

SGA left with six vacancies after fall elections

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editor-in-chief

After two unexpected vacancies and a dismal fall election, Penn State Behrend Student Government Association (SGA) is once again short-handed to begin the year. Almost a quarter of the total seats are empty.

The vacancies, which are common after SGA fall elections, are prompting SGA President Stephen Burger to re-evaluate the current election system.

After fall elections - in which four students were elected - six vacancies still remain on the senate.

Four of those vacancies are freshmen positions, which means that Lacy Smiesko, who was elected last week, is the only freshman on SGA.

Two of the other vacancies are upperclassmen positions. One senator - Aharon Robinson - resigned in this week's meeting, citing classes and other commitments as his reason for leaving.

Another senator, sophomore Ryan Frankowski, was removed from his position for not performing duties expected of a senator, including office hours and attending meetings, according to Burger.

These vacancies, which represent nearly a quarter of SGA's total voting members, will be filled throughout the semester. They will be largely taken care of through "in-house elections," which involves a

brief speech by a candidate and a vote of present members at any Wednesday meeting of SGA.

However, it is the inability to fill the freshmen seats that has Burger taking a second look at the system in place.

"I think it's more a failing of the system than of any SGA," he says. "It's a very outgoing, gung-ho fresh-

man who wants to come to a new place, and within a few weeks pick up an election packet, campaign, and run for a position on government.

"In the past four or five years, there have always been these vacancies."

According to the SGA Constitution, available on OrgSync, any vacancies left over after fall elections

must be filled by the first week of November.

At this point, though, the SGA is not hindered by the vacancies in any of its normal functions. It requires quorum - a certain percentage of voting members - to take any action during meetings. The vacancies do not count towards the total count of members, though. The fall elections, too,

elicited very little student involvement. Only 160 total votes were cast, and the highest vote-receivers received only 49% of the total vote.

While this is common for fall elections, Burger says it points to flaws in the system that must be corrected.

Burger says that one of SGA's top goals for the year is to have contested

elections. He hopes to have at least two students run for each executive board position and each of the eight senator positions that open in spring.

For the last two years, senatorial spring races have been contested, while the President and Vice President positions have not been contested for several years.

SGA at a glance

SGA is made up of 26 voting members: 17 senators, four special representatives, one University Faculty Senate (UFS) representative, and four executive board members.



Interested in getting involved with SGA?

Contact SGA President Stephen Burger at srb5125@psu.edu.

Meetings are Wednesday at 5:30 in Reed 114.

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