Biographical Sketch

Dr. Diercks retired from the Air Force as a colonel in 1989 following a 26-year career. He commanded the largest Air Force weather wing from 1986 – 1989. In 1989 he joined Penn State as a senior research associate in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences where he was responsible for managing the college computer network and teaching meteorology courses. He retired from Penn State in 2004. John is a Fellow of the American Meteorological Society, a Lifetime Alumni Association member, and a Nittany Lion Club member.

John received three degrees in meteorology from Penn State. He was an Evan Pugh Scholar and outstanding cadet in the Air Force R.O.T.C. program. He received an Ellen Steidle Achievement Award for advancing the mission of Earth and Mineral Sciences. He was a member and officer of Phi Sigma Kappa Fraternity.

John is an active community volunteer. For the past five years, he has helped international Penn State students complete their tax forms. He served two terms as President of the Lady Lion Cager Club, the booster club for Lady Lion Basketball. He serves on a Youth Aid Panel to help youth who are first-time offenders with the law clear their court record. John teaches investment courses at national meetings for the BetterInvesting and InvestEd organizations.

John and his wife Donna Howe Diercks ('64) live in State College. They have two children John R. Diercks ('89) and Deborah L. Diercks ('94).

Position Statement

The Pennsylvania State University is a great academic and research institution. Unfortunately, a nationally publicized child abuse scandal and the way the Board of Trustees resolved it have damaged the University’s reputation. The situation has brought to light weaknesses in the board’s structure and governance that need to be corrected. As an Air Force officer for 26 years and a commander for eight of those years, I’ve handled many difficult situations and will bring a different perspective to the Board.

I believe the Board should:
1) Apologize to the Paterno family for the way the dismissal of Coach Paterno was resolved and find an appropriate recognition for a great coach who did so much for the University and community.
2) Conduct a thorough review of the board’s Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Orders to evaluate the number of members required for a more effective governing Board; determine the appropriate proportion of appointed members and members democratically elected by the alumni at large; and ensure decisions are more transparent to alumni, faculty, and students.
3) Take a more active role in oversight of University finances and keep tuition increases at or below the rate of inflation.

As a dedicated Penn Stater, I will devote my efforts to restore the University’s image and strengthen the University in academics, research, athletics, student life, and community relations. Life-long experiences, residency in State College, past University employment, and ability to handle challenging tasks will make me a positive and productive member of the board.