

## University

# Influx of returning vets may set record

by Art Goldschmidt

Penn State administrators must scramble to prepare for the influx of Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans who qualify for federal benefits under the Post 9-11 GI Bill passed by Congress in July.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports that 112,000 veterans applied for educational benefits from May through July 2009. Nearly all will qualify for the new benefits, which include tuition charges, a living allowance comparable to what military families receive, and even a \$1,000 annual allowance for textbooks. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the projected cost will be \$62 billion over the next decade.

“This fall you’re going to see the largest influence of vets on campus since Vietnam. We’ll be changing the landscape of American classrooms,” Brian Hawthorne, 24, regional director of

“[World War II veterans] raised questions in class [and] had pretty critical comments to make based on their own exposure to life overseas and in the armed forces that were very stimulating and made for exciting instruction. One simply dared not go before a class of those people without having something to say.”

Professor Kent Forster

Student Veterans of America, recently told U.S. News and World Report:

What is this likely to mean for Penn State? Statewide student enrollment, as of November 2008, was 92,613, an increase of 2,000 from the previous academic year, with the largest increase in the World Campus. University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses will be challenged by an influx of returning veterans in 2009 and more so in the years to come.

In an August 3 press release, Penn State’s Office of Public Information predicted that as many as 340 degree-seeking veterans—twice the number enrolled during spring 2009—can be enrolled at University Park through the Yellow Ribbon Program, under which Penn State has agreed to share tuition costs with the Veterans Administration if costs exceed those of the state’s most expensive public institution. More than 1,000 U.S. colleges

and universities, especially the expensive private ones, have signed up for the Yellow Ribbon Program. For Penn State, the program’s main cost will be forgoing part of the additional charges customarily levied on out-of-state students.

Combined with the Commonwealth Campuses, a total of 1,460 veterans may be enrolled, approximately twice the number of veterans enrolled at Penn State in spring 2009.

John Romano, vice president for Commonwealth Campuses, stated that precise enrollment figures are not usually available until the sixth week in the semester. Because the Yellow Ribbon Program may cause some veterans who reside in Pennsylvania to attend universities or colleges elsewhere, just as it may enable Penn State to attract additional out-

see Veterans, pg. 20

## PSU’s Second Life encourages students to get one

by John Meier

The future has made a great deal of promises, mostly through the voice of science fiction films and books, but we have yet to see flying cars or man on Mars or The Matrix. Or maybe we do have that last one after all. In the eponymous film, The Matrix was a fictional world generated by computers, a virtual reality where every living person existed and some could fly and dodge bullets. There is actually a free, computer generated virtual world where anyone can fly and interact with other people in another Earth; it is Second Life.

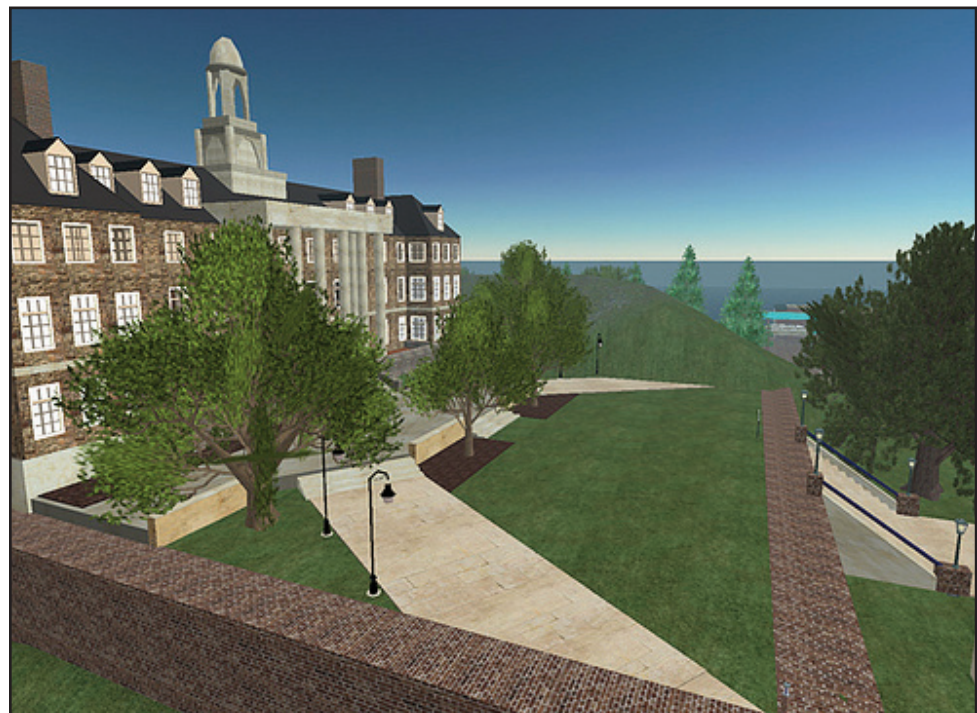
Much of the real estate in Second Life is the property of organizations or companies, which often purchase one or more of the standard “island” sized properties. They often use this land to create a virtual presence in the world as a way to engage customers, interest potential employees or to conduct meetings and informational events. In a global economy and worldwide commerce distance, is often the limit, though it

has no meaning in a virtual world where travel is instantaneous.

Penn State has a number of islands in Second Life: two main islands, an island for the College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST), an island for the Penn State Berks Campus, an island for the Penn State World Campus, and an island in Teen Second Life for the Penn State Admissions Office. Since almost any object can be created in Second Life for only the cost of time, it is often used to create a presence for a real institution or service. It can also allow users from across the world to interact in a similar environment to the real world. Research projects in Second Life can also take advantage of the large scale social and economic interactions going on between the millions of registered users.

“I think that there are people who don’t believe in the virtual world and think that the only world we live in is this one,” said

see Second Life, pg. 22



Graphic located at Flickr  
One example of Penn State’s Second Life offerings is Old Main, home of the university administration. Second Life offers research, marketing and social networking opportunities to users.

from Veterans, pg.19

of-state students, the immediate impact of the Post 9-11 GI Bill is unpredictable.

Because of the workload caused by the anticipated influx of veterans, the director of Penn State's Office of Veterans' Affairs, Brian Clark, declined to be interviewed. He did mention in passing that, not only are he and his staff stretched to the limit, but the Department of Veterans Affairs is slow to complete its paperwork. A secretary estimated that the office has so far received 100 veterans' requests and may get "several hundred more" for fall semester 2009.

Future enrollments of Iraq and Afghan war veterans will grow markedly, Romano predicted. The impact could well resemble that of the veterans' influx after World War II. Historian Michael Bezilla, director of Advancement Projects and

Communications in the Office of University Relations, noted that all entering Penn State freshman in 1946-47 had to go to Commonwealth Campuses and even to other colleges, like Gannon, St. Francis of Loretto, and Mansfield State, before transferring to the main campus. Entering women, he stated, were unable to enroll at the main campus for three years, unless they lived in the Centre Region. Only in 1949 did the "famous five hundred" women breach the barrier, making the freshman class coeducational once again.

In 1947, veterans made up 5,362 out of Penn State's student body of about 8,400. The number of veterans reached 5,597 in the academic year 1948-49. However, the Faculty Bulletin of Nov. 3, 1950, reported that in fall semester of that year the number of veterans had dropped to 3,154.

Penn State is a much larger and more diverse university than it was six decades ago. Although the proportion of veterans

to the student body as a whole may rise, it will never reach 64 percent as it did in 1947. But, if history serves, Penn State professors can expect high demands from vets returning this fall.

Quoting the late Kent Forster, professor of European history from 1940 to 1980, Michael Bezilla writes in Penn State: an Illustrated History, that students who had served in World War II "gave a different leaven to the undergraduate student body. They raised questions in class [and] had pretty critical comments to make based on their own exposure to life overseas and in the armed forces that were very stimulating and made for exciting instruction. . . . One simply dared not go before a class of those people without having something to say. They wanted no part of an instructor who tried to get by without adequate preparation."

Penn State student veterans are likely to demand greater accountability from their

teachers, more career-oriented courses, and accelerated programs of study. They will try to catch up with the men and women their age who entered college directly from high school. These trends should impact the Penn State College of Technology and the World Campus, which already serves many men and women in uniform, more than Penn State's conventional academic programs.

Because most of the veterans served in the Middle East, some will demand more courses related to that area. A recent article in Inside Higher Education speculated that they will expect their professors to approach the Middle East in a pragmatic and empirical, as opposed to ideological, way. Certainly the field experience of these Iraq and Afghanistan veterans will make them valued informants for their classmates. In this respect, at least, the landscape of American classrooms will change.

*Register Now for the Hottest Footrace . . .  
 . . . in the Coolest Place!*

**10th Annual  
 Tussey mOUntaiNBACK  
 50 Mile Relay &  
 Ultramarathon**

Proceeds  
 support



- ⇒ Gain an incredible experience of teamwork!
- ⇒ Designed for both recreational and competitive runners!
- ⇒ See world-class ultramarathoners in action!
- ⇒ Prerace dinner, post-race celebration!
- ⇒ One incredible Saturday!
- ⇒ Not running? Volunteer! Call 235-6390  
 ~ Registration closes Sept. 19 ~

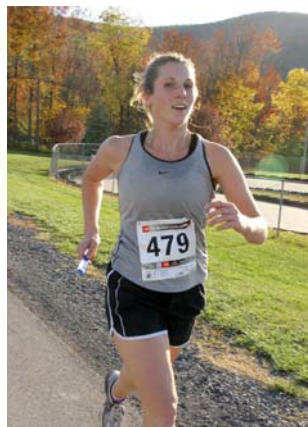


Photo by fongstudio2.com



**October 3, 2009**

"I have never had more fun at a race!" - Jeff McClarren, Bellefonte, PA  
 "Your race is top notch!" - Mark Lundblad, 2007 National Champion  
 "...challenging and scenic!" - Anne Lundblad, 2007 National Champion

*Just for the hill of it!® Get complete details and register today at:*

**tusseymountainback.com**

**WEBSTER'S**  
**BOOKSTORE CAFÉ**  
*a community gathering place since 1999*

**128**  
 S. Allen St.  
 Downtown,  
 State College  
 (814)  
**234-9712**

**Organic, Fair-Trade Coffees**  
**A Ton 'O Teas**  
**Amazing Vegetarian**  
**Lunches & Homemade Soups**  
**Everyday**

**This is  
 what  
 LOCAL  
 looks  
 like.**

The New Digs  
**WEBSTER'S**  
**CAFÉ ON AARON**

**434**  
 W. Aaron Dr.  
 in the  
 Aaron Plaza  
 (814)  
**272-0433**

# Forum invites reader input on diversity discussion

by Jaimie Campbell

If you are reading this newspaper, it is safe to say that you have an interest in all things Centre County. Whether it be social, political or spiritual, you have wondered what are the concerns and needs of your neighbors or just simply what are they doing that is new and exciting. Maybe, you just wondered what people of other ethnic backgrounds are involved in to enhance Centre County. Here's a new opportunity.

The Forum on Black Affairs (FOBA) has organized the Martin Luther King Jr. banquet on the Penn State campus for more than three decades, and this event has always been well attended by the Penn State community. But this organization is so much more than an annual banquet.

FOBA is made up of staff, students and faculty of Penn State University. Membership is not limited to University

We are hoping and expecting to increase dialogue about all things, some you may want to know and some you may not, but we will at least be engaging you in a conversation that we should be having. So consider this an invitation to discuss, raise your Voice and develop a conversation on the topics of race, gender, and any other topic that can help strengthen the diversity community here at PSU and in Centre County as well.

Park. FOBA has active members at several of the commonwealth campuses.

FOBA is

"... dedicated to ensuring that all Black persons participate fully in and benefit from the mission of the University, as a land grant institution and as a leader in higher education in the nation, to provide educational opportunities for all citizens in the

several pursuits and professions in life.

"... dedicated to the principle of equality for all people. This dedication is manifested in a renewed commitment to achieve equal opportunity for Blacks at the Pennsylvania State University through affirmative action and through effective administration of policies and procedures of this institution."

"We are people who believe that we must take an active role in initiating and maintaining an environment for Black members of the University community that encourages individual and community development. The Forum on Black Affairs welcomes the participation of all who share this vision of an improved and dynamic University Community."

FOBA is involved in a number of programs. We provide two scholarships every year (named after Fannie Lou Hamer and W.E.B. Dubois) for students with excellent academic achievement and service to the African-American community.

We have a civic program in which we provide the presidents of the university with a "Black Paper" providing a real look at why faculty and staff stay or leave the university and what is the impact on the students they serve. And we have cultural and social activities. The Martin Luther King Banquet and The Women On Black Affairs' (WOBA) Annual Retreat throughout the academic year are our two biggest ones.

FOBA also seeks to form meaningful partnerships with other organizations in the community to carry out valuable and worth-

while projects.

In this era where increased, intelligent conversation is needed surrounding the concerns of race and equity issues, FOBA provides a haven where these conversations can be held in a



thoughtful, rational and most all a respectful environment. FOBA is determined to bring issues facing the diversity community to the forefront at PSU, and in Centre County as well


Voices has offered us this space to dedicate to this conversation on the page. So for the next 10 issues of Voices, a member of FOBA will discuss issues related to the diverse community that it serves. The articles may range from politics, academics, social and just possibly lifestyle issues that may affect your neighbors in ways you never imagined!

We are hoping and expecting to increase dialogue about all things, some you may want to know and some you may not, but we will at least be engaging you in a conversation that we should be having. So consider this an invitation to discuss, raise your Voice and develop a conversation on the topics of race, gender, and any other topic that can help strengthen the diversity community here at PSU and in Centre County as well.

Please join us by writing in ideas or passing this column on to others you know.

FOBA meets every first Wednesday starting in October. We will be having our first program on Sept. 23 at 6:30 p.m. in the Alumni Hall at the Nittany Lion Inn. At this meeting we will be welcoming our new staff and faculty of color to the Penn State family; it would be great to see you there as well.

More information about and a membership application for FOBA can be found on our Web site at <http://www.foba.psu.edu>.



**Teamsters  
Local 8**  
**PRIDE - UNITY - STRENGTH**  
**PROUD TO SUPPORT OUR TROOPS  
OUR COMMUNITY AND YOUTH SPORTS**

**Teamsters Local 8**  
Proudly Supports  
Local Youth Activities

*The Men and Women of  
Teamsters Local 8 Encourage  
Supporting Local Youth Activities*



PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY PARK, PA 16802

from *Second Life*, pg. 19

Penn State research assistant Joel Solkoff. "I think they are sadly mistaken."

Unlike some online worlds, such as the popular *World of Warcraft*, *Second Life* has no monthly fees for the basic user. Users can purchase money used in game, "Linden dollars," with real money that provides the company behind the game with a source of income. It also leases the virtual real estate to individuals and organizations on a monthly basis.

Each user sets up an avatar, which is a representation of them in the game world. These avatars are often human looking, but can be anything such as an animal or fantastic creature or even an inanimate object. The avatar acts as the person controlling them: conversing with other avatars by chat, sometimes known as instant messaging; walking, flying or teleporting around the virtual world; or interacting with other objects in the world, such as chairs or buildings. Objects are created for the world by the users of the game and through a special programming language called the Linden Scripting Language. These objects can also move and operate on their own. This allows for creation of items like cars, clothing with moving images or almost anything imaginable.

And while many users may join *Second Life* for its entertainment value, Solkoff, who is helping to write research on virtual reality, said there are more serious real-world applications.

"Virtual reality is a way of planning for the future by creating a place, a three- and four- dimensional place, the fourth being

time, in which its possible to try out ideas such as, 'Is it a good idea to put some more effort into the street cut on Calder Avenue so that people on wheelchairs don't tip over?'" he said. "You can try that out without going to the expense of pouring the concrete and watching people tip out and break their heads on it."

Success in *Second Life* is measured in some similar ways to real life, such as money and property as well as respect in the community. Creativity is highly prized and since the cost of creation is mainly time it is possible for anyone to be successful.

Interactions in the game can even be recorded as videos, which spread outside the game as movie shorts or music video remixes. Since avatars can also be customized, the appearance of other users in itself reflects a dramatic diversity and can challenge the expectations of a novice user. Despite the seemingly limitless possibilities, *Second Life* seems more like the real world than many other virtual worlds and online games. Most avatars look human and objects are often those found in the real world at their normal scale.

More information on Penn State's involvement in second life can be found on the Web site of the Educational Gaming Commons.

Getting started with *Second Life* and signing up for an account can be done online at Linden Labs official website <http://secondlife.com>

*John J. Meier is a Science Librarian at the Pennsylvania State University. One of his research interests is using technology appropriately in libraries and higher education.*



graphic located at Flickr

The *Second Life* dorm room, Penn State style, is one place Penn State avatars can reside.

*Jewelry*

*Theme Party Costumes*

*gifts*  
*bags*  
*decor*  
*shoes*  
*ties*  
*pins*  
*hats*  
*belts*

*Vintage Clothing and Gifts!*

*the Rag and Bone*

224 East Calder Way  
State College

238-2966



**SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT!**

Contact the Law Office of Katharine R. Allen, PC for a FREE consultation on your criminal record expungement options.

**814-237-5529**

[www.kralaw.net](http://www.kralaw.net)  
[KRA@kralaw.net](mailto:KRA@kralaw.net)

**Is the past threatening your future??**