

## User Submission: Thoughts on Penn State and a Call to Action

July 23, 2012

To this day, I remember the feeling. I was elated. I was proud. I was suddenly one of them. I had sent in the necessary paperwork and with my I's dotted and my T's crossed, it was official: I had become a Penn Stater. I had completely narrowed my college search and I had set my sights on Penn State. I could not have been any happier. Regardless of what has happened over the past year or what will continue to transpire over the next few months, I am still so proud of that decision. Regardless of what anyone says or doesn't say, I still know I could not have made a better decision. Because let me be honest, choosing Penn State was the best decision I have ever made.

Over the past two years, I have absolutely, without a doubt fallen in love with Penn State and the mystique that this place holds over the students. Growing up, I never quite understood the draw. Living in Pittsburgh, I was a Pitt fan with football season tickets my junior and senior year of high school. I was not one of those diehard Nittany Lion fans that had been coming up to State College every weekend with their families for football games. In fact, I never visited the university or State College itself until I took my first tour of Penn State. I was always indifferent towards the university and again, I just didn't get it. I didn't understand why so many people were going there from my hometown area. Obviously, I was aware of Penn State's prestige as a top public university in the country. But, that's all on paper. Numbers and statistics were not solely driving this almost migration to Happy Valley. I knew there had to be something else going on, something more human. Over the past two years, I have figured it all out. And man, am I happy I did.

For those of you that know me, you know that I love sports. I'm an aspiring sports journalist with big hopes and big dreams for my life. To be honest, I chose Penn State in large part because of its dominant athletic programs. I knew that the connection between Penn State Athletics and the College of Communications was strong. I knew I would have the opportunity to cover big time college sports: an opportunity that not many college students would have and an opportunity to build a foundation of experience to jumpstart my career. I would have the opportunity to cover the storied Penn State football program and the iconic and larger than life Joe Paterno. Yet, although I'm a dreamer, I am also a realist. I knew there was more to Penn State than athletics. And let me tell you, there is much more. Yes, Penn State produces some incredible teams and some incredible student athletes. But, athletics does not define Penn State. Football does not define Penn State. Jerry Sandusky, Tim Curley, Gary Schultz, Graham Spanier and yes, Joe Paterno all do not define Penn State. So, you're asking yourself then, what or who does define this university? The answer is pretty straightforward: **we do**.

It's simple. The students define Penn State. As I said before, I never understood the mantra or aura of the university until I got here. But when I did, it all hit me rather quickly. The Penn State student body is truly a phenomenon. The students constitute such an impressive group of young individuals that all share a common bond: an everlasting and unbreakable love and devotion to the university. It's rare to find a Penn State student that isn't proud or happy to go here. The unity, pride and strength produces the formidable force that is the Penn State student body. This force has done much to define Penn State as a proud university and institution. Student charities like THON, Lift for Life, the Pink Zone and Habitat for Humanity represent a few of the many definitions of what is Penn State. I'm not going to drown you with evidence. This isn't a research paper. If you don't believe me when I say that Penn State students have demonstrated the core values and standards of the university, do some research for yourself. The evidence is there and Penn State students do define this university. And they define it in a pretty damn good way.

Everyone needs to look at the writing on the wall and then take the big picture into perspective. Leadership at Penn State failed us. Child molestation took place in an alarming rate right here on our campus and our leaders failed to stop it. They enabled Jerry Sandusky's heinous and egregious violations against humanity. I don't need to tell you anymore about that though; we all know the story from start to finish. Although those "leaders" have rightfully so given Penn State a bad name and have marred the reputation of the university, they did not and do not define our school. We do. We all need to stop living in the moment and we need to move on. We all need to stop defending him or her. We all need to stop debating on the status of a statue or the name of a campsight outside of Beaver Stadium. Decisions have been made and they will continue to be made. Whether you like it or not, we need to accept these decisions and move forward with them. We all need to gain foresight on what is important: that we do indeed define Penn State. We, the students, hold the key to the future and it is up to us to pick up the pieces and clean up the mess that has been left behind. We need to concentrate on tomorrow and focus on how we can rebuild this place and the values that we know it to stand upon. We need to let the world know that we are more than football, more than athletics. We need to let the world know that we are a university built upon integrity and honor. With the unity, strength, pride and power of the Penn State student body, the reputation of this university can and will be restored. This will happen because we, the students, define this university. **We, the students, are Penn State.**

This post originally appeared on [Jon Blauvelt's Blog](#) and cross-posted to WEstillARE with his permission.

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