

## **A TIME TO MARK A LEGACY**

*FROM CDT EDITORIAL STAFF*

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As a society, we prefer to mark round numbers -- the 50th year of this, the 100th anniversary of that -- but as Penn State quietly marks its 151st birthday with Founders Day events Wednesday, this is a good time to reflect on the university and its central role in the community. And we do so today in several ways.

The lead item on this page, PSU Perspectives, is a column written by Penn State President Graham Spanier, which was originally published Sunday in The Patriot-News of Harrisburg. In it, Spanier argues convincingly for greater public support for higher education.

He outlines many of the benefits -- economic ones, but also research and public service, not to mention education -- the state receives from its universities. In turn, under the tacit agreement under which the system traditionally has worked, the state invests in this significant asset through higher-education funding.

We agree with Spanier that the state is not keeping its end of the bargain. Directly beneath Spanier's column is a column written by a descendant of one of his predecessors, George Washington Atherton, who served as Penn State president from 1882 to 1906. We often think of historic figures as marble men and women -- larger-than-life statues, rather than flesh-and-blood humans who struggled with many of the same issues we do.

As Mary Kuntz tells us, Atherton overcame the loss of his father when he was just a boy, a serious mill accident and the heart-wrenching death of one child and the life-long disease of another. And he became a pioneer in public-supported higher education, the legacy Spanier inherited and the importance of which will try to convince the General Assembly over the next several weeks.

Part of the educational process, of course, consists of addressing and resolving important issues such as discrimination, an issue -- and the university's dealing with it -- tackled by Anthony R. D'Augelli, a professor in the College of Health and Human Development, in a letter printed below. And in a less controversial, more nostalgic mode, today's "Looking Back" spans two pages inside On Centre, reprinting a 1930s-era university map drawn by an art professor, highlighting some institutional "ghosts" from what was even then its storied past.

Happy Founders Day, Penn State. May you, and we with you, celebrate many, many more.

## **Courts should hold PSU to its nondiscrimination policy**

We have Penn State women's basketball coach Rene Portland to thank for clarifications by Penn State about its nondiscrimination policy ("Arguments filed in case," Feb. 10).

In the federal lawsuit brought against Portland by former Lady Lion Jen Harris, university attorneys filed motions to dismiss complaints related to violating university policy prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. They argue that "general policy statements" are not legally binding, and, "Mere administrative provisions in a personnel handbook or policy handbook simply do not rise to the level of agreement by which an employee must abide." This would surprise employees who think Penn State's policies require abiding. If the lawyers are right, we have been led to believe the nondiscrimination policy provided protection not just as do federal and state laws, but also for sexual orientation, as of 1991. The revised policy was never presented as optional, and it appears on many Penn State documents. Does an institution print a "mere administrative provision" on all of its documents? The attorneys' statements mean they think Penn State's policy imposes no legal obligation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. I hope the courts think otherwise.

Anthony R. D'Augelli  
Professor, human development