

SGA Presidential election 2006: Meet the candidates



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SGA Senators Meredith Straub and Ken Middlemiss are running for President and Vice President of the 2006-2007 school year. Straub and Middlemiss have collaborated on many projects and say they work like a well-oiled machine. "We have similar views and ideas which allows us to work well together...we make a good combination," said Middlemiss.

Straub has been at Behrend since the fall of 2004 and Middlemiss has been here since the fall of 2003. Straub has served SGA as Director of THON, Student Affairs Assistant Director and Panhellenic Council Representative. Middlemiss has served as Director of Student Affairs, Assistant Director of THON and University Faculty Senator.

The platform Straub and Middlemiss have chosen can best be defined as "No empty promises." They said they do not want to make any promises that they cannot keep. Straub said, "We will work actively with things that are presented to us."

Not making empty promises does not mean that they do not have things they want changed. They want to try to improve communication between the SGA and the student body. They want to give students who are not directly involved with SGA an opportunity to know what will be going on in their weekly meetings. There is a message board on the bottom floor of the Reed Building that they would like to utilize next year. They plan to post important decisions made by the Senate in the hopes that more students will want to get involved and attend the weekly meetings.

They are looking to get more students involved with SGA so that there will be more representatives of the student body. They also want the SGA atmosphere to become more family-like so things will RUN more smoothly by changing the atmosphere, they think it will allow better decisions to be made.

"I love to talk to people; I want people to know that I'm here for everyone," Straub said. Straub and Middlemiss said they are eager to hear about what the students want. They both agreed that SGA is currently the last place students go when they want to see change. Both candidates said that is a major thing they want to see changed next year.

Both candidates said they plan to stay actively involved with SGA in some way if they do not win the election. Middlemiss said, "I love THON, I couldn't not be a part of THON."

Students will be able to meet all the candidates, including senatorial candidates, Monday night in Reed 113 at 7 p.m. The Presidential Debate will be held Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. in McGarvey Commons.

Current SGA Vice President Deepti Soni is on the ballot as a 2006-2007 presidential hopeful. Soni's vice presidential running mate is former SGA member and Resident Assistant Ross Zambanini. Together, the two have almost six years of time put in at Behrend. Both have been involved with SGA since their freshman years in the fall of 2003.

Zambanini, a double major of International Business and Management, spent last semester studying abroad in Spain. Soni currently has senior standing as a Political Science major and has been accepted at Harvard in the fall for graduate school. However, Soni has decided to postpone attending Harvard so she can stay with the SGA for another year.

Soni has served on SGA as a senator for two years and is serving this year as vice president. Zambanini, in past years, has served as Director of Student Affairs, Representative of Student Life and as a member of the Student Life Council.

Both Soni and Zambanini said they wanted to see more student involvement with SGA. "I'd like to see a lot of power out of the senate and into the [campus] groups...there is so much to do here but there are a lot of obstacles, and I think our job should be to make those obstacles easier to overcome," said Zambanini.

Soni agreed, "We want more student involvement so we can help the students make Behrend a better place...we plan to go to the students and contact them to get them involved."

The running mates addressed some of the issues they expect to face in the coming year if elected. Zambanini said he would like to see parking changes occur in the next year, especially due to the directional shift of the campus because of the REDC. Soni said they will be looking at how things like a nursing program and teaching certifications will be affecting the students. Specifically, they want to look closer at the Information Technology Fee and what it is spent on.

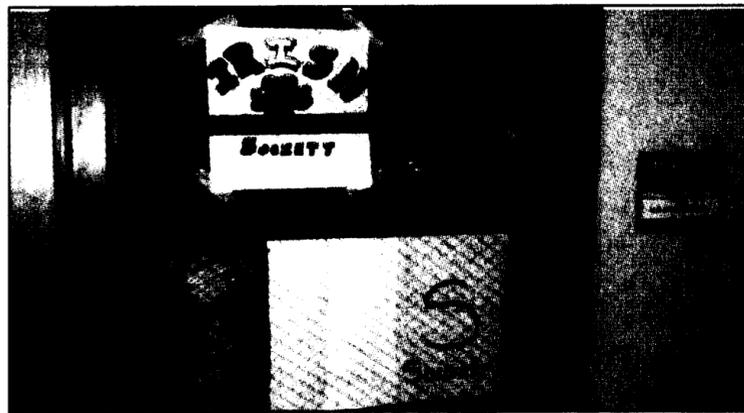
It was difficult for either candidate to go into more details about the platforms they will be running on because, until Wednesday evening, they were not sure they would be allowed to run in this election. Issues surrounding the SGA experience of Zambanini were discussed and voted on during the weekly meeting. Before the vote took place, there was a possibility that Zambanini was not qualified to run for vice president (see *Controversy not closed*).

Inside



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Behrend go bragh Controversy not closed



By Miranda Krause
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"Everyone is Irish on Saint Patrick's Day" and most people only celebrate their Irish heritage on Saint Patrick's Day. However, on Penn State Erie's campus, there is an organization that doesn't just celebrate one day of their Irish heritage; they celebrate every day. The Irish American Society's (IAS) sole purpose is to "educate students, faculty, staff and the community about the culture and history of the Irish people and Ireland" as it states on their website at <http://www.clubs.psu.edu/bd/mcc/IAS.htm>. The IAS started four years ago with at least 16 members; today it has over 20. The funding for IAS is mostly done through fundraisers set up by the group plus any additional funding Behrend can give them. Some of the members include Chrissey Lambert, President of IAS, Zach Mentz, Vice President of IAS, and Jena Ferguson, Treasurer.

For Saint Patrick's Day, a holiday normally celebrated with green beer and green eggs and ham, IAS will be taking a more school-approved approach and will be passing out green kool-aid. IAS will also be taking pictures of students who would like their picture in a cardboard cutout of a shamrock. Chrissey Lambert said, "This was all we really could do because so many other organizations are doing so much for St. Patrick's Day."

St. Patrick's Day came to America in 1737 and was first celebrated in Boston. The most traditional St. Patrick's Day icon is the shamrock. The shamrock icon comes from a story in which St. Patrick used a Shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in all of his sermons to represent the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and how they could all exist as separate elements but still be part of the same being. Because St. Patrick's Day is celebrated before the first days of spring, people wear and celebrate Saint Patrick and the color green.

Chrissey Lambert, being the president of IAS for a year and a half now, is more than happy with the turnout. "We get a couple of new members each year and hopefully more members will join so we can do a lot more than we have had the time to do." One of the main points Lambert wants to stress is that, "You don't have to be Irish to be part of the organization." Just as on Saint Patrick's Day, you don't have to be Irish to celebrate because "everyone's Irish on St. Patrick's Day."

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Controversy surrounds the upcoming SGA Presidential election that stemmed from a closed vote in Wednesday's weekly meeting. During the meeting, the senate was presented with a motion to overturn an election committee's recommendation that one of the two sets of running mates should be disqualified from the election because they had not fulfilled a constitutional requirement.

During discussion on the motion, Vice President Deepti Soni's running mate, Vice Presidential Candidate Ross Zambanini's SGA experience was called into question. According to SGA's constitution, a presidential or a vice presidential candidate needs to have a minimum of one year experience as either a director or an assistant director of an SGA committee, such as Student Affairs Committee or THON Committee; they also could have been a committee board member or an SGA senator for one year.

Earlier in the week Zambanini was asked to provide documentation of his full year of service. As of the meeting on Wednesday, he only had the word of Jeannie Roos that he had served as her assistant in Student Affairs during the fall of 2003 but never held the title of Assistant Director. According to an e-mail sent by former Vice President Justin Curry, during the 2003-2004 school year, there were no Assistant Director titles available.

Both sides of the issue were represented during the discussion, Constitutional Review Director Zackary Mentz said, "We need to stick to the spirit of the law." He argued on the side letting Soni and Zambanini continue in the election on the grounds that the law is interpretive and not set in stone.

Former President Scott Soltis was in attendance at the meeting as well. He explained why the one-year experience stipulation was added to the constitution last year saying, "We wanted candidates to have sufficient experience to hold those positions."

Matchbox Players President Jerome Pohl was also in attendance was compelled to remind the senate that they have the power to change laws and make sure things are run fairly. He pointed out the fact that if Soni and Zambanini were disqualified, there would only be one ticket remaining. Pohl asked, "Do I get to vote or do I get a president?"

After a lengthy and heated debate, a motion was made to use a closed voting process wherein all persons without voting power left the room. The Senate voted to overturn the Election Committee's recommendation 10-7-1. Had the Senate not overturned the recommendation, there would have only been one ticket running in the upcoming election.

After the recommendation was overturned Soni said, "I'm happy people expressed themselves and represented both sides of the argument because SGA is about representing the student voice."

Vice President Soni had to chair Wednesday's meeting as president because President Alexander Henderson was out of town on a school trip. Although the senate voted to overturn the recommendation, Henderson holds veto power for up to a week after the vote. The week-long veto power will end on the day of the candidates debate.

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