

## Penn State Distance Learning

from Israel Isenberg

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As high school graduation time approaches, many seniors will be thinking about what they should do next. Two short years ago, I was wearing that same cap and gown. Beyond the fact that I was going to continue my education, I was very undecided.

I must admit, at sixteen years old, the idea of going off to college had scared me. Several months prior to my graduation, my father had picked up a Penn State Distance Education catalog at Ag Progress Days in State College. He made some phone calls. We found that Independent Learning, as the program is called, would be well suited to my needs. The course schedule was flexible, allowing me to study at my own pace. I would be able to study in the quiet of my home, as I was used to doing as a homeschooler, without going into the college classroom. I would be able to complete between one and two years of study, depending upon my major. And, as I was not sure what I wanted to do "when I grew up," I would have time to think about my future.

I sent my SAT scores to Penn State when I took the test at a nearby college, earlier in the spring. That summer, I took a placement exam at a branch campus, to determine which courses I should take. In September, following graduation, I enrolled in two courses through Independent Learning. Most courses include less than fifteen lesson assignments and two or three exams. The course material was shipped to me and I slowly began. The first lesson assignment was hard and it took me two weeks to complete, because it required more time than my high school work. However, I soon adapted to this change and began to make progress. I am now able to complete several lessons a week. Upon completion, I mailed the lesson to the professor for evaluation and correction. The professor would then return the graded lesson. After several months, I was ready for my first examination. You are permitted to take the exams at any Penn State branch campus, or you may use a proctor who meets Penn State's requirements. I decided to take my exams at Penn State Altoona, about an hour from our house. The exam took place in a small office room. I was the only person taking an exam. The proctor was a Penn State secretary (who reminds me of my grandmother) and was very friendly.

At the end of a year and a half, I have sixteen credits earned through Independent Learning. I am currently finishing two more courses. For me, the advantages of this method of study were many. I was able to keep high grades while making the transition to college level work, to take my time choosing a major and, to prove, to myself, that I can succeed in college. This fall I will be attending Penn State main campus as a sophomore enrolled in the Animal Bioscience major. I plan to go on to vet school after completing my requirements at Penn State. If you would like more information about Independent Learning, call the Department of Distance Education at 1-800-252-3592 and ask for a free catalog. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Jerry Goff, coordinator of advising, at (814) 863-3283.

[Note from Howard Richman: An update about Israel appeared in the summer 2000 issue of *PA Homeschoolers*: Israel Isenberg (PHAA 1996) of Marion Center PA, has accepted early

admission to Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Currently a senior at Penn State University, Israel will receive his bachelor's degree after his first year at veterinary school. As a student at Penn State, Israel was on the Dean's List every semester, after completing his Freshman year entirely through Penn State distance courses. He was accepted into all seven of the veterinary schools that he applied to for graduate work.