

Editorial opinion

Game on

Campaign must be full of action, not USG's usual empty promises

Let the games begin.

Today marks the start of official campaigning for Undergraduate Student Government president and vice president. While the name-calling, prop-waving and sometimes unconventional candidates make life interesting for Collegian reporters, maybe this semester we can have more method to this madness.

A little less show, a little more substance. We're sick of promises that dissolve into nothing and student leaders who suck up, rather than speak up, to administrators.

University students need USG to report their concerns to the administration or to lobby the state government for higher state appropriations. More than enough issues exist for the next USG administration to tackle — tuition increases, computer lab problems, general education changes, housing shortages, diversity conflicts, parking fines and student activity fee questions, to name a few.

But we have been too lenient, letting our leaders promise us quick fixes to our problems without asking them exactly how they plan to accomplish their goals.

Then, they get in office and claim ignorance. They can't be expected to fulfill their campaign promises if the ideas aren't feasible!

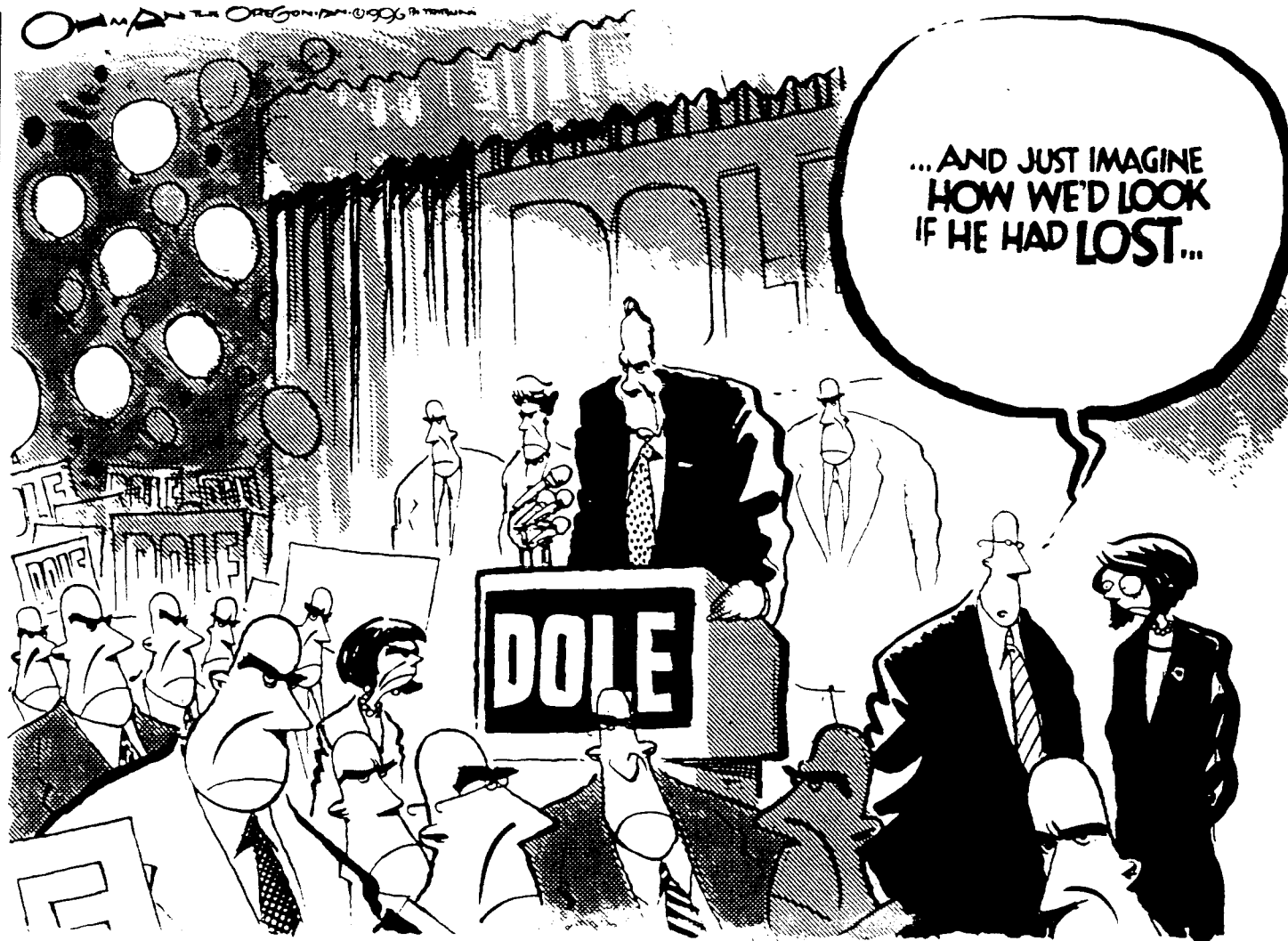
So why are we electing them if their ideas aren't workable?

USG sets up debates before election night, and the people running will be known to the public, giving students several chances to ask questions and force the candidates to explain their platforms. We want maps of where the candidates are going and exactly how they are going to get there.

With carefully thought-out goals and a clear understanding of their duties, the new administration can prove they are student leaders — not circus ringleaders.

USG debates will take place from 7 to 10 p.m. Wednesday in East Halls, 7 to 10 p.m. March 18 in the Wesley Student Center and 7 to 10 p.m. March 25 in the HUB Fishbowl.

Meet the Candidates events are scheduled for 7 p.m. tomorrow in Findlay Commons, 4 p.m. March 19 at the Student Book Store and 1 p.m. March 26 in the HUB Reading Room.



Letters to the editor

The answer is you

The last year has seen abundant tension and turmoil for the "student leaders" who compose our so-called student government. Hoping, perhaps all too foolishly, that I might in some small way abate this trend, I applied for a vacant USG town senator seat at the end of Fall Semester.

Last week (after three months of bureaucratic red tape and one moronic interview) I was informed by the SARB chair that I had been appointed to Senate (while I was dancing in Dance Marathon, no less). With the news, I was set for my first Senate meeting.

At that first meeting, as I sat in my chair around the long rectangular table where Penn State's great "leaders" came to congregate, and glanced at the assembled collection of self-important and pretentious "colleagues," it became all-too-apparent that any attempt to rock this boat would come in vain.

Watching the meeting progress, with its trademark lack of efficiency and all-too-familiar and immature verbal banter, only affirmed what I already knew. USG is a joke. Yes, it's true. It's not a rumor, it's reality.

The real tragedy is many of the "leaders" of whom I speak are, indeed, some of the best and brightest students at Penn State. It truly saddens me that they have chosen to use these gifts to further their own interests or to degrade one another, rather than to go about the business of giving their peers a voice. My intention is not to point any fingers. As a member of USG, part of the blame is my own.

But the issue here is not blame. It's government — what it's supposed to be and what it is. While the student body laughs at the folly that USG has become (and rightfully so), they should also begin to see that when the laughing stops, they're still left without a voice.

What a crime it is that a student body of our caliber has been left with a governing body so impotent that the University president has had to call on the Lion Ambassadors to be our voice in Harrisburg, or that has disqualified far and away the best candidate to be the next USG president because those in positions of power have become hopelessly partisan or just outright corrupt.

The fine men and women of USG may know all about parliamentary procedure, forming committees, and feeling important. But they know nothing about government. They know nothing about what it means to compromise. They know nothing about the monumental responsibilities that come with representing others.

The true University is a balance between faculty, students, and administrators — each distinctly different but always equal. We've lost that balance, and because we have, we are all silent.

The time has come for you, the students, to take back what is yours. We deserve and must demand leadership from outside the current political arena.

The answer isn't a joke campaign by someone and their pet lizard. The answer is you. I hope, above all else, that you will remember this on election day.

Benjamin Sweet
USG senator
junior-public relations

because the University does that, and that's life. So, the motto of the Collegian should be: Don't complain or try to better things... leave well enough alone. Hmmm... what a philosophy.

Second, the editorial writer seems to assume that salaries and raises are THE reason why student tuition goes up each year. Get real! Anyone wonder why Penn State's tuition is much higher than the State System of Higher Education for example?

Sure... tuition is a large part of the cost of our operation, and the fact that the state only gives us about 17 percent of the total budget is THE major reason why tuition is as high as it is and keeps going up more and more each year. Don't blame faculty for a problem that the state has created. Until the state provides a more sensible level of funding for Penn State, tuition will keep going up and up. If you are mad at that, go yell at the governor and the Legislature, but don't expect the faculty to bear the brunt of the inadequate funding of the state. Better yet, quit complaining... that's the way life is.

Third, and most important, the editorial suggests that the professors' widely varying salaries says nothing about their work or commitment, but is that NOT the main issue here? THAT is the issue that the Collegian should take a stand on.

Should not one's compensation, at least within the same organization, be PRIMARILY based on work performance, experience and service provided? Where is the incentive to do better and produce more when the institution fails to reward based on merit?

I thought a basic principle of the free market economy was that those who worked hard and were productive... got ahead and were rewarded for that effort. But, no, not at a place like Penn State. What counts is what you COULD EARN OUTSIDE... and not what you do INSIDE.

Perhaps the Collegian should re-evaluate the credentials of the editorial writers when such a shallow "explanation" of the salary situation is provided, because they clearly need some help in separating fact from THEIR fantasyland.

Better luck next time.

Dennis Roberts
professor-educational psychology

The opinions page is an open forum for discussion for the entire Penn State community. Diverse viewpoints in columns, reader forums and letters to the editor are encouraged to promote an ongoing intellectual dialogue on issues important to our readers.

the daily Collegian

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USG campaign season prompts proactive list of demands

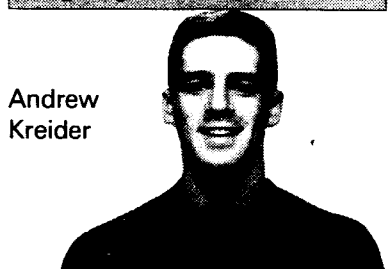
After such a relaxing spring break down South, one would think that I had overcome my fetish for controversy and intrigue through a realization that there are many, many, many more important things than our Undergraduate Student Government and the politics found therein.

Alas, too much has happened in these past three weeks to let the USG issue die, and as the campaigns for the positions of 1996-97 USG president and vice president will officially begin today, I find myself unable to avoid the topic.

In the hope of aiding any of our potential candidates who might need to find some focus for their current campaigns, I've decided to present to you my own ideal USG platform. And in order to help our concerned student voters separate the good from the bad, I'll be handing out some awards to a few people and organizations as well.

You got it — I've decided to leave behind my negativity and instead become proactive and creative in my quest to offer solutions and suggestions for the mess that we call USG. No more pointing fingers or naming names for this

My opinion



Andrew Kreider

columnist. Besides — I'm tired of being shunned or threatened by all-too-serious-wannabe-contenders-for-the-USG-presidency or hearing rumors that I'll be sued for slander or libel, or whatever else. Some people need to lighten up, or at least go buy one of those 79-cent home enema kits they sell at Giant and put it to good use.

But I digress.

Here are the three things that I want my student government to do for me:

■ (1) *Abolish the tuition stipends for our student government leaders.* Put the money (wherever it comes from, Dr. Latta) into a scholarship for students who demonstrate both

extracurricular involvement and financial need. This wouldn't prevent the USG president or vice president from applying for the scholarship, but it would assure that the tuition assistance would go to a student who has contributed something to the University despite his or her adverse monetary situation. We don't need to be compensating student leaders for "lost work opportunities" when they wouldn't have been working anyway.

■ (2) *Refuse to send student representatives to those worthless administrative committees.* Committees filled with administrators and a token USG kid hurt more than they help. The student on the committee, in hoping to keep the position and maybe get a good letter of recommendation from the bigwigs he or she sits next to, is tempted to forgo making the bold statements or taking the firm stands that might rock the boat.

Our "leaders" become little yes-men and yes-women, mere rubber stamps with office space in the HUB. In the meantime, the University can say that every decision is made with student "input."

Stop this nonsense! Demand that

administrators come to YOUR meetings if they value your input, and make sure you don't sell out the students when you come to an agreement.

■ (3) *Revise the USG Constitution* (no, not to serve the purposes of some pompous USG senators, but to serve the student body). Did you know that for an average student to put a question on the ballot so that it can be voted on by his fellow undergrads he or she must first get a petition signed by 1,500 other students, then have the question approved as "valid" by the USG Supreme Court, and then hope that at least 25 percent of students turn out to vote on the issue?

By these standards, none of the USG elections held in the recent past would have been valid.

Currently, candidates don't need anywhere near the same number of signatures to get their names on the ballot for an election, and nowhere near 25 percent of students EVER turnout to vote for these candidates — it's more like 10 or 11 percent. How is it that someone can take over the student government with a mere plurality of whoever shows up, and average

students can't bring issues to a referendum by the same standards? That's bogus, if you ask me. Change the Constitution to put more power into the hands of average students, or make the elections requirements the same as those for a referendum.

Now on to my awards:

First, a hearty "bravo!" and "best of luck!" to all of those students who have decided to get involved in the process by running for office this year, especially those who have never been involved in USG before.

Extra-special love to the Madagascar Revolutionary Council and their two candidates. Sick of our tendency to conform to everything and question nothing, this group has embarked on a brave and poignant campaign led by The Cock and The Fish, hoping to displace what they call the "suckup, resume-buildin', committee-formin', soap-opera-playin' weasel boys who pretend to give a shit about student needs." Refusing to play by the rules of the institution they so despise, they have launched a truly populist cam-

aign, relying on the write-in votes of the disgruntled masses, and even though I've garnered them another campaign violation by writing this, I wish them the best.

And two thumbs down to those "weasels" themselves, the members of the USG Senate who before spring break tried in every possible way to manipulate the elections code and the USG Constitution to their own selfish ends. In their drive for power and their refusal to accept their own stupid mistakes, they have sacrificed the integrity of their organization and generated well-deserved negative PR. They know who they are, and if you don't, what you to know, call me or E-mail me and I'll tell you. Libel suits be damned.

That's all, my friends... the campaigns start today, so listen to what these people tell you between now and election day, March 27. And if over the course of the next two weeks you find yourself unable to decide for whom to vote, don't worry. Just stay armed, and keep waiting for the signal.

Andrew Kreider is a senior majoring in political science and a Collegian columnist.