

# Employers disregard party school stigma

by Dave Deilius

Penn State graduates this May who are still looking for a job can breathe a little easier, because despite the local discussion around alcohol abuse, major employers say Penn State's party school reputation is not getting in the way of interviews or hiring.

That universities are more readily identified with football than academics is not new. In 2006 the University of Phoenix aimed to boost its national profile by purchasing the rights to the Arizona Cardinals' new football stadium. According to people interviewed for this story, however, Penn State's name becoming analogous with alcohol consumption is problematic. Recently, the death of engineering student Joseph Dado and Penn State's designation as the nation's number one party school by the Princeton Review has started a conversation about the value of a Penn State degree in light of its reputation as a party

school.

But Penn State Director of Career Services Jack Rayman said that he interacts with more than 1,500 employees and never once has the party school stigma been brought up, even in social situations. He likened the Princeton Review's party school ranking to coverage of Sandra Bullock or Tiger Woods, and said that although he is not proud of the school's association with alcohol abuse, some employers treat it as little more than an icebreaker without realizing how bad the situation is.

"If you don't get past the icebreaker, an interview will be very superficial until you get to something more substantive," he said.

Mark Brender, the vice president of communications for GeoEye Inc., confirmed Rayman's outlook, saying that company representatives collected several outstanding resumes at last month's Career Fair, and Penn State's reputation will not be a factor in determining whether they get hired.

"It has not impacted my decisions on whether to contact a Penn State recent graduate or not. As someone who has hiring authority, I typically look for completion of degree, relevant work experience or internships while in school and a well-above-average GPA," he said. "Face to face interviews are the best way to gage a person's ability to serve in any particular position."

Similarly Dan McClain, vice president for Enterprise Communication at Northrup Grumman Corporation, said that the only rankings the company takes into account when hiring are not party school or football rankings, but much less-noticed and hyped academic program statistics.

"When considering college graduates for positions at Northrup Grumman, we evaluate all candidates based on their individual background, educational achievement and experience," he said. "We do not take into consideration their university's reputation for non-academic factors such as whether

they are perceived as a party or jock school."

This was echoed by Gloria Barone, the corporate communications director for CIGNA Corporation, and Peter Price, the director of Global Communications for Prudential Financial.

"We have no preconceived notions about Penn State and have hired recent graduates and alumni," Price said. "We always look at academics and curriculum as part of assessing an institution as well as a candidate's overall accomplishments, especially as they relate to matches with our varied job opportunities."

Price's assessment held true for Corey Stephens. The 2009 chemical engineering graduate, who was hired after graduation by Albemarle Corp., said the biggest advantage of attending Penn State is the robust-

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# Radio show raises awareness of sustainable living

by Chris Franklin

The hosts of "Sustainability Now," an hour-long radio show that airs every Friday at 4 p.m., have a simple goal: to make the Penn State community aware of sustainable living as both a concept and a lifestyle.

The hosts Peter Buckland and Mike Shamalla sit across from one another in the TheLion.fm radio studio located in a cramped room no bigger than a doubles dorm. The two hosts sit at a wooden table fiddling with buttons, microphones and laptops with Brian Snyder, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), and Kyla Smith, a certified Pennsylvania organic inspector. They are meeting to discuss sustainability, an idea that has become a buzzword in politics and contemporary culture.

Each show begins with the hosts asking their guests what the term "sustainability" means to them. The question may sound easy, but Shamalla believes that an easy answer is hard to come by.

"I think it really is this super complex

integrated network of things like culture, economics and, the big one, ecology," Shamalla said. "Sustainability is a lot about being fair...it's about being fair to people, not raping the oceans and not taking more than you need," he said.

Buckland seems to have anticipated the question and slides a white business card with a quotation on the back across the table. It reads: "Sustainability is the possibility that humans and other life will flourish on Earth forever." The quote is from author John Ehrenfeld. Buckland's face seems to indicate that the card answers the question better than he can.

Buckland, doctoral candidate in educational theory and policy, has known Shamalla, a graduate student in landscape architecture, for most of his life growing up



Peter Buckland

in State College.

Shamalla suggested the idea for the show to Buckland at a party and it has been going strong since 2009.

"If through this radio show we can get people to just recalibrate their diet just a little bit or driving habits, that changes things...it changes things in a really important way," Buckland said.

On this particular Friday afternoon, the pair is talking about sustainable agriculture and organic farming. Smith and Snyder are posed questions regarding how farmers view sustainability and what constitutes organic farming practices.

Shamalla acts as the ring leader of the show, often posing initial questions to guests, while Buckland often follows up with reactions and thoughts to guest responses. The show flows like a genuine conversation and it's easy to see that the two hosts have been friends for some time, often completing one another's thoughts.

"Pete is really great on the radio and I knew that from the beginning, because Pete has really strong opinions about his beliefs



Mike Shamalla

and he's a really well spoken person that comes across well on the radio," Shamalla said.

"Sustainability Now" makes a point to keep the local listener engaged and to focus on the central region of Pennsylvania, often

including Penn State in their discussions.

Even though the hosts wish the university would include a specific goal regarding sustainability in its mission, they clearly believe that Penn State has given them a unique platform to discuss sustainability to students.

"Students are historically the best drivers for the environmental transformation of large colleges and universities," Buckland

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# Jewish-American promotes Palestinian cause

by Tamara Conrad

The Penn State Students for Justice in Palestine have been trying for more than a year to organize an event at which there is a representative for both the pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian perspective to debate the occupation in the West Bank. They have not succeeded.

But Anna Baltzer, a Jewish-American author and activist for Palestinian rights, told Voices in an interview that debating the issue is nonessential to the movement for Palestinian rights.

"In terms of the actual facts on the ground," Baltzer said, "they're not debatable."

The Students for Justice in Palestine brought Baltzer to speak at Penn State in April. Baltzer, a former Fulbright scholar, documented human rights abuses and supported Palestinian-led non-violent resistance to the occupation while volunteering with the International Women's Peace



Anna Baltzer

Service in the West Bank.

The segregation in the West Bank goes further than apartheid in Africa did, Baltzer said. In South Africa, black Africans were limited to 14 percent of the land; today Palestinians are limited to 7 percent in

Israel, said Baltzer, author of "Life in Occupied Palestine: Eyewitness Stories and Photos." The percentage is similar in the West Bank, she said.

Palestinians are getting pushed out of the West Bank, because the Israeli government and in essence the U.S. government, are paying Jewish people to move onto more Palestinian land, Baltzer charged during an interview with Voices. Pennsylvania's share of total U.S. military support for Israel will

be \$1.2 billion over the next 10 years, Baltzer said.

"For us to sort of get into this controversy sort of stuff, instead of really focusing and saying, 'OK, we know these are the facts, now what are we going to do about it?' can be counter productive," Baltzer said.

"We're at a point where we have to end the apartheid system first, and then look at ways for Jews and Christians and Muslims in the area to coexist in the future," said the Columbia graduate.

Baltzer said when she arrived to the West Bank she was initially shocked by the segregated road system for Israelis and Palestinians. She said the segregation stretches further, however.

"What hospital you can use, whether you can go to the hospital or not. What schools you can be at. Whether or not you have the right to build a home on your own land..."

Many have considered the two-state solution as a solution to the conflict between

Palestine and Israel, but Baltzer does not think this would work.

"It doesn't address the racism at all. It reinforces it and accommodates it," she said.

Whatever solution is conjured up, she said she hopes it is based on human rights and not nationalism.

Baltzer, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, said she grew up with a positive image of Israel.

"We talked about it as something that was a peace-seeking, democratic entity that was constantly under attack and constantly trying to preserve itself and defend itself against anti-Semitism," Baltzer said. She said the "myths" are not being recycled as much now.

"The sort of unconditional support for Israel is diminishing steadily over time among American Jews," Baltzer said. This

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# Penn State group releases first LGBTQA literary magazine

by Tamara Conrad

The students of Undertones have come out with their release of "Out and About," the first Penn State LGBTQA literary magazine, featuring personal essays, fictional stories, poetry and artwork.

Undertones, a campus organization for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community of color at Penn State, launched the new magazine in April.

Lianna Newman, the editor-in-chief of the magazine and president of Undertones, said she came up with the idea last spring. She said it took so long for the LGBTQA community to get its own literary magazine because, "I don't think anyone's ever thought of it."

UPAC approved funding for her project in the fall, and since then she has been gathering content for the magazine.

Newman said she wanted the magazine to

feature work from Penn State students statewide.

"I didn't want it to be a University Park thing," she said. "I wanted it to reach out to all campuses."

She pitched the idea to the Commission for LGBT Equity, which connects representatives of the LGBTQA community from all university campuses, to solicit content from Commonwealth campuses.

The magazine includes three personal essays, three fictional essays, seven art pieces and 11 poems.

Freshman Erika Pilgram submitted a personal memoir about her first kiss with a girl.

"It's a personal story, so it's kind of revealing, but I think it's something people can identify with," Pilgram said.

She said the essay was originally written for a class, but she saw a poster advertising the magazine and decided to submit it for entry.

Pilgram said she's excited about the magazine's release because it provides an outlet for the people she has met at the LGBTQA Resource Center on campus.

"Art has always been important to the

LGBTQA community," Pilgram said.

Freshman Shane Pendleton submitted "Surrender," a poem detailing his emotions that surfaced after having feelings for someone. He didn't act on those emotions.

"I heard the magazine was being put together, and I have a big collection of poems that I've been writing since I was 13," Pendleton said. "The poem is something I've had for a while, and I was confident about it."

The magazine can help people realize they're not as "different as society paints them to be," Pendleton said.

"I think if people saw the magazine and saw the work, they'll realize they're not alone in the way that they feel," he said. "They'll see that what they're going through is normal."

The elected Undertones board members who will take over next year plan to continue the magazine as an annual project, Newman said.

As for the community's response to the magazine, Newman was cautious.

"I think that the community that is acknowledging it is accepting it," she said.

# Huh?

What did you say?  
Could you repeat that?

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# Give graduates gift of time, confidence and civility

by Jamie Campbell

May is here already, and with it comes the natural order of things—Mother's Day, blooming flowers, blossoming trees, an increase in Dr. Seuss book sales and of course graduation. As the graduation season rapidly approaches, millions of people all over the world are getting ready to make their next step in life.

In celebration of these soon-to-be-graduates, many of you are trying to find great gifts to help them on their way. Let's see if I can help with some gift ideas for the new graduates.

First, give them the gift of confidence. You can give them this by reminding them that they have taken one step and have more to go. As we continue to examine the educational system, we must continually remind our new graduates that their degree



is worth the work that they have put forth. Nowadays, when people obtain fame for nothing or fame for being infamous, a degree means something. The obvious, of course, is that a degree can't be taken away, but it is so much more. The degree shows that one can succeed in the face of obstacles, great or small. Sometimes, the recent grads can look at those who are achieving without effort and lose the confidence that they worked so hard to build up. I think you should give it back to them.

How?

Do something that they aren't used to. Write them a note. The written word is one

to think on a small, personal scale and make appropriate adjustments in his or her life. This doesn't mean that all the fun should be cut out of your life, but Buckland suggests that responsibility needs to be considered.

"Our country is really good at getting people to enjoy fun, but in really bad ways," Buckland said.

of the most powerful weapons. This is something they can have when things start getting rough. A reminder that someone has belief in them may be all it takes to get them through. All the well-wishing texts get pushed down, voicemail deleted after 14 days, but a letter or card can last forever and still have a powerful impact on the individual.

Second, give them the gift of time. Not just a watch, (although it would be nice) but truly give them time. Time to find themselves, and yes I am well aware that they have had four (five, six, seven...) years to find themselves. They might have a job that

you wouldn't define as an ideal starting point, but remember it's their starting point, not yours.

I am pretty sure it took all of us some time to get where we are, and for many of us, we did not start on a perfect path. Give the recent grad time enough to find his or her way. Give the grad a chance to start small and begin to flourish in his or her own fashion. This gift also means that you will know when they have had enough time and they are floundering. At some point, however, we all needed a swift kick. Just realize timing is everything. Sometimes the best thing you can give someone is time, space and



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said. "There are so many people around here that are really concerned about sustainability."

Buckland and Shamalla believe that an issue as big as this requires each individual



Photo by Kelsey Stratton

Peter Buckland, far left, and Shamalla, far right, talk with guests, from right to left, Education Professor Dana Stuchul, Biology Professor Chris Uhl and Buddhist contemplative Tsultrim Datso. The three work together to educate about sustainability.



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ness of its alumni association, which he said outweighed any negative associations with its drinking culture.

"By easily relating to the interviewer my life at a major university, I was able to relax and transition into talking about my engineering attributes," he said. "When you have something much larger than yourself that you can use to relate to people, it makes it very easy to relax when talking to people you don't know."

Campus alcohol abuse is not only a Penn State problem. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, alcohol is involved in 68 percent of violent behavior, 52 percent of physical injuries and 85 percent of sexual assaults at college campuses nationwide, but Penn State statistics reinforce national averages.

According to University Health Services, the average number of emergency room visits has risen from 199 in 1999-2000 to 586 in 2008-2009 and the average blood-alcohol content of those students has similarly risen from .221 in 1999-2000 to .253 in 2008-2009. Although the university inherits many of its problems, with one-third of incoming students reporting binge drinking behavior. Many students come to Penn State because of its party school reputation, work hard to uphold that reputation and finally cement it nationally by voting in polls like the Princeton Review.

R. Scott Kretchmar, a professor of exercise and sport science in the Department of Kinesiology, said he has no problem with a social life, but is concerned that a campus with too much else going on can limit the

hard work and focused attention required to unlock the potential of its students.

"Even if only 20 percent of our graduates live out a life that is significantly less productive and rewarding that it could have been for want of curiosity, work, study and attention while at Penn State, that is a statistic that should give us pause," he said. "So my concern is not just with our ranking as a party school or with any reputation we may have. It is with the quality of potential employees that leave our institution with PSU degrees in hand. Our reputation will be affected even more by their success, or lack thereof, in the workplace."

Although 60 percent of arrests on State Patty's Day were non-Penn State students, graduates of smaller colleges and universities likewise cite more than just the ability to create an alcohol-fueled holiday as benefits of attending Penn State. Mike Kroner, a 2009 Waynesburg University graduate who was unable to find employment after graduation, said that when he thinks of Penn State, he thinks parties and athletics, but also opportunity.

"I don't remember anyone in high school or college saying they were visiting PSU for its academic prowess," he said. "It's not that it doesn't come across as a good school, but it seems like the social factors offered supersede the education from a reputation standpoint. But as someone who went to a small college, I see the advantages of going to a larger institution."

Clay Calvert, a communications and law professor who left Penn State for Princeton Review's number two ranked party school, the University of Florida, said that while both universities rank highly in both football and partying every year, those rankings

don't affect hiring decisions because they are reflecting different dimensions of each university.

"To the extent that one embraces a credo of a 'work hard, play hard' philosophy, I don't believe that graduates of either university suffer in terms of employment," he said. "Both universities have huge alumni networks that are extremely loyal to their graduates and that really trumps any negatives that one can draw from their reputations as schools that party hard."

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is truer for the younger generations of American Jews, she said.

"The seeds have been planted of doubt," Baltzer said, "and over time, hopefully, they'll blossom the ways that mine was into an understanding of why we have to come out of Israeli apartheid."

Baltzer encountered the Palestinian perspective of the occupation while backpacking throughout Iran, Syria and Lebanon. During this time, she was taken in by many Palestinian families that introduced her to a different perspective of the history and present of the region. She was prompted to research the history to "prove them wrong," but Baltzer said she soon learned that she grew up missing a lot of information.

As many Jewish Americans become skeptical, and even outright critical, of Israel's presence in the West Bank, tension and debate within the Jewish American community has also increased. While there are some Jewish Americans pushing against segregation, there are others who do not want to hear or talk about the issue.

Israel has always been considered a safe place for the Jewish people, Baltzer added, but it really isn't, because it exists through the oppression of other people, she said.

"By oppressing Palestinians, they are going to resist," Baltzer said. The media covers the violent resistance, but Baltzer said there's a long history of non-violent resistance.

"People think, 'Why aren't the Palestinians acting more like Gandhi or Martin Luther King?'" Baltzer said. "The Martin Luther Kings of Palestine are exactly where King was: They're in prison."

Baltzer said villages of people are

marching down to protest the wall taking away their land and to the checkpoints, being shot at with tear gas, sound bombs, rubber bullets and live ammunition. They hold sit-ins, sing freedom songs and get hosed by Israeli soldiers, Baltzer said.

When it comes to being a leader in the non-violent resistance movement, Baltzer gives credit to Palestinians.

"I've simply done what my conscience told me to do. I just sort of went to see, and then wrote it down, and then people wanted to read more, and I then told them, and then people wanted to hear, and I told them," said Baltzer, who has written scores of articles, appeared on The Daily Show and tours the country with her story. "The incredible wisdom of [Palestinian] people who are fighting for their freedom, they're my teachers."

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eventually, a good swift kick when that person really needs it.

Last, but surely not least, give the grad the gift of vocabulary. Words such as thank you, excuse me, sir/ma'am are slowly disappearing. Can you image the power that you could bestow on them by reminding them that the manners that they often dismiss as trivial are important. We have taken the time to educate these graduates with continual refreshers in the realms of academics, yet we let manners and proper respect fall to the side. The spirit that a great deal of these new grads are walking is that they do not have to be conscious of others if their station is not of value to them. The vocabulary that you give them will help them for the rest of their lives. Give them the words, and manners, that they will need to succeed.

Confidence, time and vocabulary are the gifts that you can renew and refresh. Money, cars, stocks and bonds make truly great and often sought after gifts, but I implore you to give these grads something more. Give them gifts that they can use for the rest of their lives, in addition to the outstandingly fun gifts you were already planning to give them.

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