SGA candidates anticipate the elections

By Bill Greenwood

Students will soon be given the opportunity to make their voices heard when several prominent organizations conduct their elections for the 2005-06 school year.

Voting will take place on Thursday, April 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Commuters will vote on the bottom floor of the Bart Luedeke Center while all Greek and resident students will vote in the Bric Diner.

Students will elect officers to the Student Government Association (SGA), Finance Board, the Residence Hall Association and the Association of Commuting Students (ACS) as well as select class officers. While many individuals may not think that these organizations have an impact on their college experience, the offices are involved in many important areas of campus life, according to Jessica Muro, chair of elections and recruitment for SGA.

"The people who will be chosen into office are representing not only as a whole student government, but in the residence halls or in the Greek houses or as commuters," she said. "Who [students] pick is going to affect all aspects of their campus life here."

Students will need to display their Rider ID card before being allowed into the polls. "All students, freshmen to seniors, are allowed to vote," said Muro. "If you’re a resident, you’ll be voting for student government positions, RHA positions, class officers and Finance Board for residents and the at large seat. If you’re Greek, you vote for SGA, Greek seat for Finance Board and class officers (and at Large) and if you’re a commuter, you vote for student government, ACS, class officers and Finance Board commuter seat (and at Large seat)."

In the weeks prior to the elections three meets and greet, in which students will be able to interact with the candidates, will be held. On Tuesday, March 29, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in Daly’s Dining Hall, students can mingle with candidates for SGA and Finance Board offices. RHA and class officer candidates will be on hand for the second meet-and-greet, which will be held on Wednesday, March 30, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in Daly’s. The final event will be held on Monday, April 4, from noon to 1 p.m. in the commuter lounge. There, students will meet ACS candidates and anyone else interested.

"Candidates come with display boards talking about themselves with pictures or what their history is at Rider, things that they’ve done," Muro said. "A lot of them dress up in costumes or suits or whatever fits them. Sometimes, there’s candy or little promotional gifts to give away with their name on them."

Those running for SGA positions will then discuss the issues on Tuesday, April 5, during the candidate debate. The event will take place in the Bric Diner at 5 p.m. After answering questions about what were found to be the most important issues by a campus wide survey, the floor will be opened to those in attendance, according to Muro. "You have to hear [each candidate’s] opinion, not just know them as that cute girl sitting in class or that friend of a friend," she said. "You should know what they’re supporting."

One of the issues mentioned most often by candidates for office was that of the recent increase to the Student Activities Fee. Several candidates hope to use the fee in the most fair and biggest way possible.

"[I will] see that every student’s Student Activities Fee is effectively and properly disbursed among the Rider University population and, at the same time, ensure that the awareness and creativity of Rider University students is rewarded," said John Kostic, who is running for Finance Board, Resident seat.

However, others have created plans that would allow their organizations to lessen their reliance on the fee for funding. "I look forward to doing a large amount of fundraising, between $1,500 and $2,000, so that the Class of 2007 can fund most of its future events, such as senior events, on its own and not have to rely on the Student Activities Fee for funding," said Charles T. Burton, who is running for Finance Board, Resident seat.

Candidates have also spoken out about making the SGA budget public information, as it is currently considered private. "I think that there is a good argument to make the Student Activities Fee public," said Chris Manning, who is running for RHA Executive Board President. "By making it public, we can ensure that our money is going where we want it. We can hold elected officials accountable for what they do with the money we give them."

However, Perry Whiteley, who is running for SGA President, said that concerned students should instead contact the SGA President, who will then set up a meeting with the appropriate officers in which the student will be made aware of what has been done with the money.

"Candidates have come up with this idea of what they’re going to do with the money, but they haven’t presented it to us," Whiteley said. "I think it’s important for students to be able to ask their schools what is being used for the money."

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