

Letter: Is Town and Gown gone?

- Sep 8, 2026 Updated Sep 8, 2026

For countless years, Town and Gown have worked together. Unfortunately, times have changed.

This summer when students and faculty were away, a decision was made by a few to timber a large portion of the Co-op Lodge Forest. The supposed reason was safety from falling limbs. No arborist was hired to check the health of the trees and for safety. In fact, those injured from falling limbs is less than 1%. Cars, bikes, swimming pools and lakes, crossing a street, children putting toys in their mouths, food poisoning, guns and knives, etc. can cause far more danger than a tree limb.



What changed in the spirit of Town and Gown? In the early 1980s, 15 town couples formed a President's Council. The mission for each couple was to solicit 10 other couples to donate \$1,000 each year. New membership expanded to more than 150. Then Christine Toretti created the Distinguished Speaker Program. F.E. Helwig created the Distinguished Artist Series. Each attracted many ticket-buyers and sponsorships. Much money was raised from these two programs.

IUP helped the town as well. Indiana County Humane Society was permitted to use College Lodge for its biggest fundraiser. The beautiful Homecoming parade included local school bands and allowed many clubs to participate. And so, through the years Town and Gown had a thriving relationship.

How did we get to this downward outcome? Why are townspeople who do not have student identity cards not permitted in the park? And why were hundreds of beautiful trees cut down? Now that students are back, more than 150 have signed a petition to stop the timbering.

However, hundreds of trees are already down and the place looks like a bomb hit it. Why did this happen? Was money made from timber sales the real reason? These trees remove carbon, absorb water to stop flooding, help soil remain healthy, provide shade, offer beautiful scenery and so much more. It will never come back in our lifetime.

Please do what you can to stop this. Start a petition, write a letter to the president. Let them know this timbering must stop.

Norma Tarnoff

Ventnor, N.J. (formerly of

White Township)