like they have no sense of belonging in their dorm or apartment."

Infini-T offers a broad menu ranging from typical cafe food, such as white cheddar cheese sandwiches and baked goods like brownies, to Middle Eastern inspired dishes like their savory baba ghanoush. The menu also features vegan and gluten free foods.

According to one employee, the most popular dish is the Pani Puri. It is intended to be shared and its kaliedoscopic ingredients create an inviting warmth that is conducive to a group experience. Stuffed inside a crispy rice pastry that is broken at the top, are smooth mashed potatoes, zesty chickpeas, onions, and peppers. All this is topped in a sweet and a sour sauce.

The food is good, but where Infini-T really shines is the panoply of beverages. Most of their drinks are available by individual cups or by the pot for groups. This includes over twelve categories of enticing non-alcoholic drinks, including dozens of different teas.

"Their most popular green tea, "Ling Chung," a brew from China which means "Dragon Well." Served steaming hot in a stylish, yet functional double walled glass with long cut tea leaves still in the infuser, the full bodied yellow tinted liquid smells exactly as it tastes, very mellow with a strong flavor and a satisfying, slightly bitter after taste."

Infini-T’s chocolate latte is like a liquefied dessert. As its name suggests, most

At Bobby Flay opens restaurant in Princeton Market Fair

By Emily Lukasewycz

Bobby Flay, an American celebrity chef and host of seven Food Network shows, opened a new location of his restaurant, Bobby’s Burger Palace, in Princeton Market Fair on Tuesday, August 28.

Starting at 10 a.m., people were lined up for the opening at noon. At noon exactly, the line had finally started to move but those in the middle of the line didn’t get to the cool air until around 2 p.m. Once inside, however, the hungry mobs were enveloped by the enticing aroma of onions and fried food, coupled with the warm environment of reds and yellows, and, on opening day, a chance to meet Flay and have a picture taken.

After placing one’s order and taking a number, there is the choice of seating. Family style tables with lime colored chairs are available at the back and there’s a long ribbon-shaped table in the front. Once seated, you place your number on the table and the helpful and accommodating servers bring you your drinks and food. When the food arrives, its simple, no-frills presentation is fitting of the casual and fun atmosphere: BBQ is about good food. Sitting in the middle of a plate paired only with a pickle half, the “Crunchburger” is tempting right away. The medium cooked angus burger is succulent and tender, sitting atop a simple, seeded bun that supports the juiciness of the burger. On top of the beef is double American cheese, perfectly melted and spilling over the sides, and a pile of potato chips which provide a mouth watering crunch. Of the few side dish selections, the sweet potato fries are a stand out. Perfectly salted and perfectly crunchy, they’re not dried out or too mushy and are a steal at only $3.

The ease of ordering take-out with BBP is a significant draw. You can order ahead on their website and just pick it up. In the case of mall employees, it can be delivered right to you.

"It’s going to be so convenient having real, good food right in the mall! The fact that it’s affordable is even better," said Andrew Zucker of Sayerville, a Barnes and Noble employee.

Those who met Flay on opening day seemed satisfied with the experience.

"He was so nice," said Dana O’Donnell of Mercerville after getting her picture taken with Flay. "I thought, considering he was so busy trying to get a restaurant open, he was very cordial and so nice to all the fans waiting to meet him," she added.

"He looked tired," Sarah Scarantino of Mercerville said. "You could tell he’s definitely put a lot of energy into his restaurant.” She added, "The service was fantastic. Even after you ordered your stuff, you still had people coming to your table asking, do you need anything? How’s your food? I thought we were going to be waiting a lot longer to get actual food on our table."

O’Donnell also mentioned the service at BBP. “It took us about ten minutes to have everything, and if that’s fast on opening day, imagine how fast it’ll be on a regular day. I even got a burger without a bun and it was still delicious,” said O’Donnell, who suffers from celiac disease and can’t have gluten.

“You could tell everything was fresh ingredients, most like a farm-to-table kind of thing,” said O’Donnell.

Bobby’s Burger Palace offers a free rewards program. You get a card, and for every dollar you spend, you get a point. Once you reach 100 points, you receive a free burger, instead of coupons. The idea is to keep you coming back.

"It is a very clever incentive to come back. And from the warm and inviting atmosphere, the impeccable service and fantastic food, there’s no reason not to!"
PROFILE: Record breaking power-lifter, Adam Burros

By Zac Santanello
Senior Reporter

Twenty year old Adam Burros, a third year Mercer student majoring in mechanical engineering, can lift three times his body weight, and does so daily.

Burros, who is from Bordentown, is just 5’7” tall and weighs 132 pounds, but he is one of the top power-lifter competitors in his weight class throughout the country.

Burros only took to the sport about two years but with the help of Kevin Mosley, President of the Weight Lifting Club, here at Mercer, Burros has been able not only to set state records but national records as well.

Burros says he was not looking for this type of success when he began lifting two years ago. When asked what got him started in the sport Burros replied, “I basically needed a reason to stay in the gym. Training for a competition keeps me on track. “

He adds, “as long as he stays injured, dedicated, willing to learn, and he goes out of this camaraderie came the teams rallying cry, shouting “Vamos Timos!” (which is Portuguese for “Go Team!”) just before the start of each race. “We formed a family from the start,” said Downs.

In preparation for the 2012 season, the team had its first full off-season of training. Their regimen included distance runs several times a week and aqua jogging, a training method done in pools, when the weather was poor.

The season started on September 1 at the Delaware Valley Invitational held at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown Pennsylvania. The Mercer team fielded five runners and placed 14 out of 15 colleges attending the meet.

Coach Cahill cited the difference of native languages as something that brought the team together rather than driving them apart. “One of the strengths of the team is how close knit they are.”

Their team included native speakers of Portuguese, Spanish, and English for the team to communicate.

Women’s XC looks to build size and strength

XC started with just two players two years ago, now there are 11

By Stephen Harrison
Senior Reporter

The 2011 Mercer Women’s Cross Country team finished second in the Region XIX finals. They had fallen just short of their goal of defeating Essex County College, a much larger program. One year earlier, the team was not able to field the minimum five runners required to place in a cross country event.

“To come so close to beating a team that is so established was awesome,” said Sierra Downs, a third year liberal arts major, and former VOICE reporter. She said, “There was a sense of team pride because everyone worked so hard to get to that point. There aren’t many feelings more fulfilling than that.”

The Mercer women’s cross country program has increased in membership in both of its two years. Although Mercer had a Women’s Cross Country team in the late 1980’s, it had been disbanded for almost two decades. The program was reestablished with two runners in 2010, grew to seven runners in 2011. The team has 11 runners for the 2012 season.

After finishing second in the Region XIX finals last season, the team traveled to New Mexico to participate in the Division I Junior College National Championships. They were unable to field a scoring team as five competitors from a school are required to place and only four runners were able to make the trip, but Coach Erin Cahill says she wanted to expose the team to upper level competition.

The 2011 team consisted of four American students and three international students from Brazil. According to the players, the diversity helped the team grow closer particularly as they each practiced a new language, Portuguese for the American women and English for the Brazilian women.

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Combining science fiction, Victorian wardrobe, and the attitude of the Wild West, Steampunk is either the most ingenious or least sensible of all subcultural phenomena.

The Steampunk following in New Jersey is one of the strongest in the world, with the Steampunk World’s Fair being held in Piscataway, NJ each year in May. The event features, among other things, displays of sword fighting, unusual musical acts, a panoply of homemade Steam punk gadget vendors, and even an absinthe tasting.

What is Steampunk exactly? It is a cultural movement, that focuses on ornate aesthetic sensibilities. Steampunk’s pseudo-Victorian style is its calling card. Corsets, double-breasted vests, brass-handled canes, future escape pocket watches, aviator goggles, and monocles riddled with gadgets and gears are the conspicuous of the Steampunk wardrobe, as shown on Steam punk shopping websites such as clockworkculture.com.

In many ways, Steampunk is a reaction to the modern throwaway culture, by adding painstaking craftsmanship to make modern technology look like old fashioned, hand-made mechanics. It reflects our love-hate relationship with technology. It captures the moment uncoincidentally that authors like H.G. Wells penned the first stories that would define modern sci-fi. In its quest to revert back to a more beautiful time, Steampunk ends up in science fiction’s birthplace.

“We bring together a lot of people that share the interest in the strange clothing and the time period it is based out of,” said former Mercer student Samantha Stein. Stein explained that she has a strong interest in fantasy and sci-fi, which first drew her to the genre of Steampunk.

Cinema such as “Wild Wild West” and “Sky Captain: World of Tomorrow,” and graphic novels like Alan Moore’s “League of Extraordinary Gentlemen” all capture different aspects of the Steampunk aesthetic. Former MCCC student, Samantha Stein said, “For me, it fantasizes about what the Victorian era could have been, had there been more imagination in those newborn sciences and industries. Stein listed some of her favorite steampunk novels and movies, including the “Leviathan” trilogy by Scott Westerfield, and movies such as “Hugo” and “Sherlock Holmes.”

“There are no masks in war,” Westerfield wrote in his book, “Leviathan,” a pseudo-Victorian novel set on the eve of the Great War. “There weren’t many sword fights in war, but Nor lastly.” Yet sword fights are common place in event features, among other things, displays of sword fighting, unusual musical acts, a panoply of homemade Steam punk gadget vendors, and even an absinthe tasting.

By Dan Povio
Senior Reporter
Not your grandma's counterculture

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Former MCCC student, Samantha Stein, said, "It fantasizes about what the Victorian era could have been, had there been more imagination in those newborn sciences and industries."

Stein listed some of her favorite Steampunk novels and movies, including the "Leviathan" trilogy by Scott Westerfield, and movies such as "Hugo" and "Sherlock Holmes."


The fear of misusing technology on a massive scale is a grand theme of sci-fi, and Steampunk captures this fear vividly. It captures the moment in history when authors such as J.G. Wells penned the first books that would define modern science fiction. In its quest to revert back to a more beautiful time, Steampunk ends up in science fiction's birthplace.

"It brings together a lot of people that share the interest in the strange clothing and the time period it is based out of," said former Mercer student Samantha Stein.

Stein explained that she was inspired by Steampunk and the interest in fantasy and science fiction, which first drew her to the genre of Steampunk. "The world of Steampunk is an alternate world, where the technologies of the dream power and Tesla-style electricity are combined to make bigger and better things... but they're still beautiful... they're still art."

All photos taken at the May 12, 2012 Steampunk World's Fair in Piscataway, NJ. LEFT: Fencers demonstrating sword play technique. ABOVE LEFT: Man in full home-made Steampunk attire featuring futuristic arm weaponry. ABOVE: Steampunk man in black costume with embroidered gears, top hat with skull and antlers.
Chinese activist artist’s work shown at Princeton

By James Resler-Wells
Senior Reporter

Joseph Wang and his fiancée, Diana Ho, say they were surprised to see 12 bronze animal heads mounted 10 feet high on posts in front of Robertson Hall, home of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Policy. The art is that of famous Chinese political activist and artist, Ai Weiwei.

“We were just driving along and were like ‘whoa, that can’t be them,’” said Wang in an interview with The VOICE. Wang studied classics at Princeton and graduated in 2001.

The exhibit is Ai Weiwei’s “Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals,” a travelling exhibition featuring the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac. Cast in bronze, the statues share the space known as Scudder Plaza with James Fitzgerald’s “Fountain of Freedom.” The Princeton University website featuring the exhibit says the installation has been successful. “You have to expect that often seeing the work of art will provoke as many questions as it answers.”

Steward believes the installation has been successful. “You have to expect that often seeing the work of art will provoke as many questions as it answers.”

Steward distanced the Art Museum from the controversy though, by adding: “in presenting such work we are not per se taking a stand on the artist’s political position, or on the government or issue they may be confronting through their work.”

Steward is concerned, though, that Ai’s public spotlight as an activist may overshadow the artistic value of his work. “One of the challenges of becoming known as a dissident artist, one who like Ai Weiwei is as famous for his dissident stance as for the works of art he makes, is that we may cease to see the art on its own terms.”

Steward believes the installation has been successful. “You have to expect that often seeing the work of art will provoke as many questions as it answers.”

Steward said, adding: “But if it provokes that curiosity to such a point than even a small percentage of viewers are motivated to consider what the answers might be, or to seek out more information, then I think it’s done its work.”
Financial aid headaches abound as semester starts

Students scramble to stay in classes when aid doesn’t come through

By Jamie Brickland
Senior Reporter

The Financial Aid office on the West Windsor campus was packed during the first week of the 2012 fall semester. Students fill every chair in the office while others stood, some even outside in the hallway, waiting to be seen. One of these students was Alex-Rae Martinez, a liberal arts major.

According to Martinez, she was given three choices by Mercer after missing the tuition deadline of Aug. 17 due to a miscommunication over documents. She could either pay in full, start a payment plan, or re-register for next semester. Martinez opted for the payment plan while she waits for her financial aid to finish processing. Though she is supposed to be reimbursed for the classes, she is still worried the financial aid money won’t come in time.

“I hope it comes through soon because I can’t make many more payments,” said Martinez.

For the previous three semesters she’s attended Mercer, Martinez hasn’t had a problem with financial aid. Many students like these are waiting for their financial aid to finish processing before they can pay their tuition. According to Financial Aid Director, Jason Taylor, Mercer received a record-high 10,088 financial aid forms in the fall of 2011, and he believes this year the college will receive even more.

In an effort to get students’ paperwork processed faster, Taylor said he is working to develop a weekly process that will allow the financial aid staff to handle this scale of students more consistently. His plan involves delegating certain duties to individual staff members rather than having everyone responsible for everything. Taylor is hoping this change will get things accomplished around the office a lot faster and in a more efficient manner.

Taylor also advised students to solve their issues with financial aid before registering for their classes. “This will help prevent them from getting their classes dropped,” he said.

In a follow up interview, Martinez said she visited the Financial Aid office on Sept. 10 and was told by staff that her financial aid still wasn’t verified.

“I’m even more worried now because my next payment for tuition is on Oct. 1,” said Martinez.

While some students have found the financial aid process stressful, others, like Lawrence Brinnius, a new media major, reported that the process was “relatively painless” despite the wait. Brinnius managed to get an extra extension on his tuition deadline to avoid having his classes dropped.

“[Martha Gunning, within Counseling Services], helped me push my deadline to September 5,” said Brinnius. He then added that he benefited from seeing a counselor rather than handling the situation on his own.

However, not all students were able to get their deadlines pushed back. Culinary arts major William Reyes said he was informed that his paperwork may not be processed until October.

“When asked about the delay, Taylor said it takes at least 4-6 weeks to process a student’s forms if there are no corrections needed. He continued, “We encourage students to apply early if they want us to process their forms on time.”

Martinez and Brinnius both admitted to handing in paperwork either immediately before or later than the August 17 deadline.

The VOICE also spoke with digital media arts major, Stacy Olschewski, who felt like the Financial Aid staff wasn’t very helpful or sensitive to her situation. Olschewski is emancipated from her parents. She was told by the staff that without getting information from her parents needed to complete her form, she would have to pay her tuition out of pocket.

According to Taylor, the state of New Jersey doesn’t honor emancipation. “We have to abide by the law,” he said.

According to Taylor, another way students may lose or not receive financial aid is if they don’t attend their classes, which will then result in a bill from Mercer.

However, Taylor said, “If a student shows potential and shows they want to be here, then we will help them.”

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HPE: not for me

Mercer’s mandatory gym class is as patronizing as it is useless

Kem Napier

You know what I hate? Running at someone else’s beat. That’s why I can’t stand the HPE required credits. As a college student, I don’t need to pay 500 dollars for someone who grew up watching Gunsmoke to tell me to wear a condom and eat my veggie. If I care about personal fitness I’d use the free gym located in the same damn building.

Originally part of the Gen. Ed. program, Health and Fitness was separated into its own division in the early 1990’s as part of an effort to achieve state-wide consistency in the Gen. Ed. department. This made sense at the time because a majority of transfer institutions don’t have an HPE requirement and the class, in most cases, does not transfer. Perhaps because these classes are just recycled high school health lessons, wrapped in a garish 500 dollar price tag?

A recent VOICE poll shows that 90 percent of the 30 Mercer students surveyed thought that the requirements were unnecessary, with 76 percent stating that they didn’t learn anything new. Student sentiments ranged from second year Liberal Arts student Miranda Santiago’s “it did not make me more healthy or active” to a more aggressive “those courses are bullshit” by Michad Hernandez, second year Liberal Arts student.

“It was pointless and has absolutely nothing to do with my major” said Michal Hernandez, second year Business major.

The presence of non-transferable, mandatory health classes does nothing to stifle the feeling of Mercer being “13th grade” and fail to combat the already scrutinized image of community colleges.

As of 2008, Mercer is one of eight NJ community colleges [out of 19] that has an HPE requirement, but is the only college that has three required credits [Camden, Middlesex and Gloucester have one credit requirement]. Furthermore, none of the classes offered are worth more than two credits, forcing students to take [and pay for] at least two unnecessary classes.

This wastes time that could be spent working towards a degree and valuable transferable credits. Is this because Mercer thinks its student body is fatter, or do they just need the extra cash to pay for fancy signs and make up for otherwise inadequate health care?

According to a faculty member who has served on the Curriculum Committee but who asked to remain anonymous because he worried for his job safety, “The full-time professor who teaches HPE – also the president of the faculty union – is known to have a death grip on those classes. No matter how many times other faculty members have politely suggested moving to either a one credit version [of HPE] or simply making it optional – which has been floated a number of times – he has gone ballistic.”

There is nothing redeeming about HPE, it doesn’t even transfer. “If I have to pay for the class and it’s mandatory to take, my credits should transfer” Hernandez said.

The only things that make me run are rabid dogs, ice-cream trucks and my own whimsical, fun-loving demeanour. When it comes to dealing with the completely unnecessary HPE requirement, I’d rather be chasing an answer than fleeing a problem.

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MCCC Cafeteria – West Windsor Campus

To RSVP, or for more information, contact Judy Grausso in the Liberal Arts Building, Room 135, West Windsor Campus, at 609.570.3358 or graussoj@wpunj.edu

Lindsay Le Duc
Major: Education

The May 9, 2011 article by Ali Mirza, entitled “The Funky Velvet Division: sex, drugs and...oh yeah, rock n’ roll” has been removed from The College VOICE website (www.mccvoice.org). The people and places named in the article and contained in the photo that accompanied it are real, but the band they were reported to have played in, and the band’s various exploits detailed in the article, appear to have been fabricated by the author, resulting in the article’s retraction.

The VOICE holds itself to the highest standards of journalistic integrity and works diligently to ensure that all information reported is verified and accurate. If you see an error of fact, please write to the editor at pollen.laura@gmail.com so that it can be verified and corrected. If you would like to write a response to an article, again, contact the editor. Provided the response fits our policy guidelines that can be found online, we will ensure that it is printed. Everyone must have a voice.
Paul Ryan’s “Path to Prosperity” document is a bad plan for college students

Financial aid proposals offer little comfort to current students

percent of a person's discretionary income. This income-based payment system would cap payments at an amount intended to be an affordable level based on income and family size.

Romney, by contrast, thinks too much aid is the problem. In “A Chance for Every Child: Mitt Romney’s Plan for Restoring the Promise of American Education,” Romney says “during the period that the cost of tuition increased 439 percent, federal spending on Pell Grants increased 475 percent — yet this has only fed the growth in costs.”

Romney’s stump speech and campaign materials show that he feels that increasing the cost of government run programs will not be enough. Romney’s proposal to privatize government aid, such as the rises in the cost of college costs, Romney has indicated that students feel too entitled to financial aid and that the inability to pay should not be so widely accepted.

For Keon White, the problems remain. He says his mother has enough money in her career to support herself and her son, but it is not enough to cover the ever increasing costs of a higher education even at a community college. And neither presidential candidate has proposed a way to attract new humanistic programs to streamline the bureaucratic process and cut back on the complicated paperwork involved in applying for aid.
Dear Innocent,
If your lack of guilt is more than just nominal, you have nothing to worry about.

-The VOICE

Dear Concerned Fan,
Most of your homework should be doable on Friday/Saturday. The football season is only four months long, you can pick up your social life again in February.

-The VOICE

Dear Robin’s Son, Smokey
A more proactive solution would be to invest in an electronic cigarette before 2013. “E-cigs” are cleaner, healthier alternatives to smoking, and they will not be banned on campus next semester. Until then, smoke ‘em if you got ‘em.

-The VOICE

NOTE: THIS FEATURE IS FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PROBLEMS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.