

University

Debt load growing for PSU students

by Dave DeIulius

Although Penn State students will be an average of \$29,000 in debt when they graduate—well above the national average of \$20,200 for the same cohort—many see their degrees as well worth a veritable mountain of debt.

Alyssa Fettinger, a graduating senior studying health policy and administration, estimates that upon graduation, she will have to repay more than \$25,000 in student loans. She is also aware that 71 percent of Penn State graduates are in the same position, but despite the state of the economy and an entry-level starting salary, she would be willing to take on up to \$10,000 more just to attend Penn State.

This willingness to take on more and more debt, as well as institutional tuition increases, are two reasons cited by the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study to explain why the amount of money students borrow has long been growing.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, two out of every three students borrowed a total of \$75.1 billion in 2008-2009, a 25 percent increase from the previous year. Although the amount borrowed has been consistently growing for years, a 25 percent surge is the largest recorded. These numbers highlight how taking on debt has become a prerequisite for many families in paying for higher education, and can force recent graduates to postpone further schooling and delay milestones such as buying a home, getting married and having children.

Anna Bernat, a junior who will have an estimated \$40,000 worth of debt by the time she graduates, said that although the thought of paying back her loans is overwhelming and she will probably have to put off law school for a “few years,” she looks at her debt load as an investment that will

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High Debt States	
District of Columbia	\$ 29,793
Iowa	\$ 28,174
Connecticut	\$ 26,138
New York	\$ 25,950
New Hampshire	\$ 25,785
Minnesota	\$ 25,558
Pennsylvania	\$ 25,219
Vermont	\$ 25,047
Rhode Island	\$ 24,973
Maine	\$ 24,916

Penn State students have, on average, a higher level of debt when they graduate than most students in the country, according to the U.S. Department of Education. But they are not alone. Pennsylvania overall ranks among the top 10 states (including the District of Columbia) for student debt load.

Source: “Student Debt and the Class of 2008” report by the Project on Student Debt

We celebrate surviving a dark period in history

by Jamie Campbell

So... summer has finally arrived, kids are out of school ready to enjoy their summer break, parents are going crazy trying to find something for those same kids to do to “enhance their summer break” before the summer holiday season really kicks in. It has often been said that Memorial Day is the kick off for summer, followed by July Fourth (or Arts Fest, depends on which one you can afford to enjoy), which provides a midpoint. Then Labor Day ends it all.

That covers the summer right? Wrong. (Oh come on, you knew it was coming.)

There are a few holidays that are missed, or given a quick mention and then quickly forgotten. It just so happens this year two of these holidays fall back to back. June 19 marks the holiday known as Juneteenth.

“Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at



Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. Note that this was two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation—which had become official January 1, 1863.”

No fireworks, very little notoriety and quite a few would treat Juneteenth as a made up holiday. I mean really, didn’t we just hear a few months ago that slavery didn’t amount to “diddly” in American history? But yet several states (by my count five) recognize and give credit to Confederate Memorial Day (April 26). Proclamations and words extolling the virtues of this aspect of southern history ring out, and don’t be anti-American history by questioning this celebration.

To me this type of celebration is akin to romanticizing a tragic memory not to learn from it, but to wallow in its ignorance for sake of keeping “history” alive. By no means will African-Americans, Blacks, Coloreds, Negroes ever forget slavery (we’ve got the names to remind us every day of who we are and what we went through to evolve to this point). We don’t need to be reminded that it was a great time for a majority of the population at that time.

What we want to celebrate is that we made it through one of the darkest periods of our time. Yes, we want to know where we have come from, and this isn’t a point of enjoyment. It was a struggle and a testament to those who came before for those

yet to come that you can make as an African-American when the odds seem insurmountable. Texas did not get the news until two years after the Emancipation Proclamation; news traveled slowly then. However, it seems that regression moves swiftly now. Arizona just passed legislation that no matter how you slice it, will lead to racial profiling. If you have never felt like or have been profiled, great, but if you have, you have clear understanding that anything can be used to stop, hold or question you. To be asked for “papers” harkens back to a time when being asked for poll taxes, being in a certain part of town after sundown required



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permission from someone was the norm, and yes, some have not forgotten those times and the punishments, and humiliations that went along with it because they lived through it. This "law" is supported by folks saying things like, "Well something had to be done," "We were forced to do this," "This is what the people wanted." Which people wanted this, the people who are falsely detained? Who forced you, and why wasn't this issue a major problem, let's say two or three years ago? Things have not changed that greatly, right?

Well maybe they have. We should remember Juneteenth and celebrate it, not for the darkness of the past but for the brightness of the present that it brings us.

June has also been titled "Black Music Month" by (wait for it...) President George W. Bush (yep, him) in 2002

What we want to celebrate is that we made it through one of the darkest periods of our time and yes we want to know where we have come from, but this isn't a point of enjoyment.

(Wikipedia contradicts this, but every other reference that I saw gives credit to W.). I encourage you to enjoy the works of Stanley Clarke, Max Roach, Grover Washington, and Ella Fitzgerald, and of course the great Lena Horne when you can. Jazz at best embodies the spirit of the American idea; creativity, improvising to make better, smart and it was created within these lands, to inspire people here and around the world. Also, if NPR can do rap music, you can too. It's American and some of it is just fantastic. Rap has

been called many things good and bad, but it is on your child's playlist either way. Listen to it, because they are. It will give you something to talk about with them during the long car to grandma's house. Just don't sing along unless you are prepared for their giggles and eye rolls.

The last summer holiday I wanted to chat about is Father's Day. Before anyone says that I forgot Mother's Day; I didn't. I just didn't think I could get away with writing "thank you" 900 times. Someone once said to me that "fathers are like

offensive linemen, nobody knows who they are until they mess up."

Think on that for a moment and you might agree it. We always are shown on film or TV as the bad fathers or father figures who could be good, but somehow always manage to fall just short of greatness (think Homer, Al Bundy, Ray, Curtis etc.) and the ones shown in real life are often just a step above earthworms (no offense to the earthworms).

I know how much my dad means to me, and all the horrid ties, lighters (when he was trying to stop smoking), sweaters (that I borrowed), watches (that we swapped) could not say how much I have appreciated him. Good parents are few and far between, and statically speaking even more so are good fathers. So to all of the worthy, good, hard working dads take your bow and enjoy your day. You deserve it.

Enjoy your summer, be healthy and safe.



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eventually pay off.

"For the most part, my tuition is covered through grants and scholarships. I do, however, have loans to cover my apartment, food and incidentals," she said. "Someday, all of this school and incurred debt will be worth it. I know that a degree from Penn State is influenza—especially when dealing with alumni. It could very well be the key to my success in life."

According to a report released in December 2009 by the Project on Student Debt, the average student loan debt levels for graduating seniors have risen 24 percent from \$18,650 in 2004 to \$23,200 in 2008. Also in 2008, 1.4 million students, or over 67 percent, graduated from four-year colleges and universities with student loans to repay, up 27 percent from 1.1 million students in 2004. Similarly, the average student debt load of \$20,200 in 2009 is 20 per-

cent higher than the \$16,850 average in 2004.

According to the same report, Pennsylvania was ranked seventh in average student debt load for the class of 2008, and the Penn State University system was joined by West Chester University, Temple University, University of Pittsburgh-Bradford and Lincoln University on a list of "high debt" public college and universities. Bryn Athyn College of the New Church was the lone Pennsylvania school to appear on the list of public and private "low debt" colleges and universities.

Lisa Powers, the director of Penn State's Department of Public Information, explained Bernat's attitude by citing research that suggests more highly educated individuals are happier, healthier, make better financial decisions, have much less unemployment and contribute more to society, as well as studies showing evidence of a very high return on higher education and

its accompanying debts.

"Penn State graduates are willing to take on this cost because they see it as an investment in their future. Surveys have shown that students see higher education as a key to success in life, and indeed we do produce successful graduates," she said.

"Penn State's outstanding international reputation has value, and the quality of a Penn State education is well-known and well-respected. As a world-class research university, Penn State offers a wide range of opportunities and provides students with lifelong skills that can help them get ahead."

Nevertheless, the decreasing affordability



Anna Bernat

of a Penn State education has not gone unnoticed. A student aid reform package signed into law in March and hailed by President Barack Obama as "one of the most significant investments in higher education since the G.I. Bill," will save the government nearly \$61 billion over the next decade by eliminating fees to private banks that act as intermediaries in providing student loans. The savings will allow for 820,000 more Pell Grants by 2020 and an increase in the maximum grant from \$5,550 to \$5,975.

Bernat, however, is not convinced that it will be noticeably cheaper to attend Penn State anytime soon.

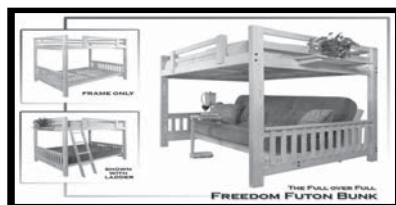
"People will always want to come to Penn State regardless of how much it costs," she said. "I don't like giving the government more control over student loans, but the system wasn't working well the way it was. Something needs to change."

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