Letter to the Editor: SGA reaches out to students

Those of us who will be graduating from Rider in a few short weeks are sure to be busy with the last-minute preparations. A lesson I will take with me is one that was repeatedly taught in just about all of my communications classes: the role of the media as a watchdog of the government. With this lesson in mind, I recognize The Rider News as the watchdog of our Student Government Association (SGA). Unfortunately, the April 11 editorial “SGA Record Voter Fallout” failed in its attempt to accurately do just that.

While the members of SGA recognize that the organization is not perfect, we continually work to better reach out to the student body that we represent. SGA officers know that communication between students, faculty and staff could always be improved, as well as the communication between the different student groups on campus. Your editorial stated “the reason we don’t know how SGA works, or why they do what they do, or care at all about getting out to vote, is because most students are uniformly uninformed.” While this is true, it is also obviously a communication problem, one which SGA is aware of, and hopes to improve upon.

However, I ask you, where is The Rider News every week during the SGA open Senate meeting? Every week student leaders come together to discuss the issues important to our campus. This meeting is open for all students to come to listen and voice their opinions. While SGA wishes more students came to the meeting, it also wishes that Rider’s “watchdog” would come so that each week’s issues could be reported back to the student body. This would better inform them, and thus, improve our communication. Once this begins to occur, the most students don’t really hear very much more from anyone about SGA until the next election,” will be solved.

As I mentioned, Rider’s SGA continues to reach out to its constituents. We are proud of the fact that our voter turnout increased from last year’s 651 students to this year’s 728 students of the approximately 3,200 (not 5,000 as you stated that could vote). Although there is always room for improvement, and next year we hope to see even higher numbers, this number is higher than that of many universities similar to Rider.

This year, the members of SGA worked hard to increase that voter turnout, and those who helped accomplish the goal should be commended. In fact, one of the reasons the elections were moved this year to the Bronc Diner was from its previous location in the Student Center was because students voiced this suggestion at one of the weekly Senate meetings.

Instead of being a “watchdog” one time a year, SGA would like to challenge the student body, especially The Rider News, to go to the meetings, voice your opinion, hear what is being done and join SGA in attempting to make Rider a better place for all of us.

—Kerry Greenstein
Senior Communication Major
SGA Organizational Affairs
Team Leader

Letter to the Editor: Technologically poor

Recently, communication students petitioned the Rider administration in favor of an upgrade in the television studio. Frequent computer crashes, outdated programs and obsolete equipment have certainly led to frustratingly sub-par student productions, and not only is the integrity of the University’s Radio and Television programs at stake, but so is that of the administration.

I am a communication major whose studies concentrate predominately on video. As both a student using the equipment in the television studio and as a lab assistant witnessing the difficulties of other students, I make a plea to the bureaucracy of Rider University to pause for a moment and think of the students. Think of the bitter disappointment when days worth of editing work is wiped clean away because of a hard drive crash. Think of the aggravation when a project that should take one hour takes three because of computer freezes and reboots. Think of the frustration when the equipment you need to complete your work is non-existent.

Clearly an advantage at the beginning of anyone’s career is desirable and familiarity with the latest technology is crucial in a field such as television. The students of Rider’s Communication Department look to strive for the same excellence that the University aims for in its mission statement. But all of the excuses in the world are not a replacement for what we really need: access and availability.

It is not enough to know that certain programs and technologies exist; the hands-on experience is the only way to become proficient in, and prepared for, the competition and demands of this field. We must recognize, simply learning to speak a language does not ensure that you will speak poetry. Similarly, simply learning of a technology will not improve one’s ability in it.

—Alexandra Alario
Junior
Communication Major

Letter to the Editor: ‘Children of Fatima’ creates a stir

The Children of Fatima will open on Good Friday at Rider University in New Jersey. Written by Rider faculty member Michael Friel, the plot revolves around a Catholic schoolboy in the 1960s who fears that the world will end when the pope reveals the third secret of Fatima.

According to The Princeton Packet, Friel admits that a friend of his called the play “Catholic bashing,” to which Friel replied, “I’m really going for the way that all institutions, whether it’s religion or government or even your parent, use fear to get what they want. By instilling fear in you, they can control you.” The play features a drunken Irish priest and a strict “St. Regina Coeli.”

If this play has a universal message about the way institutions of any kind use fear to control people, then why, out of all the institutions in society, did Friel choose the Catholic Church to slam? Why did his friend label the play Catholic bashing as opposed to, say, instigation bashing? Is the play opening on Good Friday?

I have faxed a letter to Rider University President Bart Luedeke asking him to do for Catholics what he recently did for Jews. On December 3, 2002, President Luedeke released a statement to the Rider community distancing the University from an upcoming appearance on campus of the anti-Semitic poet Amiri Baraka.

Luedeke said Baraka’s visit to the campus does not reflect a University endorsement of the beliefs and assertions attributed to him. He went on to say that Baraka’s statements have offended many members of our community and at face value stand in stark contrast to the sense of human value so important at Rider.

That was a commendable statement. In the same vein, I am asking President Luedeke to reassure Catholic students that the University does not endorse this play. Beyond this, is there anyone who believes that any college would open an anti-Semitic play on Yom Kippur or an anti-black play on Martin Luther King Day?

—William Donohue
Catholic League President

Letter to the Editor: Keeping the first Amendment in mind

Irritated. That’s the best non-profanec word I could use to describe my emotions on the morning of Friday, April 4, 2003. “What about your voting routine?” I was killing time before a meeting and surfing the net. Click, click, click...Pearl Jam... (rustling sleep and closing the laptop).

Basically, the story said that at their opening date of their North American tour, Eddie Vedder, Pearl Jam’s lead singer, spoke up about his feelings on the war. Vedder then went on during a track entitled “Bushleague” to put a Bush mask on the microphone stand and, during the song, he kicked it over. Continuing, his speech and his actions elicited boos from the crowd and about two dozen people left the show. His speech.

“...All I wanted to tell you was what this guy passed on to me,” he said. “It just upset me. I’ve been there; I’ve seen that, I’ve seen the ugliness, I’ve seen the chaos, I’ve lived with what you have to live with afterward. He just doesn’t feel like we’ve evolved at all in 20 years,” Vedder said as he ended his speech.

While these comments in these changing times may seem out of line to some, Vedder and company approached the comments with full support of troops, yet he still comes under fire. I guess because I share his same opinion I don’t understand.

—Justin Connery
Junior
Communication Major