

YOUNG PEOPLE FOR



**Building Youth  
Progressive Power on Campus**

**SERIES ONE:**

**The Role of Student Government Bodies**

# Building Youth Progressive Power on Campus

## SERIES ONE AT A GLANCE:

### The Role of Student Government Bodies

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YOUNG PEOPLE FOR



# I. INTRODUCTION

This report is the first in a series designed to analyze and share how progressive college students and their allies can best use their resources on campus to build progressive power and infrastructure over the long term. It seeks to understand how students move power in four key areas: ideas, policy, resources and people, to help shape the future of our campuses, communities and country.

Young People For expects to use this knowledge to promote progressive values on campus, and influence the role institutions within these areas play in cultivating the next generation of progressive leaders. Understanding and sharing knowledge to build progressive power on campus is a critical step in building the youth progressive movement.

“Series 1: The Role of Student Government Bodies in Building Progressive Power,” focuses on how these bodies and the officers within them influence campus policies and how financial resources are generally allocated on campus. Young People For seeks to understand the extent to which student government officers have discretion to allocate resources or direct campus policies to understand the benefits of electing progressive students to student government.

## **We specifically set out to understand:**

1. What impacts the capacity of the typical student government to shape campus policies and allocate funds to different campus groups or to support social justice in the community?
2. What possibilities exist for student governments to build youth progressive power on campus?
3. What are the individual leadership development benefits, if any, of participation in student government?
4. To what degree must strategies to build progressive power through student government be campus specific?
5. What advice would current and former student government officers give to other students interested in running for student government?

## **To achieve this Young People For:**

1. Researched the structure and budget processes governing the student government bodies on 40 campuses across the United States.
2. Conducted 15 phone interviews with student government officers from 15 campuses to gain a better understanding of the true power dynamics on campus.
3. Filmed interviews with 11 student government officers from 11 campuses to understand their experiences running for and winning the race for their position.

## II. BACKGROUND:

### Roles and Responsibilities of Student Governments

#### Student Government Responsibilities

The primary function of college and university student governments, as described in many organizational constitutions, is to be the representative voice of the student population. Student governments serve as the “go-to” body when university administration is interested in engaging students on campus issues. To institutionalize this role, student government officers often sit on student-faculty committees to oversee large campus projects and initiatives. In addition, most student governments are responsible for managing a budget generated in large part from a per-student activity fee. Student Governments are responsible for disbursing funds to student groups annually and providing additional funds for campus events and forums upon request<sup>1</sup>.

Student Government officers and representatives are elected every year. Most student governments are hierarchical in nature, with officer positions including President, Vice President(s), Treasurer and Secretary. Class Senators or Representatives fill out the body. The structure of many large universities is further segmented

#### FINDING IN FOCUS

Typically both the executive and legislative branches of student government are involved in the budgeting process, with the executive branch recommending an annual budget and the legislative branch approving.

into a three branch government structure with Executive, Legislative and Judiciary branches. Each of these branches has its own constitutions, bylaws and annual operating budgets. The Executive branch is primarily responsible for recommending the annual

budgets, ensuring bylaws and constitutions are followed or updated, and managing the day-to-day operations of the student government. The Legislative branch is made up of Class Representatives and Senators responsible for approving the annual operating budgets and bringing pressing campus issues to the table. The Judiciary branch is primarily responsible for upholding the university honor code and holding hearings for minor or serious offenses such as plagiarism or cheating<sup>2</sup>.

Student governments function with varying degrees of independence from the university administration. Overall, student governments have good working relationships with the administration, experience mutual support and a spirit of collaboration<sup>3</sup>.



Student governments often have formal mechanisms to ensure the assistance of faculty or administration. Generally, faculty advisors are designated although the degree to which they are involved in day-to-day operations and decisions can vary greatly between campuses. In addition, ultimate power to curb a student government-led initiative often lies with the university administration, although an administration may choose not to exercise that power<sup>4</sup>.

#### KEY CONCEPT

Understanding campus power dynamics between the student government and the campus administration is essential for student governments to leverage their resources and work effectively to maximize their impact on campus.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1: Definitions

<sup>2</sup> This includes matters that would also involve the local police including charges of rape, harassment, drunk driving, vandalism or other crimes.

<sup>3</sup> Data was collected in the Fall of 2006 and involved examining constitutions, bylaws and annual operating budgets of 40 university and college campuses across the United States and conducting 15 interviews of Student Government officers from within that pool.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 2: Sample Constitutions

## Budgets and Funding Allocations

Student governments manage annual budgets typically ranging from \$10,000 to \$10 million. The size of the university's student population is the main contributing factor to the size of the student government budget, which relies on student activity fees. An exception is the University of California, where the Associated Students are established 501(c)3 organizations and entirely responsible for their own fundraising and administration<sup>5</sup>.

A key budget allocation of most student governments is the annual disbursement of funds to student groups. Although student government

### FINDING IN FOCUS

The median student government budget of over 30 large public universities surveyed was 1.5 million dollars. The average budget was 3.2 million.

bodies vary widely in their organizational structure, the policies that govern the disbursement of funds are fairly consistent across campuses. In most cases, one officer or committee (President, Treasurer or Finance Committee) is responsible for drafting

the budget and presenting it to the senate or student government body as a whole who are then asked to vote to approve it.

Although faculty or university administration oversight of this process was present in almost all cases, the degree of oversight varied from being a formality (with an advisor approving and signing off the student government recommendation) to having a faculty member as an integral part of the budgetary process, influencing the decisions made along the way. Rarely, if ever, would a disagreement cause the university to freeze a student government account or take other extreme measures to prevent the student government from proceeding. In most cases, administration oversight was largely a formality, and when disagreements arose, they were generally addressed before extreme measures are taken.

In every case, student governments had a large degree of autonomy over devising and approving their budgets, but the approval process or the bylaws governing the process result in a large number of checks and balances. Prior to final approval, all required parties (other officers, university

administration, faculty advisor, committee chairs) weigh in on the budget and amend it accordingly. The amount of people involved in the budget process or the process itself prevent unfair distribution of funds. These safeguards largely prevent student government presidents and senior officers from pursuing personal agendas with student government funds.

### KEY CONCEPT

Student government constitutions and bylaws formalize a series of checks and balances effective at preventing those responsible for the disbursement of funds from allocating more funds to groups closely aligned to officers' personal or political interests.

## Student Government and University Administration

Many student government officers have a high level of involvement in their campus community and hold additional leadership positions in other student groups, university committees or within university departments.

In general, officers have a good relationship with the university faculty and administration and rely on the advice and expertise of faculty advisors for major projects and initiatives. This relationship can be facilitated by the fact that officers generally have multiple responsibilities within student government. Many lead a committee or serve on a student and faculty joint committee in addition to their designated position.

The advice-seeking relationship between administrators and student government officers is often reciprocal. Administrators generally seek student input in areas of campus life and highly value the opinions of student government officers. Because of their high level of involvement in student affairs, student government officers are often involved in important discussions concerning university policies that require student input.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 3: Sample Budgets

## III. STUDENT GOVERNMENT And University Administration

### Summary of Findings

1. Overall student government budgets range in size from \$10,000 to \$10 million. The average student budget of the 30 large (10,000 students or more) public institutions we surveyed was \$3.2 million, and the median budget was \$1.5 million.
2. The discretionary budgets of these student governments ranged from zero (University of California at Davis, the University of West Florida and Minnesota State University) to \$45,000 (California State University at Fresno). With the exception of some of the University of California schools that operate as much larger entities, between 50-80 percent of student government budgets were automatically allocated to student groups that manage their own funds.
3. A structure that emphasizes a multitude of checks and balances generally ensures that the average student government represents different points of view, and prevents the direction of campus policies or funds to any individual's personal agenda.
4. In most cases, student governments are structured in such a way that does not provide many opportunities for students interested in building youth progressive power on campus. Those elected to individual officer positions have little formal or financial opportunities to impact the political leanings of the student government body.
5. Strategies to build progressive power on campus through student government must be explicitly tailored to a particular campus.
6. Students report many individual leadership benefits to participating in student government. Students uniformly describe it as a positive experience that has helped them build skills and increase their comfort with leadership positions.
7. In order to win elections, student government officers encourage future candidates to be themselves and remain honest as the best ways to gain the respect of the student body and then their votes.



8. Officers further counsel that being passionate about improving the campus community for all students and remaining confident in one's abilities are important assets that will allow students running to get noticed and garner votes.
9. Ensuring voter turnout of supporters on Election Day should be a major focus towards the end of any student government campaign because of historically low voter turn out in student government elections.
10. Officers recommend that learning how to listen to the concerns of others is an important skill in order to be an effective student government officer once elected.

#### ■ KEY CONCEPT

Student government bodies are dedicated to being representative of the campus community as a whole, with a culture that strongly encourages the leadership to pursue initiatives that would benefit a majority of students.

## Findings in Depth

### A. BUDGETS

Student government budgets at the 30 schools we surveyed varied greatly from just over \$30,000 to nearly \$10 million dollars, however 18 of the universities had budgets between \$100,000 and \$1 million (See Appendix 5). The average budget of \$3.2 million is inflated due to a few schools in California and Florida with large student bodies and responsibility for major university programs with large payrolls and other fixed costs, such as on-campus transportation services and a child care center for example. As a result of these outliers, the median budget of \$1.5 million more accurately represents average budgets managed by student government bodies across the country.

The majority of student government funds are allocated to student groups and organizations. A portion of the remaining money, or discretionary funds, were rarely accounted for as a line item in most student government budgets. As a result, it was difficult to discern the actual amount of available or the unallocated funds that a student government body could spend at their discretion in any given year.

Interviews with student government officers revealed that in some cases, there were significant funds in student government accounts that had accumulated from undistributed funds over the years. This was the case at California State University at Fresno, where officers planned to spend their discretionary funds to outfit the library with new laptop computers. We also found that committees or positions within the student government were also granted discretionary income which was not always accounted for in the budget, making comparison between campuses difficult. That budgets were not uniform in their preparation also made cross-campus comparisons challenging.



### B. STUDENT GOVERNMENT CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

In most cases, student governments do not provide many opportunities for students interested in building youth progressive power on campus to do so through existing structure. The personal agenda of an individual elected into office has little impact on the political leanings of the student government body for two reasons:

1. It is not the culture of student governments to involve themselves in agendas that could be considered politically motivated;
2. The policies and procedures outlined in student government and university constitutions and bylaws make it difficult for any one individual to have a disproportionate effect on the student government body as a whole.

The overall duty of student government is to serve the student population as a whole and to focus efforts on improving campus life, planning university-wide events, maintaining a healthy balance of views, activities and events. At public universities, student governments spend a substantial amount of energy negotiating with state officials to keep education affordable. The other significant responsibility of student government officers is to manage annual budgets, distribute funds to student groups to carry out their programs and events, and provide additional funds for unforeseen events and opportunities that come up

during the year. One officer from Amherst College stated, “I decided to run for Student Government because I saw it as a platform to greater activism. . . It can be a good platform for activism if you can make it one, but it’s more helpful as a place to learn logistically how to navigate your campus.”

Many students we interviewed saw the primary goal of student government organizations as improving the campus community for all students and to give equal representation of all dominant views, opinions and interests. All of the students interviewed explained that they were interested in running and serving on the student government in order to improve their campus community. A Senator at University of California at Davis said, “I was very apprehensive at first, but as a leader in other student groups, and as a transfer student, I wanted to be able to do outreach and see what



never be a time where an event is too controversial, or a person too controversial that they would be censored or prevented from being on campus. We won’t censure ultraliberal or ultraconservative events or speakers; on the contrary, we are interested in fostering debate<sup>7</sup>.”

As organized student bodies with access to available funds, student governments have the capacity to plan events or programs that represent a particular political view, if officers are willing and able to do so. Discretionary funds and unallocated money that are rolled over from year to year are available for the student government to directly plan events or provide additional funds to student groups to plan events not included at the beginning of the year when budgets are approved.

Although this possibility exists, officers we interviewed with large amounts of unallocated funds available to them described using those funds to finance larger campus initiatives with broad appeal. One officer described a joint student government and university initiative that would outfit the library with new laptops and deplete almost half of their \$515,000 surplus gained from unallocated funds rolled over several years in a row<sup>8</sup>.

## KEY CONCEPT

Student governments are focused in representing and improving the whole campus community as their primary goal and function.

students cared about on campus, and [be] that liaison, [be] a face for students, show others how they have access to the Student Government Association and reach [out] to the broader student body to get more diversity [of opinions]<sup>6</sup>.”



Fostering diversity of opinions was a popular theme among our interviewees. Student government officers interviewed stated that if one particular view was being presented on campus in a forum or by a speaker, efforts would be made to present the opposing viewpoint as well. An officer at the University of Arkansas stated, “There would

<sup>6</sup> Interview, Senator, University of California at Davis, Student Government Association, November 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, Vice-President of Finance, University of Arkansas Student Government, November 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, President, California State University-Fresno Student Government, November 2006.



### C. LEADERSHIP

Officers enjoyed being in positions of leadership or believed that they had leadership experience to gain from serving. Student government was seen by many of the officers interviewed as an avenue through which to learn about the campus community, develop good management skills through dealings with peers and the administration, and to learn how to negotiate diverse views and goals.

A Vice President at Minnesota State University said, “Because MNSU has the most organized and structurally sound student government in the state of Minnesota, the job of the VP includes representation at the university level and the state level. At the university level, the VP is responsible for bringing together all student governments of Minnesota colleges and universities for summits and

trainings focused around strengthening their student governments. At the state level, the VP is responsible, along with the president, for acting as a delegate during the MNSU budgeting process<sup>9</sup>.” This high level of involvement in decisions made at the campus, region and state level can be a formative experience for college students. Serving in an essential role that carries significant responsibility was seen as a wonderful opportunity by most student leaders.

Our interviews demonstrated that students felt there were many individual leadership benefits to participating in student government. Students uniformly describe it as a positive experience that has helped them to build skills and increase their comfort with leadership positions. Acting as the representative voice of the student body requires that they have a clear and coherent understanding of the issues that students on campus are most concerned about in order to convey those concerns effectively. A sophomore student Senator at Baylor University said that, “being on the student government has allowed me the opportunity to learn how to delegate as well as how to be a good listener. Through my work as Senator, I have polished my public speaking skills and have mastered networking, which is a vital trait in today’s world. Overall, student government has prepared me with a wealth of skills that will help me succeed in the future.” The Vice President of Trinity University’s student government said, “I have learned that how you communicate is the key source to getting things done. Without knowing who to talk to and how to talk to them, it would be very difficult to make any progress.”

## KEY CONCEPT

Serving on the student government can be an excellent learning opportunity for college students who will benefit from developing leadership, organizational, public speaking and management skills.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Vice President, Minnesota State University, Student Government Association, November 2006.

## IV. CONCLUSION and Recommendations

Student government bodies are deeply invested in improving campus life for all students. Their activities involve participating in conversations with administration concerning decisions that affect students, including fee increases, changes to health plans, meal plans, and library or exam policies. In the case of state schools these decisions include tuition increases. Student government officers express that they are primarily interested in maintaining good relations with those in the campus community, and making their campus and university culture one that works for the majority of students.

There are many benefits students gain by serving on the student government. Students build confidence, learn how to navigate the college administration and develop relationships with key college administrators, including the University President. Student government provides officers with the opportunity to test their management, public speaking and organizing skills within the campus environment.

In order to build progressive power through student government, students must be motivated and set realistic goals. Understanding the campus power dynamics between the student government and the campus administration is essential for student governments to leverage their resources and work effectively to maximize their impact on campus. These power dynamics vary from campus to campus and are best understood by students and their progressive allies alike by speaking with students directly serving on student government.

### Recommendations for Students: When to Run

The majority of student officers interviewed suggested that potential candidates should have a clear purpose in mind for why they want to serve. They suggested students interested in running should begin by considering:

#### 1. What is my primary goal in serving on the student government?

- Do I have a real interest in improving the campus community?
- Do I want to learn how to manage multiple projects and views simultaneously?
- Is there a specific issue that I want to highlight in my role as a student government officer?

#### 2. What is the predominant ideology on campus?

Do I represent it?

#### 3. If I do want to pursue a specific issue, what other avenues are available to me to do something about it or bring the issue to the forefront of people's minds?

#### 4. What people, offices, groups have power on campus? What kind of power is it?

#### 5. What opportunities are there for me to start my own group or campus initiative outside of student government?

Young People For encourages students to use a tool such as the Assessing Campus Power Worksheet found in Appendix 6 to assess their campus communities and begin to determine their best role in the community. Students interested in improving their campus should consider running for student government as one avenue to affect positive change for the majority of students. Students interested in pursuing work specific to a particular issue, whether relevant to the campus community or a larger community, should also consider avenues such as campus groups or forums that will elevate discussions or actions around that issue.

## Recommendations for Students: Helpful Tips on How to Run and Win

- **Set realistic goals.** Develop a clear message that defines your campaign, who you are and why you want to serve.  
– Anna Wagman, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
- **Be outspoken.** Be available to talk to your peers and willing to listen to their concerns.  
– Jamal Vanderburg, The Wilberforce University
- **Be yourself.** Honesty is a key asset. Don't change your tune to get votes.  
– Calvin Hayes, Florida A & M University
- **Hone in on your leadership skills.** Focus on what you are good and ask for help or advice on the rest.  
– Christine Palmer, Trinity University
- **Be confident.** A solid leadership creates respect and you must master the art of delegating and time management.  
– Antonella Scarrano, Miami Dade Community College
- **Take interest.** Take some time to get to know the people in student government, as well as the issues they are working on. That way, when you are a part of it, you'll know more about what you'll be working on.  
– Kayla Moreland, Las Positas
- **Just do it.** The worst thing that can happen is you aren't elected. If you are, you have an opportunity to change things for the better.  
– Richmond Blake, Davidson College

## Recommendations for Students: Tips for How to Be Successful in Student Government

- **Learn to cooperate.** Throughout the year you will meet lots of people interested in pitching a different story or idea and you must be receptive to them.  
– Christine Lenihan, Baylor University
- **Be a decision maker.** Learn when to say no and when to yes. A good student government officer picks and chooses what to do in their limited time.  
– Antonella Scarrano, Miami Dade Community College

- **Know your purpose.** Everyone on campus has a key role to play, and we must be genuine, love what we do—but realize that it is about uplifting the community and improving it.  
– Calvin Hayes, Florida A & M University
- **Be active.** You only receive as much as you put into—if you are interested in being in SG, know what you want to address during meetings, what projects you want to pursue and propose, and remain active in your capacity.  
– Nick Pastan, Amherst College.
- **Be a team player.** Make sure everyone is contributing to the cause and that not only one person is doing all the work. Teamwork is key in Student Government.  
– Chrissy Palmer, Trinity University
- **Learn how to delegate.** This is an important factor in running a successful tenure because it lightens the load of work as well as gives others opportunities to share and take on responsibilities.  
– Antonella Scarrano, Miami Dade Community College

## Recommendations for Progressive Allies

Student governments provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their individual leadership skills and learn how to manage multiple projects, people and personal agendas. Individuals and organizations interested in individualized leadership development should consider investing in young progressives who want to serve their university student governments. These students are the representative voice of the student body and sometimes represent the university in regional or state-wide forums also. This provides young activists with a tremendous opportunity to develop their leadership, public speaking and management skills while having the support of peers and the university along the way. This will prepare them for future leadership roles where they are asked to draw upon the professional skills they learned in student government to represent their work, their organization or their movement.

It is important to recognize that efforts targeting student government bodies and leaders adopt a campus-by-campus approach. Getting to know the campus power dynamics, individual students and their goals are integral to any strategy for empowering young progressive leaders.

## How to Build Progressive Power on Campus:

# CASE STUDY

## Richmond Blake, Davidson College

**Name:** Richmond Blake

**Campus:** Davidson College, Davidson, NC

**Class:** 2009

**Major:** Political Science

**Hometown:** Pittsburgh, PA

**Student Government Position:** Sophomore Class President

**Other Campus Involvement:** Vice President of the Gay Straight Alliance, Bonner Scholar

**Campus Goal:** Richmond hopes to foster more awareness and support for service and social justice issues on the Davidson campus



### Profile:

Richmond ran for student government Senator to understand the inner workings of the student government and to gain experience working with the college administration. During his campaign, he competed with 30 people running for six Senate openings. Because Richmond earned the most votes during the campaign, not only did he become a class senator, he was nominated to the position of class president after the election. Richmond remembers feeling very supported during his campaign as an openly gay sophomore. Being open about who he was and what he wanted for the campus community were key assets in helping him win his campaign. Even so, he cautions students, “It was really important to get across who I was, and not just what my cultural identity might say about me.”

### Building Progressive Power through Student Government, Key Successes:

Richmond is building progressive power by tackling an often-controversial issue - equality for LGBTQ individuals - and bringing it to the forefront of his student government. He is pushing the University to adopt more LGBTQ-friendly policies and practices. The actions of the Davidson SGA send the message loud and clear to the university administration, and to surrounding colleges in North Carolina, that LGBTQ issues are important to college students. Richmond enjoyed two great victories in the spring of 2007.

*“I decided the best way to change the policy was through a Student Government Association resolution, an opinion of the student body, which would encourage the College President and Vice Presidents to support the inclusion of gender identity in the non-discrimination policy. In order to ensure that the resolution would pass the SGA, I, YP4-style, built a coalition of concerned student groups, such as the Gay-Straight Alliance and Just Peace. Members of these organizations attended the SGA meeting when the resolution was introduced and stood to speak in support. I also used the YP4 social capital idea, by designing a “We Support the LGBT Community” poster, which was signed by hundreds of students in the College union and then displayed in the Student Government meeting location for all the senators to see. Lastly, I encouraged the college newspaper to write an article about the event to raise even more awareness. With all of the community support and visible pressure, the SGA voted unanimously in support of the resolution. At this point, the College President and Vice Presidents will discuss and announce the ultimate decision in the coming weeks.”*

Richmond also led the effort in the SGA to bring a co-ed housing policy to Davidson to allow LGBTQ students who are uncomfortable with hetero-normative dorm assignments to choose to live with a student of the opposite gender. The policy was recently adopted by the administration on a two-year trial basis.

### Lessons Learned: Tactics to Build Progressive Power through SGA

- Positions within the student government that are responsible for setting meeting agendas are the most effective at shaping campus policies as a student.
- It is possible to create change, if you are respectful and continue to engage people about your issues.
- Go into the race with ideas and issues that you absolutely want to change, or don't run, there's no reason to.

# CASE STUDY

## Calvin Hayes, Florida A & M University

**Name:** Calvin Hayes

**Campus:** Florida A & M University, Tallahassee, FL

**Class:** 2010

**Major:** Public Relations and Political Science

**Hometown:** Orlando, FL

**Student Government Position:** Freshmen Senator, Judicial and Rules Committee member

**Other Campus Involvement:** Calvin is involved in a variety of different progressive issues on his campus and in his community including fundraising Chair for the FAMU Chapter of the NAACP.

**Campus Goal:** To build progressive alliances and infrastructure on his campus.



### Profile:

Calvin became involved in student government as a high school student and decided to run when he arrived at FAMU because, as he describes, he has always had “a drive and a passion for effectuating positive change and leadership. Why should we sit idle and let things happen when we can actively take a role in our government to make things happen?” During his campaign, Calvin worked tirelessly with his staff during the week prior to the election to get the word out about his candidacy on a campus with 12,000 students. He describes the campus campaign experience as being “very fast paced” with approximately 60 freshmen competing for 8 senate spots.

### Developing Individual Leadership:

Given the competitive nature of student government campaigns, Calvin remembers working hard to build the confidence to distinguish himself from his opponents. “You need to be able to relate to people. You can’t teach what you don’t know and you can’t lead where you don’t go. I had to go to places where I felt most uncomfortable to campaign to people. My campaign method had to be completely different than anyone else’s because after a while the [students] were getting tired of hearing the same message over and over so I had to switch it up and say what can I do for you?”

Calvin saw it as necessary to convey who he was as a person and not always state the things that needed to be done, but rather how he as an individual possessed the skills and drive to actively address student needs or concerns. “It is not always what you say that can make a difference it is how you say it. It is not always what you do but how you do what you do, that determines the outcome of a situation.” After the campaign, Calvin continued to develop his leadership and stated that serving on the student government has, “allowed me to be a better decision-maker—especially being in a room where there are disagreements on policy, I learned how to listen to other people’s issues and I’m learning how to be an active listener and communicator.”

### Lessons Learned: Advice to Students

- Try to overcome limited financing with a creative campaign. Calvin found himself competing against campaigns with lots of money for flyers and posters. He was successful in overcoming those challenges by being a different kind of candidate and focusing on the personal attributes that made him distinct. Calvin states, “You can give a person your word. You can give a person your honesty, and that’s what I had to give.”
- Develop a good slogan that means something and that you can stick to. Calvin’s campaign slogan was: “Empowered to serve and driven to lead.”
- Find a good team for support, as they are integral to your success.

# How to Run and Win as a Progressive Student on a Conservative Campus

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## CASE STUDY

Christine Lenihan, Baylor University

**Name:** Christine Lenihan

**Campus:** Baylor University, Waco, TX

**Class:** 2009

**Major:** Anthropology and Spanish

**Hometown:** Plano, TX

**Student Government Position:** Sophomore Senator

**Campus Goal:** Christine is a member of the student senate and is especially concerned with improving diversity on campus. She is striving to push her college administration to allow religious denominations other than Baptist to be able to congregate on campus.



### Profile:

Christine became involved in her student government second semester of her freshman year as an at-large member, meaning she applied for her position and was appointed by the Student Government Association (SGA). Her sophomore year she ran for re-election and was successful. As an openly progressive student on a very conservative campus, she faced an uphill battle to be elected and to champion progressive policies, including religious, gender, and ethnic diversity.

### Challenges on Conservative Campuses:

Baylor University is an overwhelmingly conservative campus affiliated with the Baptist religion. As Christine points out, being a progressive on such a campus can be isolating. *"I would say 110% of my opponents were conservative. A majority of my opponents were conservative and a majority of students that I serve with are conservative so it is an uphill battle to get my voice heard, even though I am in a student organization that does that all the time-get student voices heard- it's hard to actually get a majority voting on bills that uphold progressive ideals."*

Once Christine was elected she found that cooperation with students holding differing opinions was key to her success. *"I've learned that you need to work with as many people as possible, because you can never do something worthwhile alone. I've also learned that it takes a long time to see the fruits of your labor so perseverance is a must."*

Christine also learned that conserving her energy and picking her battles was important to her success and to her peace of mind. *"You have to keep working hard because it's easy to get discouraged when your particular bill or something doesn't pass. Don't get caught up in petty arguments between senators or over trivial stuff. It takes a lot of effort and resources and work to actually change what you are trying to change."*

### How to Run and Win. Tactics on Conservative Campuses:

- Get all the training you can
- Money can make a difference.
- Get informed about the campus and the workings of it, especially as a freshman. At Baylor, there are rules about how many t-shirts your supporters can wear per day.
- Talk to a lot of people on campus and ask them what they want to see for the school. Don't just start an initiative by yourself, because chances are someone is either already working on it or has already tried to do the exact same thing.
- Find common ground. "Try to use messaging techniques that can get across to conservatives."

## Combating Student Apathy and Increasing Engagement

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# CASE STUDY

## Antonella Scarano, Miami Dade Community College

**Name:** Antonella Scarano

**Campus:** Miami Dade Community College, Miami, FL

**Class:** 2007

**Major:** Political Science and International Relations

**Hometown:** Miami, FL

**Other Campus Involvement:** Antonella started the ONE VOTE campaign to inform and promote civic engagement among community college students. She also sits on the State board for State Community Colleges Student Government.

**Campus Goal:** To increase engagement on social and political issues, increase voter participation and branch out the campaign to all other community colleges in Florida.



### Profile:

Antonella ran for President of her student government unopposed, but that didn't stop her from mounting a campaign complete with literature and signs, to reach out to as many students on campus as she could. *"I believe that even if you are running unopposed, it is important for the students to know who their student government president is. I was determined to still get as many votes as possible and break the voter apathy which was so popular on campus."*

### Breaking Voter Apathy:

Antonella entered Miami Dade her first year and soon decided to run for student government President her second year. Once she made her decision she immediately began building a base of support, *"I knew that I wanted to run so I formed a coalition as soon as I went into school. By the time I decided to run I had a large group of supporters."*

Because of the high student turnover at community colleges, students had stopped using the campus as a place to address political issues. Antonella decided to make this apathy a major focus of her campaign, *"I wanted to run because I realized that my campus is not politically active, it never has been because it is a community college and people come in and out all the time, and my main focus was to go in and change that."* Student government was seen on campus as being more of an activities organization, responsible for hosting and planning campus wide events. Antonella was faced with the challenge of changing people's opinions about the role that student government could play on campus.

During her campaign, she went out to talk to the students on her campus and focused on informing and engaging her peers who had become apathetic to campus issues. *"Breaking voter apathy was my biggest challenge. Students don't go out and vote or understand what the student government does."* The skills she developed as a communications student helped her to reach out to students and get them interested and politically engaged. *"When talking to students I said I wasn't going to pressure them into voting for me, but I was going to inform them of the process and introduce myself and let them know about the organization."*

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Antonella now states her biggest success during the campaign was the voter turnout. *“I made an extra effort to go out and introduce myself to everyone and I also established a President’s letter in the [campus] paper that is now in there every issue.”* Antonella believes she is now a YP4 Fellow because of her work in student government. *“If it wasn’t for student government, I wouldn’t have started the ONE Vote campaign or have done the networking that helped me start this project.”* In the ONE VOTE campaign, Antonella and her peers registered 100 students the first month of their campaign. They organized a march from their campus to the nearest polling site that drew hundreds of students who then cast early Ballots in the midterm election. Antonella expects the ONE VOTE campaign to continue after she graduates.

### Advice for Students

- **Communication is key “not only within your network of supporters but within the administration as well.”**
- **“Make sure that everyone who is working with you is on the same page and organized so they know what to do.”**
- **“Don’t be discouraged. Being unopposed was a little discouraging because a part of you wants to be competitive and know that you earned and won the race.”**
- **“If you lose, you can still be a part because student government is an open forum. If you win don’t let it get to your head, and remember that you are there to serve the students.”**
- **“If you run unopposed then campaign anyway because you don’t want to be remembered as the candidate who won because she was unopposed. In my case people will remember ‘she was unopposed but I know who she is and what she stands for.’”**

# APPENDIX 1: Definitions

## Student Government

The student government (sometimes called the Student Senate, Student Council, Student Assembly or the Associated Students Inc.) is the advocating body for students on campus. Most schools have separate student government bodies for their undergraduate and graduate students, and these elected bodies are responsible for allocating funds to campus student groups and working with university faculty and administrators on important issues that affect students. Positions on the student government can sometimes be paid and highly competitive. The structure of student governments varies considerably from campus to campus. Larger universities can have a three branch system of government with executive, legislative and judicial branches, each functioning under their own set of bylaws and with independent budgets. Smaller schools tend to have a single governing body headed by a President and including vice presidents, class or dorm representatives, secretary and treasurer, all of whom serve on committees within the student government.

## Constitutions and Bylaws

Student Government constitutions and bylaws dictate the policies and procedures under which the student government will operate and details the rules and regulations that bind the student government officers. Procedures related to running for office, the budget allocation and approval process as well as how student government funds can be spent are included in these documents.

## Fee Autonomy

Fee autonomy refers to the decision making power that a student government body has over its budget. The process through which budgets are proposed and funds allocated to student groups is determined by the student government's constitution and bylaws. The degree of fee autonomy varies from campus to campus. In some cases the student government has ultimate authority on how it chooses to allocate its funds without university involvement; in others, the student affairs office or a faculty advisor has direct oversight over the allocation process. Most schools fall somewhere in between with a dean, faculty advisor or student affairs office rubber stamping the budget but not being actively involved in the decisions that resulted in its formulation. Whether or not the university decides to intervene can depend on the current administration and may be less dependent on the regulations outlined in the student government bylaws.

## Discretionary Funds

After student governments have allocated funds to student groups for the year, a portion of their total budget is left over. This can be used to fund additional budget requests throughout the year, plan events or programs or be rolled over and included in the next year's budget, at the student government's discretion.

## Budget Allocation Process

Student groups submit proposals for their annual operating budgets at the beginning of the school year. Student government financial officers together with group leaders negotiate the amount allocated. Once agreements have been reached, student governments disburse funds for student organizations to manage.

## APPENDIX 2: Sample Constitutions

### Excerpts

#### Sample 1

**SECTION I:** Budgets from Student Organizations shall be submitted to the Allocations Committee. The Allocations Committee shall review these budgets and present its recommendations to the Board. The Board shall approve Allocations' recommendations by a majority, of the entire Board membership of the Board. In the event that a recommendation is not approved by the Board, the Allocations Committee, after further consideration, must present a second recommendation to the Board. If the second recommendation is not approved by the Board, the Board assumes the responsibility of the issue. If no decision on the issue is rendered within one week by the Board, the second recommendation of the Allocations Committee shall become final.

**SECTION II:** The Board shall appoint an Allocations Chairperson and an Allocations Committee consisting of eight, non-CGS, full-time, undergraduate student members and alternates. The number of alternates shall be contingent upon Committee needs. All members of this committee must be full-time, non-CGS, undergraduate students, and shall not hold office or membership in any other standing committee of Student Government.

#### Sample 2

**SECTION 2.** The Vice-President of Financial Affairs

- 1) The *Vice-President of Financial Affairs* shall be nominated by the Tribunal and confirmed by a simple-majority of the Senate. The *Vice-President of Financial Affairs* functions as the chief-financial-officer of the SGA, and should be familiar with a wide variety of accounting techniques and practices. In addition, it is the duty of the *Vice-President of Financial Affairs* to oversee all financial accounts maintained by the SGA.
- 2) The *Vice-President of Financial Affairs* shall have the following powers and duties:
  - a) To maintain and update the SGA's official budget.
  - b) To submit a report on the status of all SGA accounts during alternate sessions of the *Senate*.
  - c) To have co-signature authority on all SGA financial accounts.
  - d) To annually update and submit the *Finance Handbook to the Senate* for its approval.
  - e) To work with the President in the creation of a budgetary proposal, to be submitted to the Vice-President of Student Affairs, and ultimately to the *Senate* for its approval.
  - f) To post and maintain a minimum of fifteen (15) consistent, office hours per-week.

**SECTION 2.** The Senate shall have the following powers and duties:

- a) To confirm the SGA budget, as proposed and amended, by the *President*, the *Vice-President of Financial Affairs*, and the Vice-President of Student Affairs, with passage of such requiring a simple-majority.

## Excerpts continued

### Sample 3

#### Budgeting, Allocation, and Auditing Bylaws Counselor

##### SECTION 1. Definitions/Explanations

- 1.1 Allocation. This term shall refer to the UISG funds assigned, or recommended for assignment, by the SA to a specific group for specific programs and line items.
- 1.2 Board of Regents. This term shall refer to the Iowa Board of Regents.
- 1.3 Budget Request. This term shall refer to the properly submitted, formal, written application for UISG funding from a group. If not specified, this shall refer to the regular annual application for UISG funding. If specified as such, this shall refer to supplemental applications submitted between consideration of regular annual applications.
- 1.7 Groups. This term shall refer to any set of people or activities, who, under these bylaws and the UISG Constitution, shall submit a budget request, e.g. the UISG executive, legislative, and judicial branches, or parts thereof, United Students of Iowa, Collegiate and Residence Associations, Commissions, Student Organizations, and student fee-supported services. Two or more sets of people or activities, who shall be eligible to submit separate budget requests and shall be within the same priority group, may combine with each other to submit a single annual budget request, e.g., parts of the judicial branch or two student organizations. Each eligible set of people or activities, however, may only submit one annual budget request whether this request is separate or combined. However, the UISG executive, legislative, and judicial branches may each submit two annual budget requests: One for fixed costs such as telephone rental and executive salaries, and one for other program costs. Allocations based on a combined request shall be to only one account and it is the responsibility of the combined sets of people or activities to make accounting and authorization arrangements for this allocation.
- 1.8 Line Item. This term shall refer to the individual expense class within a specific program section of a group's account, and shall be as defined by University accounting procedures. This term shall also refer to requests for such individual expense classes during SABAC deliberations on budget requests.
- 1.9 MSF. This acronym shall refer to mandatory student fees, i.e., that portion of the regular charges assessed of each student by the University which is not tuition. Also referred to as "Designated Tuition" by the Board of Regents.
- 1.10 Outside Funds. This term shall refer to monies raised by groups other than the UISG executive, legislative, or judicial branches from other than UISG funds.
- 1.11 Priority. This term shall refer to the significance assigned to an individual program, based on the criteria contained in this volume of the bylaws (Sec. 2.7) and legislative acts of the SA. This significance shall be used to determine the appropriate level of funding for a program only if the total amount of eligible budget requests exceeds the available funding.

## APPENDIX 3: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions for Student Government Officers

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee position in SG: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did you decide to run for Student Government?
2. What are your primary responsibilities in Student Government?
3. How has your experience been so far?

**One of the things we are trying to find out by talking to student leaders like yourself, is how we can help to move more resources into students' hands.**

4. Who is responsible for drafting the annual operating budget?
5. Once drafted, who is involved in approving the budget? What's the process? Is there faculty or university oversight? Who has veto power?
6. How much of your budget is automatically accounted for (approximate percentage) to student groups, other activities, programs and events?
7. How much discretionary funding is available on average any given year to you? To other members of the Student Government?
8. How are those discretionary funds spent? Who is involved? Describe the process.
9. What parameters, if any, outlined in your constitution and bylaws affect how you spend discretionary funds?
10. What advice would you have for students wanting to run for Student Government?
11. Anything else you want to add?
12. Can we contact you again in the future if we have questions?

## APPENDIX 4: Interviews Conducted

**TABLE 1. Interviews Conducted to Gather Budget Information**

School	State	Position of Officer Interviewed
University of Alabama	AL	Vice President of Finance
University of Central Arkansas	AR	Vice President of Finance
UC - Santa Cruz	CA	President
UC – Davis	CA	Senator
California State Fresno	CA	President
California State University Northridge	CA	Senator
Florida Gulf Coast University	FL	Treasurer
University of West Florida	FL	President
University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign	IL	President
Louisiana State University	LA	President
University of Massachusetts – Amherst	MA	Secretary of Finance
University of Maryland - Baltimore City	MD	Treasurer
Minnesota State University	MN	Vice President
University of Missouri	MO	Senate Speaker
Seton Hall University	NJ	Vice President & Treasurer

**TABLE 2. Lessons Learned Interviews Conducted at YP4 National Summit**

Student	Position	College
Anna Wagman	Senate President	Fond du Lac Tribal College
Antonella Scarano	President	Miami Dade Community College
Calvin Hayes	Senator	Florida A & M University
Christine Lenihan	Senator	Baylor University
Christine Palmer	Vice President	Trinity University
Jamel Vanderburg	Treasurer	Wilberforce University
Kayla Moreland	Director of Communications	Las Positas
Nick Pastan	Senator, Budget Committee	Amherst College
Qasim McCreagh	Budget Committee	U. of Cincinnati
Richmond Blake	Class President	Davidson College

**TABLE 3. Follow Up Interviews, Campus Culture and How to Run and Win**

Student	Position	College
Antonella Scarano	President	Miami Dade Community College
Calvin Hayes	Senator	Florida A & M University
Christine Lenihan	Senator	Baylor University
Christine Palmer	Vice President	Trinity University
Jamel Vanderburg	Treasurer	Wilberforce University
Kayla Moreland	Director of Communications	Las Positas
Nick Pastan	Senator, Budget Committee	Amherst College
Qasim McCreagh	Budget Committee	U. of Cincinnati
Richmond Blake	Class President	Davidson College

## APPENDIX 5: Budget Information

<b>WEST</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Budget (in millions)</b>	<b>Number of Undergraduate Students</b>
UC Berkeley	CA	1.50	22,880
UC Los Angeles	CA	3.04	24,946
UC San Diego	CA	1.39	20,339
UC Santa Cruz	CA	0.30	13,694
UC Davis	CA	9.20	22,735
UC Santa Barbara	CA	3.19	18,077
California State Bakersfield	CA	0.58	5,960
California State Dominguez Hills	CA	0.63	8,943
California State East Bay	CA	1.40	9,129
California State Fresno	CA	0.62	17,428
California State University Northridge	CA	1.15	26,854
California State University Sacramento	CA	9.24	22,555
San Jose State University	CA	0.54	21,963
Sonoma State University	CA	0.58	6,599
Humboldt State University	CA	0.56	6,529
Lewis and Clark State University	ID	0.08	3,451
Montana State University	MN	0.758	4,407
University of Utah	UT	0.095	22,661
Eastern Washington University	WA	1.3	9,603
University of Southern California	CA	1.8	16,897
<b>Average</b>		<b>1.90</b>	<b>16,485</b>
<b>MIDWEST</b>			
Central Michigan University	MI	0.04	19,997
Michigan State University	MI	0.30	35,678
Minnesota State University	MN	0.6	12,684
University of Missouri	MO	1.2	21,375
Winona State University	MN	0.065	7,569
University of Iowa	IA	0.289	20,300
Southeast Missouri State University	MO	0.078	8,968
University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign	IL	0.037	30,909
University of Chicago	IL	0.065	4,671
Illinois Wesleyan University	IL	0.296	2,146
<b>Average</b>		<b>0.30</b>	<b>21,548</b>

## APPENDIX 5: Budget Information *continued*

<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Budget (in millions)</b>	<b>Number of Undergraduate Students</b>
University of Alabama	AL	0.13	17,553
University of Central Arkansas	AR	0.30	9,969
Florida Gulf Coast University	FL	1.87	6,138
Florida International University	FL	9.3	30,684
University of West Florida	FL	1.85	8,168
University of Kentucky	KY	0.46	18,702
Louisiana State University	LA	0.12	2,988
North Carolina State University	NC	0.24	22,754
University of Texas - Austin	TX	0.08	36,878
Texas A & M University	TX	0.04	36,227
<b>Average</b>		<b>1.33</b>	<b>21,183</b>
<b>NORTHEAST</b>			
University of Mass - Amherst	MA	2.02	18,966
University of Pittsburgh	PA	2.30	17,798
Bloomsburg University	PA	1.39	7,783
Millersville University	PA	1.10	6,991
SUNY Stony brook	NY	2.46	14,287
University of Maryland at Baltimore City	MD	0.038	9,406
Williams College	MA	0.161	2,017
Amherst College	MA	0.129	1,638
Stevens Institute of Technology	NJ	0.179	1,789
Seton Hall University	NJ	0.218	5,335
<b>Average</b>		<b>1.00</b>	<b>6,326</b>

## APPENDIX 6: Assessing Progressive Power on Campus

On Campus	Progressive or Conservative	On Campus	Progressive or Conservative	On Campus	Progressive or Conservative
<b>Ideas &amp; Info</b>		<b>Ideas &amp; Info</b>		<b>Ideas &amp; Info</b>	
Student Newspaper:	P C	Think Tanks:	P C	Think Tanks:	P C
Student Radio:	P C	Newspaper:	P C	Newspapers:	P C
Faculty:	P C	T.V.:	P C	T.V. News:	P C
Curriculum/ Content:	P C	Radio:	P C	Radio:	P C
Websites:	P C	Websites:	P C	Websites:	P C
				Campuses and Educational Institutions:	P C
<b>Policy</b>		<b>Policy</b>		<b>Policy</b>	
Student Government:	P C	Mayor:	P C	Executive:	P C
Board of Trustees:	P C	City Council:	P C	Legislature:	P C
Admissions:	P C	School Board:	P C	Judicial:	P C
Chancellor:	P C	Zoning /Planning Board:	P C	Military:	P C
University Employment Policy – wages and benefits:	P C	Law Enforcement:	P C	Law enforcement:	P C
		Tribal Government:	P C	Transportation:	P C
				Environmental:	P C
				Public Education:	P C
				Employment:	P C
				Housing:	P C
				Fiscal/Tax:	P C
<b>Resources</b>		<b>Resources</b>		<b>Resources</b>	
Student Government:	P C	Mayor:	P C	Executive:	P C
Student Fees:	P C	City Council:	P C	Legislature:	P C
Student Groups:	P C	School Board:	P C	Judicial:	P C
University Investments:	P C	Zoning and Planning Board:	P C	Military:	P C
		Private Sector, such as developers, businesses:	P C	Law enforcement:	P C
		Key community institutions:	P C	Transportation:	P C
		Key community groups:	P C	Environmental:	P C
				Public Education:	P C
				Employment:	P C
				Housing:	P C
				Fiscal/Tax:	P C
<b>People</b>		<b>People</b>		<b>People</b>	
Student Groups:	P C	Churches and other religious groups and organizations:	P C	Churches and other religious groups and organizations:	P C
Religious groups:	P C	Neighborhood and block associations:	P C	Political groups:	P C
Political Student Groups:	P C	Service agencies:	P C	Non-profit advocacy and organizing groups:	P C
University employee unions	P C	Political groups:	P C	Unions:	P C
		Unions:	P C		