



The Grad News

The Newsletter of the Hopkins/Homewood Graduate Community

Volume 2
Issue 4

February 2001

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GRO

Graduate Representative Organization



The Johns Hopkins University

Health insurance holdup

Dan Bain, DOGEE

It's hard to say whether the relative lack of excitement in the insurance saga is good news or bad news. Njal certainly spent a good bit of time at the Althing in slow deliberations. All the same, this plodding was limited to several weeks in the summer. Unfortunately, living in the age of Beckett rather than anonymous Vikings, it seems we have little choice. The news is neither good nor bad; it is boring, designed to drown us in information.

Last month I outlined some clear choices that had to be made by the student body on insurance. In a nutshell, the tradeoffs are between the costs of the premium and the quality of the coverage. Many responded. Thanks to all of you. The overwhelming response was that an insurance plan with at least two levels of coverage should be offered. One level would be bare bones, for all of those who feel fit as a horse and short on cash. The other level would provide a modicum of coverage, maintaining at least our current coverage with the addition of "luxuries" like a prescription card. This all makes perfect sense. We've proposed these ideas to the university and received a variety of responses. Some folks claim that the university would/should never consider creating this sort of arrangement because the following scenario proceeds without fail:

1. Two plans are offered. There is much celebration and feasting.
2. Everyone (except for people with diseases too horrible to mention in public meetings) flocks to the cheaper plan.
3. The high risk remains in the expensive plan. There are many fewer people to share this risk. This causes the average cost of the high-end plan to level off somewhere in the troposphere. This causes great hardship for people with conditions who must maintain a higher level of coverage (e.g. pre-existing conditions, etc.)
4. The plan crashes and burns, pleasing nobody. Aside from the obvious retort (i.e., who's pleased now?) this seems like defeatism at its worst. At the same time, others in the university place the blame at the feet of the insurance com-

pany, claiming that there is very little chance that any insurance company would allow such a plan. The fact here is that many folks who responded to last month's queries cited previous work experience where just this sort of arrangement is commonplace. So, maybe we do need another insurance company. The bottom line is that the university is hesitant to move toward this type of arrangement.

The other issue that needs to be addressed is that some students have insufficient insurance or no insurance at all. Next year Cornell is moving

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Books that deserve a second look

Keith Barbera, History of Science, Medicine and Technology

If there are two things any grad student seeks relentlessly, they are a good deal and a good book. In this article, you'll learn where to find both in the same place.

The Book Rendezvous (410-659-9933) has two locations—both a ten minute walk from the Inner Harbor. One is at 3 N. Calvert Street., and the other is at 805 Light Street. Both are well stocked (about 30,000 books), and there's a plan in the works for another, larger store. In the republic of letters, owner Clifford Panken is a populist. On principle, he includes the widest range of books, from Sidney Sheldon to ancient Greek. Among the stores many strengths are history, literature, literary criticism, foreign languages, and science fiction. Panken's goal is to provide people with books they want at moderate prices. For example, one can find *Teach Yourself Hindi* for \$2, and a hardcover edition of *The Path Between the Seas* for \$3. In my opinion, Book Rendezvous has the best prices in town.

Normal's Books and Records, at 429 E. 31st Street, is another place with character. The crew running it is as motley and interesting as the books and pop art displayed in the window. Fur-

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Health plan

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toward a system wherein they pay health insurance premiums for a majority of their students. A large part of the impetus for this change is the following. Cornell had a waiver system similar to ours (i.e., you did not have to purchase the university plan if you presented administrator X with a photocopy of an insurance card and a signed waiver.) Upon scrutiny (i.e., one year they decided to check these waivers carefully) it turned out that a majority of those who waived the plan had insufficient insurance or no insurance at all. Bankruptcy laws are not getting any more lenient. And bankruptcy should be the least of your worries during an otherwise stressful time (e.g., cancer, unplanned pregnancy, etc.). Cornell recognized these numbers as a problem.

At Hopkins, these numbers do not exist. Preparation of this sort of dataset requires time, energy, and some authority that can grant guarantees of amnesty, privacy, etc. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some students do not carry the insurance they claim at registration. If Hopkins has the type of problem that existed at Cornell, the university needs to address the problem. Yet the problem cannot be identified by anyone other than the university. We are slowly pushing for the beginning of this type of investigation.

That's the news. If you have questions, comments, or extreme views on all of this, please do not hesitate to contact Dan Bain at dbain@jhu.edu.

Restaurant Review

Ze Mean Bean Café

Crystal "Meth" L'Hôte, Philosophy Department

With only a five-minute wait at 1:30 on a Sunday afternoon, Ze Mean Bean Café's Jazz brunch offers a charming and confident nouveau-rustique setting. The menu features a nuanced and reasonably priced variety of appetizers, breakfast foods, dinner-style entrees, and Vaccaro's-caliber desserts. Though the volume of the bouncy, Gershwin-inspired jazz and jazz-y tunes might drive the bleary-eyed to misuse one of the sturdy high-back wood chairs or for-sale Czech art adorning the exposed brick walls, you can hear the music at a more comfortable volume from the spacious (yet cozy!) upstairs dining room. Service is informal, but efficient, delivered with a smile and a genuine—as opposed to a forced—sense of humor. Scott is our favorite.

Ah, yes the meal. The brunch menu is remarkably varied, even though the majority of options can be categorized as traditional brunch-fare: omelets, French toast, pancakes hovering around the \$8 mark, and various things covered in Hollandaise sauce. Naturally, we focused our selections here, sampling the French Toast with Spiced Apple Rum Sauce (made with their celebrated Ukrainian bread), the Cinnamon Chocolate Butter-milk Pancakes with spiced maple syrup, the Bacon, Tomato and Cheddar Omelet, and the Frittata Espagnole, an open-faced omelet donned with tomato, cumin-dusted chicken and Queso Fresco. Though not quite as mouth-watering as their descriptions, even these moderately-sized "standard brunch entrees" go

well beyond the mundane. While the vanilla-flavored French toast was only subtly sweet, the cinnamon pancakes were a veritable built-in dessert. Of the eight or ten different sorts of three-egg omelets offered, the two that we sampled were made with ingredients as fresh as the flowers on each table, and didn't leave us feeling cheezed out, dude.

For the budget-conscious, there are fine "combination" breakfasts. The French Connection, which is French toast with scrambled eggs, runs about \$8. Bacon, eggs and other substantial sides are otherwise à la carte. For an additional \$1, egg-beaters can be substituted in any of these entrees.

Mean Bean also offers a nice array of brunch appetizers. The Sweet Potato Bisque sounds terrific and the *City Paper* vouches for the pierogies. Finally, there's a nice array of more lunch-like options for the "unch" part of your brunch: full-scale luncheon entrees (including pork and chicken dishes ranging \$12-19) as well as sandwiches and wraps (including a black bean burger and other vegetarian items).

And of course one always has the option of finishing off with one of Mean Bean's beloved desserts, or with an item from their astonishing array of specialty drinks and coffees. Desserts are made fresh daily; this Sunday's offerings included a well-made chocolate cake layered with a fresh raspberry filling and drizzled with Godiva chocolate, as well as a not-too-moist and not-too-dry but just-right strawberry-topped cheesecake, among many others.

If you're in search of a stylish way to celebrate the holiday, Ze Mean Bean Café is offering its annual Valentines Tea on Saturday the 10th. This even features live music and a "buffet of sweet and savory with all of your favorite tea assortments." On the 14th, opt for their five-course Valentines Prix Fixe Dinner; seatings are at 6, 6:30 and 8:30 (reservations required). Ze Mean Bean Café is located at 1739 Fleet Street — near Fleet and Broadway, 410-675-5999.

Two possible health plan options

	Low End Policy	High End Policy
Deductible	\$1000; paid out \$250 per visit with referral from Student Health	\$250; paid out \$75 per visit with referral from SH&WC
Prescriptions	No Card, Reimbursement System Continues Insurance covers only 60% of any	Prescription Card System Copay system similar to existing system
Premium Cost	\$600 (????)	~\$1000

New GRO sports rep levels playing field

Eugenio Culurciello, Electronic and Chemical Engineering

Hopkins has numerous athletic activities that are somehow hidden from the eyes of graduate students. This is probably because graduate students are not given the piles of information heaped upon undergraduates when beginning their studies here. But this can be remedied.

The GRO has just appointed a new Sport Coordinator, Eugenio Culurciello (that's me!). Eugenio's job begins with this article, informing you of some of the sports options available to graduate students. Eugenio also acts as a liaison between the Recreational Sports Office and the graduate student population. He can help you get started in your favorite sport, or even help start new sporting clubs that are not yet on the Rec Sports roster.

For starters, there are many intramural sport clubs open to graduate students. A complete list can be found at www.jhu.edu/~recsport/.

The Recreational Sport Office, led by Bill Harrington (billharr@jhunix.hcf.jhu.edu), always welcomes and organizes any sporting activity, either part time or club. They also organize major sport tournaments and competitions each semester. Basketball, soccer, baseball and volleyball are the main sports, but occasionally some others make it into the mix.

In addition, many of the undergraduate Hopkins athletic teams are generous enough to allow graduate students to join the teams' practice sessions. But this applies to practices only, as most of the teams are competing in undergraduate leagues. For more information about which teams allow grad students to join practices, contact a coach. Information can be found at www.hopkinsports.com/.

For more information or to make suggestions, please feel free to direct your

Got Problems?

If you are having trouble with MEGA Life, such as problems getting reimbursed, filing claims, or anything else, contact Dan Bain (dbain@jhu.edu). Dan has connections! And if he can't solve your problems, he can put pressure on MEGA Life or those negotiating our next insurance contract.

We've got answers.

Books that deserve a second look

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thermore, they really know books and are happy to chat. Normal's caters to diversity, a fact mirrored in both their books and clientele. The store emphasizes classics and non-textbook academic books. Strengths include literature, literary criticism, philosophy, music, art, film, and alternative culture. Another nice feature is the large and varied used CD, record, and video collections. Moreover, prices are reasonable—about half of retail value.

Across Charles Street from Normal's is **Allen's Book Shop**, which has over 60,000 books. While it's smaller than Normal's, it has access to many more books off site. Allen's does the bulk of its business over the internet, and owner David Ray will gladly do searches to acquire books. Holdings at the store, however, are also well worth checking out. There is a good assortment of books in history (including Maryland history), philosophy, music, cooking, railroads and transportation, literature, and literary criticism. Springer-Verlag math books are another nice plus.

The Book Thing of Baltimore, at 2645 N. Charles Street (entrance in rear), is a recent addition to the Baltimore book scene. Open weekends and by appointment, it has 200,000 books. Russell Wattenberg and his volunteers have an unusual mission: to give away free books! The idea has struck a receptive chord. It's unusual to see the five finger discount institutionalized! Ten thousand books find new homes every week; about 250

visitors (ranging from Hopkins professors to the homeless) leave toting books and magazines. Russell goes out of his way to make people comfortable. There's a steady stream of donated books, so you're guaranteed eventually to unearth unexpected treasures. Thanks to the number of books and the capable assistance of Russell and his volunteers, it's almost impossible to leave empty-handed. For more information, call (410) 662-5631 or visit www.bookthing.org.

The venerable **Kelmscott Bookshop** (23 years in business) is on the other end of the spectrum. Though it's a bit upscale, it's not unaffordable. Owner Teresa Johanson gives Hopkins students a 10% discount. What's more, the shop will match the lowest internet price on books in stock. Areas of strength among their 80,000 holdings include old and rare books, literature, literary criticism, history (including local history), and medicine. In addition, book rebinding and restoration are available. Visit the Kelmscott at 32 W. 25th Street.

Allan Holtzman of the MSEL Resources Department has put together an excellent guide to books (both in Baltimore and beyond). His "Out-of-Print, Used and In-Print Book Meta-links and Other Book Resources," available at www.mse.jhu.edu:8001/~dma/op.html, will help you locate even the most obscure books. Allan will also contribute his considerable expertise to help you locate books. His number is 410-516-5315.

According to George Macaulay Trevelyan, "Education has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading." Venturing off campus to browse in used-book stores can broaden (and refine!) our education.

Over charged?

If MEGA Life charged lab fees for your annual exam at the SHWC during the 1999-2000 school year, you may be entitled to a refund. Contact MEGA Life immediately to ask for a reimbursement. If this fails, contact Mary Ellen Porter and the Student Health and Wellness Center.

GRO

Graduate Representative Organization



The Johns Hopkins University

The Graduate Representative Organization

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Movie Review

You Can Count on Me

Marty Moran, Department of Philosophy

Okay, so *You Can Count on Me* has been in theaters since before Christmas, and its run at the Rotunda will probably be over by the time you read this. Still, this brilliant independent film, which marks the directorial debut of Ken Lonergan (also the screenwriter), deserves special mention. Not only did it win a Sundance Film Festival Award last year, but its phenomenal success in limited release (only 10 cities including Baltimore) earned it national recognition and a nationwide release in late January. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this movie, it tells the story of Sammy and her younger brother Terry, a couple of moderately happy upstate New York young kids who lose their parents in a car accident. The movie examines how each of the children responds to this loss, but we hardly see them as children. Instead, Lonergan cleverly jumps to the adult years, where the lasting effects of the tragedy can be seen on a grand scale.

We soon find out that Sammy never left town and is working hard to raise a child from a failed marriage, while Terry became a drifter with no real home and no real direction. When an unexpected pregnancy sends him running back to his sister for help, they are both forced to confront all the pains and anxieties of their childhood anew. This is where Lonergan is most successful: in his depiction of a relationship both strengthened and destroyed by a common loss. Thus, we see Sammy and Terry fighting because of their differences but also desperately striving to reconcile them, for brilliantly contrasted against the dominant background of their relationship are their failed dealings with other people. Terry cannot bring himself to return to his pregnant girlfriend, and his immaturity prevents him from getting along with anyone except Sammy's 8-year old son Rudy. Sammy, for her part, cannot relate to her own son, her boss, or her would-be boyfriend. In the end, they both come to realize exactly how much they mean to one another.

Overall, *You Can Count on Me* provides a refreshing and intimate look into the human soul. Buoyed by great leading performances by Laura Lilley and Mark Ruffalo, this movie succeeds

A fond farewell

Sam Parrish, Director of the Student Health and Wellness Center, recently left JHU for a position in Pennsylvania. He has been an advocate, a friend, and a supporter of graduate student health issues, and we will miss him. Best of luck and many thanks to Sam.

where many have failed. Make no mistake—this is not a feature length version of “Party of 5.” Yes, there is the typical outpouring of emotion and self-analysis, but the similarities end there. This film boldly depicts human suffering with an honesty that is at once shocking and uplifting. Perhaps the best feature is Lonergan’s exploration of the role of religious belief in coping with tragedy. While Sammy finds stability and even a certain amount of comfort in religion, Terry, as the Prodigal Son, predictably refuses to listen. His brief conversation with a priest is one of the most poignant and insightful scenes of any movie this year. Also enjoyable are the supporting roles of Rory Culkin (exactly how many Culkin boys are there, anyway?) as Sammy’s son and Matthew Broderick in an effortlessly comedic turn as a bank manager. These great acting performances, combined with Lonergan’s amazing depth and perspective, will make you want to see this movie twice. From start to finish, *You Can Count on Me* delivers on its promise. *You Can Count on Me* is playing at the Sony Rotunda, in the Rotunda Mall.

Get Connected

GRO Guide Online

Your favorite source for restaurant reviews, tips on navigating the administration, and outdoor fun is now online: www.jhu.edu/gro/groguide/.

Grad News Online

Catch previous issue of the *Grad News* online at www.jhu.edu/gro/gradnews/.

Coffee Hour:

Every Monday from 3 to 4 pm in the Gilman Hall Coffee Bar. Free coffee and good company.

Happy Hour

Every Tuesday night from 6 to 10 pm at PJ's Pub. Bass and Guinness pints for \$2, as well as free food.

The Grad Forum

Post a wanted ad, sound off about your latest passion, make a hot date, or just see what other grad students are up to. Link to the Grad Forum from the GRO website: www.jhu.edu/gro/.

All events are **sponsored by the GRO**.